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## The Impact of the Arts on Traveller Education; an Exploratory Study

Bernadette Fagan  
*Technological University Dublin*

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*Bernadette Fagan, RGN, RM, ALSM*

*Master of Philosophy Thesis,*

*School of Social Science,*

*Faculty of Applied Arts,*

*Dublin Institute of Technology,*

*Dublin.*

# **The Impact of the Arts on Traveller Education; an Exploratory Study**

**Supervisor: Dr. Nóirín Hayes**

**July, 2013**

## **Declaration**

I, Bernadette Fagan, certify that the thesis *The Impact of the Arts on Traveller Education; an Exploratory Study* which I now submit for examination for the award of Master of Philosophy is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the works of others except and to the extent that such works have been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for post-graduate study by research at the Dublin Institute of Technology from December 2002 to July 2013 and has not been submitted in whole or in part at for an award in any other Institute or University.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the Institute's guidelines for ethics in research.

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Signature.....Date.....

....

**Candidate**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to explore the impact that the Arts, (that is the study of visual art, drama, music, dance, creative writing, film and video expression), have on the educational process within Irish Traveller Educational Centres whose students are widely recognised as the most highly marginalised group within Irish society (Ireland, 1995; MacGreil, 1996; Zappone, 2002). Art programmes appear to induce a ‘flow’ state, as identified by Csikszentmihalyi, that he defines as a state of optimal awareness in which the subject becomes lost in the action of the moment and results in a heightened integration and differentiation of the psyche (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The Arts appear to ignite either through motivation or cognitive stimulation an increase in academic and social awareness (Fiske, 1999; Efland, 2002).

An emergent action research design was used encompassing a survey of educational centres, interviews of art and drama teachers employed in the centres and focus groups of students attending the centres.

The study confirmed the influence of ‘flow’ in generating creativity within a classroom setting and how this led to an acceleration of the growth of social and political consciousness and how this subsequently affected academic awareness in the population studied. There was also evidence of a decrease in xenophobia and a growth in empathy towards other ethnic groups. The Arts were also found to have an uplifting effect on the dejection that appeared to be quite prevalent amongst members of the focus groups which they blamed on the eradication of their native way of life. A link was also perceived to occur between the internalisation of Art practice

that calls for a synthesis of perception, emotion and cognition resulting in a personalisation of learning that further engages the individuals' cultural capital thus engaging the learner in a new entry path to learning.

If the tenets of this thesis are correct, the status of Arts education may be recognised as a valuable asset in its own right and as an instrument of educational equity both for Travellers and other marginalised communities.

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	13
1.2 Background and Rationale.....	14
1.3 Description of the Study.....	16
1.4 Aims and Objectives.....	17
1.5 Outline of Thesis in Chapters.....	19
<b>2. The Traveller Community and Marginalised Education in Ireland.....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 Demographic Profile.....	20
2.2 Irish Traveller Ethnicity.....	24
2.3 Traveller Accommodation and Impact on Health and Education.....	26
2.4 The Marginalisation of Travellers in Education.....	30
2.4.1 The Development of Traveller Educational Centres .....	33
2.5 Summary.....	36
<b>3. The Arts in Education .....</b>	<b>38</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	38

3.2 The Function of the Arts within Schools.....	39
3.3 The Effects of the Arts on Academic Attainment.....	43
3.4 ‘Flow’ the Optimal Experience .....	44
3.5 ‘Flow’ and the Preparation for the World of Work.....	48
3.6 The Therapeutic Effect of Art.....	51
3.7 The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.....	52
3.8 Project Zero- the First Research Group on the Effect of the Arts .....	52
3.9 Transference of Learning in the Academic Sphere.....	54
3.10 Involvement in the Arts and Academic Outcomes.....	55
3.11 Factors that Affect the Learning Experience.....	58
3.12 The Effects of the Arts on Political Consciousness.....	61
3.13 Impact of the Liberal Arts Education.....	65
3.14 Summary.....	68
<b>4. Methodology .....</b>	<b>70</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	70
4.2 Research Design.....	73
4.3 The Instruments of Measure.....	75
4.3.1 The Survey.....	75
4.3.2 The Interviews of Art and Drama Teachers.....	77
4.3.3 The Focus Groups of Traveller Students.....	79



4.4 Limitations of the Study.....	83
4.5 Summary.....	85
<b>5. Presentation of Results .....</b>	<b>86</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	86
5.2 The Survey of Traveller Educational Centres.....	86
5.2.1 Background information on Traveller Education Centres.....	86
5.2.2 Buildings in which Centres are situated.....	87
5.2.3 Background of Students Attending Centres.....	89
5.2.4 Barriers to Access for Students.....	91
5.2.5 Centres involvement in the Arts.....	91
5.2.6 Summary of the Survey.....	92
5.3 Teacher’s Perspective on the Impact of the Arts.....	94
5.3.1 Themes arising from Teachers’ Interviews.....	95
5.3.2 Academic Achievement’.....	96
5.3.3 Positive Impact and ‘flow’.....	96
5.3.4 Increase in Creativity .....	97
5.3.5 A Breakdown of Barriers within Centres.....	98
5.3.6 Enhancement of the Physical Environment of the Centre.....	98

5.3.7 Therapeutic Effect upon Individuals and Groups.....	99
5.3.8 Exposure to Cultural Diversity.....	100
5.3.9 Art as a Medium for Traveller Civil Rights.....	101
5.3.10 Lack of Progression to Mainstream Jobs or Education.....	101
5.3.11 Summary of Teachers’ Interviews.....	102
5.4 Students Focus Groups on the Impact of the Arts on their Education.....	103
5.4.1 The Themes that Emerged.....	104
5.4.2 ‘Flow’.....	105
5.4.3 An Increased Cultural Awareness.....	107
5.4.4 Stimulation of Creativity.....	110
5.4.5 Therapeutic Effect.....	111
5.4.6 Political Awakenings through Art: Findings of the Women’s Group.....	112
5.4.7 An Intensification of Memories.....	116
5.4.8 Summary of Focus Groups.....	117
5.5 Overall Summary.....	118

<b>6. Analysis and Discussion of Results.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>6.2 Education Centres .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>6.2.1 Physical Environment of Centres.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>6.2.2 Opinions on the Arts.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>6.2.3 Education versus Training in Traveller Education Centres.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>6.2.4 Art as an Instrument of Leverage.....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>6.3 Creativity and the Progression of Learning.....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>6.4 ‘Flow’ and Art Classes.....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>6.5 Unlocking the Political.....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>6.5.1 Heightened Awareness of Marginalisation.....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>6.5.2 Art and Racism.....</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>6.5.3 Desolation and Confinement.....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>6.6 Cultural Capital.....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>6.7 Art as a Form of Therapy.....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>6.8 Internalisation and Personalisation of Learning.....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>6.9 Summary.....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>7. Conclusions and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>7.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>148</b>

<b>7.2 The Positive Impact of the Arts on Traveller Education.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>7.2.1 Impact upon Creativity.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>7.2.2 Impact upon Relationships.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>7.2.3 The Impact of ‘Flow’.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>7.2.4 Political Awakening.....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>7.3 The Impact of the Arts on Prejudice and Deprivation.....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>7.4 Recommendations.....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>7.4.1 Recognition of Traveller Ethnicity and Political Representation.....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>7.4.2 Expansion of Traveller educational centres.....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>7.4.3 Intercultural Education.....</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>7.4.4 Art as an Entry Point into Marginalised Education.....</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>7.5 Summary.....</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>8. Bibliography .....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>9. Appendices .....</b>	<b>192</b>
<b>9.1 Covering Letter.....</b>	<b>192</b>
<b>9.2 Survey of Traveller Educational Centres.....</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>9.3 Compendium Summary.....</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>9.4 Table of Subjects and Accreditation Levels.....</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>9.5 Schedule and Example of Teachers’ Interviews.....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>9.5.1 Example One.....</b>	<b>212</b>

9.5.2. Example Two.....	213
9.5.3 Example Three.....	213
9.6 Schedule and Examples of Focus Group Sessions.....	216
9.6.1 Example One.....	217
9.6.2 Example Two.....	218

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

*“Arts education has been argued to have social, motivational, and academic repercussions”*  
(Winner and Hetland, 2000, p.3).

This study was carried out in Ireland from December 2002 until July 2013 and examines the effect of the Arts on the education of members of the Traveller Community who were attending Traveller Educational Centres at that time. The Traveller Community comprises approximately 0.6% of the Irish population and is recognised as a separate ethnic group if resident in Northern Ireland or Great Britain (though not in the Republic of Ireland). Senior Traveller Educational Centres were set up in 1983 to meet the educational needs of the Traveller Community within the Republic of Ireland. They were abolished in June, 2012 at which time there were 33 such centres throughout the country with students from 18 years to 65 years of age. At the time the survey, interviews and focus groups took place an entry age of 15 years was in place.

The term “the Arts” is used in a wide context throughout this study and is given to mean any artistic endeavour be it in the field of the visual arts, music, theatre, dance, creative writing, film or video expression and the study of such undertaking as part of an educational curriculum or in some cases as part of extra-curricular activities. Social achievements are also highlighted and could be defined as advantageous learning experiences that emphasise good interpersonal,

community and intercultural skills. Traditional academic awareness measures are not used in this study as they may be deemed irrelevant as many of the participants would not have completed standard examinations. Instead the study took account of informal evidence of changes in academic awareness such as renewed interests or attention in particular subjects.

This thesis attempts to explore the impact that the study of the Arts have on a sample of students, attending a Traveller educational centre, from their perspective. It also delves into and analyses the opinions and experiences of teachers involved in delivering an Arts programme in eight centres. Finally it encapsulates an overview of Traveller Educational Centres via the survey of the 21 directors who responded to it. In so doing it attempts to analyse the effect that the study of the Arts has on the quality of education of students attending educational centres and how this affects their social and academic outcomes. Ultimately, it is hoped that it will add to the knowledge of the effect that the Arts have on the education of people who live on the margins of society and on the Traveller / Roma communities in particular. Therefore, it will add to the international body of work relating to the impact that the Arts have on Traveller education and how that affects the social and academic achievement of this marginalised group.

## **1.2 Background and Rationale**

Irish Travellers are the most deprived sector of Irish society (Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995; MacGreil, 1996). *“Traveller families live in conditions that no other sector of Irish society would be expected to tolerate”* (Irish Traveller Movement, ITM, 2007). They suffer severe educational deprivation with only 28 members of their community attending a third

level institution in 2005 (Pavee Point, 2005). Two-thirds of all Travellers leave school before their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday according to the 2002 Census of Population (Central Statistics Office, CSO, 2002) and only one in twenty live to see their 55<sup>th</sup> birthday (CSO, 2002). Alienation from the dominant society causes untold stress for Travellers and is so common that it may be described as an axiom (Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995; MacGreil, 1996; ITM, 2007). If the negativity experienced is internalised the effect is compounded.

The Arts, however, appears to compensate for marginalisation (Freire, 1972; Boal, 1971, 1998, 2001, 2006) due to the internalisation that takes place when involvement and engagement with the Arts subject occurs. Some American studies show an 83% increase in academic achievement in youth from disadvantaged groups who become engaged in the Arts (Brice Heath, 1999) though the effect while being positive was not as marked on youth from the general population. Children and youth from 'Art – rich' schools scored very high on measurements of fluency, creativity and originality (Burton, Horowitz and Abeles, 1999) while the study of music enhances spatial-temporal performance leading to an increase in mathematical reasoning (Graziano, Shaw and Wright, 1997; Rauscher and Shaw, 1998).

Such findings call into question the way we as a society treat the Arts and the approach and appreciation of the effect that Arts subjects have on school curricula in general and calls into being the usage of the Arts as an instrument of leverage in the search for educational equality within our society. Hence, this study sets out to analyse its effect on the education of members of the Travelling Community, whose members are the most educationally disadvantaged



segment of our society (Task Force of the Travelling Community, 1995; Zappone, 2002; Flynn, 2002; Pavee Point, 2007).

### **1.3 Description of the Study**

The researcher worked as a drama/art teacher in an educational centre and also delivered the childcare and intercultural study modules in that centre thus, it was deemed opportunistic to delve into the study, using an emergent action research paradigm. The focus groups that were formed were known to the researcher as students, though the focus groups took place at a time other than scheduled class time but during the school day. While opportunistic in nature, the researcher recognises this as a limitation in that the study's impartiality may be called into question. The researcher thus seeks to define a single query – in this case, how the Arts impact upon the educational experience of students attending Traveller Education Centres. The data analysis and report writing were written with rigour and reflect the reality that presents in the data.

Creswell (1998) lists the criteria necessary for a “good” study of this kind as rigour in data collection procedures. He states that the study should be framed within an evolving design, it should be presented to reflect multiple realities, the researcher should be an instrument of data collection and the main focus should be on the participants' views. An attempt was made to follow these guidelines in the study and in so doing it was hoped to emphasise the importance of understanding the underlying social and educational context in which the study is set and hopefully to move towards a deeper understanding of the full effect of the Arts on individual and group dynamics.

Educational research is notoriously difficult to clarify, as there are so many variables that may prompt parents to send children to any given school, thus many local issues determine what may promote one school as being more effective than another. Traveller educational centres, while individually being as inherently different as neighborhood schools, do attract students from the most homogenous of Irish backgrounds, as Travellers have until the recent past existed in a caste-like state (MacGreil, 1996).

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

The Arts stimulate cognition and affect academic outcome on a number of fronts (Arnheim, 1954; Fiske 1999; Deasy, 2000; Efland, 2002). The aim of this study was to assess the impact that the Arts have on education in Irish Traveller Educational Centres. By choosing an emergent action research methodology for this study it was hoped to capture the position of all three protagonists – the directors, the teachers and the pupils and to gather their different perspectives on how the Arts affect education and development within centres.

Children of Travellers, while having strong social and familial support within their own community do appear to disengage with school during the secondary school years as the national average for retention in secondary school to Junior Level is 94.3% while it is only 51% for Travellers (Pavee Point, 2006).

The concept that the Arts may in some ways recompense an individual student for material or educational deprivation and ignite (either through motivation or cognitive stimulation), an interest in academic achievement appears to be an exciting vista that warrants closer scrutiny. Art programmes induce a 'flow' state (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Csikszentmihalyi coined the phrase 'flow' to describe the experience of becoming so engrossed in the subject at hand that one loses awareness of the passage of time, one feels completely involved by the task at hand and a sense of ecstasy or at least of being outside everyday reality occurs. A feeling of great inner clarity is experienced and a feeling of ease in one's ability to accomplish the task at hand and a realisation that one's skills match the challenge of the activity to the extent that neither boredom nor anxiety feature in one's feelings. One has a sense of serenity that moves beyond the confines of one's own ego and there is an intrinsic motivation to complete the task at hand.

Some of the teachers interviewed identified similar effects upon their students when asked if 'flow' was present in their opinion. Likewise during the focus group discussions participants described the criteria that are associated with a 'flow' state that is feelings of loss of awareness of time, relaxation and outside everyday reality though no overt question was asked about 'flow'.

*“If one assumes that we are prepared by evolution to follow a path of unending development and if the key to such a development is intrinsically motivated concentration, then how can adults prepare an environment for children that facilitates deep concentration and 'flow' and is thereby consistent with our normal, inborn capacities?”(Rathunde, 1997, p.28)*

The therapeutic effect that this has on individuals (and subsequently larger society) should not be underestimated and may give rise to an awareness of the importance of involvement in political action for society (Freire, 1972 and Boal 1971, 2006).

### **1.5 Outline of Thesis in Chapters**

Chapter 2 contextualises the study and gives relevant historical and social referencing in which to explore the subject of the study i.e. the Travelling Community.

Chapter 3 comprises the literature review which delves into writings concerning the social and educational value of the arts, the history of the various attitudes towards the relevance of the arts in education and the deep social changes that appear to occur following engagement with various art forms. It also introduces the theory of 'flow' and the effect of the personalisation of learning on different ethnic groups.

The methodology on which the study is based is explored in Chapter 4. Some background knowledge of emergent action research methodology is given. More detailed analysis of the relevance of focus groups for marginalised collective communities is also presented.

The findings are presented in Chapter 5, while the discussion and analysis is presented in Chapter 6, while chapter 7 comprises of conclusions and recommendations for future action.

## **2. The Traveller Community and Marginalised Education in Ireland**

### **2.1 Demographic Profile and Contextualisation**

*“The experience of Travellers in Ireland today can be described as that of social and cultural exclusion. The widespread denial of Traveller’s culture exasperates the experience of that exclusion. Traveller’s nomadic tradition is equated with vagrancy and thereby criminalised”* (Pavee Point, 2006, p.1).

Irish Travellers have been described as Ireland’s oldest ethnic minority (Gmelch and Gmelch, 1976). They constitute 0.6% of the population of Ireland according to Central Statistic Office figures (CSO, 2002). According to the Irish Traveller cultural organisation Pavee Point (Pavee Point, 2005) the figure is nearer to one per cent when the approximate figure of 15,000 Travellers, who live in Great Britain but commute between the two countries on a regular basis, is taken into account. They also argue that the figure of 0.6% is artificially low even for those Travellers resident on a permanent basis in Ireland as it does not include households that are recognised by local authorities. Local authorities are responsible for providing housing and services and therefore have population figures for each county. When local estimates from each county are taken into account the figure to emerge is nearer to 30,000 living in the Republic (Pavee Point, 2005) bringing the percentage nearer to 0.75% of the total population of 4,238,848 in the Republic of Ireland (CSO, 2006).

The perinatal mortality rate for Travellers is 28.8/1,000 births which is higher than that of Brazil at 20/1,000, while amongst the general population in Ireland it is 9.9/1,000 births and in Sweden which has a very high level of anti-poverty measures built into its social welfare system it is merely 5/1,000 births (World Health Organisation, WHO, 2006). Two-thirds of the Traveller population left school before their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday as opposed to 21% of the settled population and the median age of Travellers is 18 years compared with 32 years for that of the settled community (CSO, 2002). In 2002, 73% of Traveller men were unemployed, as was 63% of Traveller women (CSO, 2002). The figures for the settled community were 9.4% and 8% respectively (CSO, 2002). Even taking into account the recessionary figures of 2009 which places the unemployment rate at 11.9 % for the overall population (CSO, 2009) the rate is still approximately six times greater than that of the overall population.

At European level, Irish Travellers are represented on the European Roma and Traveller Forum which was founded in 2004 and sits in consultation with the Council of Europe. According to its Secretary General, Terry Davis (2008) the Council:

*“Protect Roma against discrimination, intolerance and violence. We must remind authorities not only about their responsibility to combat anti-gypsism but to offer advice and assistance”*  
(Davis, 2008).

On the world stage Roma is represented by a special Consultative Status to the United Nations and has a permanent seat on the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It is also a full

member of United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

In Ireland, 641 Traveller families live in very poor Fourth World conditions either on the side of the road or in unserviced halting sites (ITM, 2004) with subsequent negative effects upon health and children's education (ITM, 2004 and 1995). To compound this state, Travellers who do not have permanent accommodation find themselves in a legal quandary since the enactment of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 (Office of the Attorney General, 2002) which makes living on the side of the road a criminal offence within the Republic of Ireland and has resulted in 88 convictions in 2004 alone.

Children's rights may also be contravened by this as Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

*"1. State parties recognize the rights of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development" and " 3. State parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means shall take appropriate measures to assist parents or others responsible for their needs to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material goods and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing" (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNHCR, 2002).*

Clearly a child's need for adequate shelter is not being met if basic shelter and sanitation are not in place as commonly occurs on unserviced sites. A child's social, mental and moral needs are

subverted if their cultural right to nomadism is subsumed and their readiness for formal education is severely compromised by such conditions.

For members of the Traveller Community schools appear to be failing to engage their youth with many leaving without any formal accreditation. In figures released by the Department of Education (2006) for the school year of 2004 to 2005 there were 671 pupils enrolled in first year, nationwide, while only 72 were in the Leaving Certificate year, indicating that roughly 90% of Traveller pupils leave before completing secondary school. This would mirror findings of the Office for Educational Standards of Great Britain (Ofsted, 1999) which found that Roma/ Traveller children are at the highest risk of any ethnic group to disengage with the school process.

A report from the Mid -Western Health Board area in 1989 showed that Traveller children were significantly over -represented at that time in institutionalised care with 63 Traveller children in care at that time. Proportionately that leads to a statistic of 7.6 per 1,000 Traveller children in care as opposed to 2.6 per 1,000 of the general population, which would indicate that 50% of the Traveller children in care had been placed there on grounds of neglect as opposed to 36% of the children from the settled population (O'Higgins 1996).



## **2.2 Irish Traveller Ethnicity**

*“Until recently, one of the most common responses was to deny that racism was a problem in Ireland .....Another commonly articulated view was that if groups did experience racism in Ireland, it was somehow their own fault arising either from some form of deficiency on their part and /or the failure of such groups, in particular the Traveller community, to allow themselves to be subsumed into Irish society” (Farrell and Watt 2000, p.11).*

The lack of recognition by the Irish state of the ethnicity of Irish Travellers may be deemed as an institutionalised form of racism (Keane, 2010) as to deny a group that recognises itself and is recognised by others the status of being a separate ethnicity denies them protection by law under Article 1(4) and Article 2(2) of the UN Race Convention (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1965). This lack of recognition of the ethnic group denies any protective measures that are necessary to counter-balance a society that has a gross level of social and economic inequality towards a minority ethnic group.

A study by McGreil (1996) found that 86% of Irish people hold strong prejudicial attitudes towards Travellers. His study used a random sample of 1,347 adults who were on the Register of Electors, half of whom came from a rural district and a quarter who came from a large urban area. It was distributed through the survey unit of the Economic, Social and Research Institute and took place over a six month period between 1988 and 1989. The response rate to the survey was 73% and allowed for further interviews for more in depth responses. The scale of the study allowed for patterns to emerge for example, he found that young urban professionals held the

strongest prejudicial attitudes towards Travellers at 94% while elderly male rural dwellers held the lowest prejudicial attitudes.

According to the Irish Traveller Movement (2006) a study with a sample size of 100 Travellers found that nearly 90% of them had experienced some form of discrimination while in a public place. Their survey showed that 77.2% had been refused service in a public house because they were Travellers, while 45% had experienced problems when booking a hotel and just fewer than 30% were asked to leave or cancel. While purchasing goods in shops, 60% had been embarrassed by staff and 53% had been asked to leave. When attempting to access the use of a washing machine in a launderette 18.2% had been refused custom.

Since 2000, Irish Travellers have been recognised as a separate ethnic group in Great Britain and thus receive a certain amount of protection for their way of life under the law. According to the British Commission for Racial Equality:

*“All the evidence shows that Travellers and Gypsies are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised of ethnic minority groups in Britain. ‘No Traveller’ signs in pubs and shops can still be seen, and local authorities have no statutory duty to provide sites for gypsy and Traveller families, spending small fortunes each year evicting them, instead. Gypsy and Traveller children are taunted and bullied in school, local residents are openly hostile to them, and scare stories in the media fuel prejudice and make racist attitudes acceptable” (CRE, 2004, p.1).*

## **2.3 Traveller Accommodation and Impact on Health and Education**

*“Some Travellers have become physically sick from being in houses and realising that the authorities are expecting them never to move out. It is hard to imagine what it is like for people to say ‘This is the end of the road’”* (MacDonagh 2000, p.37).

The ghettoized conditions of Travellers in the early 1960s and their visibility as a group living in sub-standard conditions in urban areas led to the establishment, by the Fianna Fáil government led by Séan Lemass, of the Commission on Itinerancy (Department of Social Welfare, 1963) which reported in 1963 that it considered the eradication of itinerancy as the only way to solve this ‘problem’. The report assumed that with housing, assimilation would take place.

Twenty years on, the 1983 Report of the Travelling People Review Body which was commissioned by the Fine-Gael/Labour Coalition government led by Garrett Fitzgerald, held that while integration and assimilation were desirable, the final choice of accommodation must be left with the individual families concerned and the appropriate choice of accommodation made accordingly. Thus, while conventional houses or apartments were considered to be the most appropriate type of accommodation there was some movement towards group housing which was considered to be more culturally appropriate by Traveller organisations.

In 1995, the Task Force on the Travelling People recommended 3,100 units for Traveller families to be built by the year 2005 (Task Force of the Travelling People, 1995, p.108). Only 123 units have been built to date. At the present rate of accommodation provision this will not

meet the 4% annual increase in the Traveller population. To get an insight into the human cost of the council waiting lists, the Casey family in Tallaght lived on a soft-ground unserviced site without any washing or showering facilities for 25 years, while waiting to be accommodated in Traveller specific accommodation (personal communication to the author by Mary Casey Donoghue, 2012).

In 2000, the ITM estimated that roughly one third of families had settled in either private or local authority houses, one third had been accommodated on permanent sites or group housing schemes and about one third were still living in shanty-town conditions on unserviced sites or on the side of the road (Joyce, 2000).

It is only since the publication of the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community in 1995, that the importance of nomadism to the Traveller Community has been recognised and the need to provide culturally appropriate accommodation acknowledged by governmental bodies. However, the fact that provision for accommodation is provided by local authorities rather than central government, raises questions about the level of political will at local level which is necessary to achieve the accommodation programme. Despite the implementation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act of 1998, which obliges local authorities to meet the current and projected needs of the Traveller Community, these needs are not being met. The Report of the Task Force and Traveller organisations called on the government to set up a National Accommodation Agency for Travellers to cut through local opposition on a national scale. David Joyce of the Irish Traveller Movement has suggested linking it in with the National

Roads Authority to provide a network of transient sites running through the main transport arteries throughout the country (Joyce, 2000).

The negative media attention surrounding the summer migration of Irish Travellers returning from England for the summer and the refusal of county councils to provide any form of refuse collection appears to have been instrumental in passing the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002. This Act has since been used to move Travellers on, when they are living on the side of the road but without providing any alternative accommodation or place to camp (Pavee Point 2002). The Act criminalises Travellers for having a transient lifestyle. Travellers tend to camp on areas of land known as commonage (that is land that is held in common by adjoining landowners or the county council) and to return to camp on the same sites in a systematic pattern over several years. Any squatters rights, built up sometimes over generations, on these sites are nullified by this Act. It solidifies, in national law, the policy of blocking the entrances to possible campsites by huge boulders whereby access is denied or caravans are locked into sites - a practice that has been carried out successfully by many county councils.

*“The blocking up of traditional camping places all around the country has been a systematic move to leave Travellers with no place to go. In the future when we look at these boulders will we see them as monuments to prejudice?”* (MacDonagh, 2000, p.39)

The European Court of Human Rights (Chapman versus the United Kingdom, 2001) has already voiced concern that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers be provided with the means to secure their minority lifestyles and that they thus be provided with appropriate accommodation. In 2007, on

foot of the Second Irish Examination by the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention on National Minorities, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers (Resolution 10) criticised the Irish government for its failure to implement the Housing (Traveller) Accommodation Act (1998) which requires local authorities to provide for culturally appropriate housing. The National Plan for Action against Racism Committee (2008) stated that cultural diversity in accommodation must be recognised, supported and encouraged. It also criticised the role of local authorities in failing to fully implement accommodation programmes for Traveller families.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (2003) the physical displacement of nomadic peoples, leading traditional lifestyles, leads to depression of the adult population which in turn gives rise to problems with alcoholism, an increase in domestic violence and higher rates of poverty with the subsequent loss of physical and mental health. Children of people thus affected lack self-esteem, may suffer from depression and have problems integrating into mainstream schooling with the dominant population, due in part to racism which results in a decrease in opportunity and again which may lead to lives marred by high rates of poverty, substance abuse and suicide rates (UN, 2003). When one sees the effect of enforced sedentarism on nomadic people within an international setting, the effect on Irish Travellers should not be underestimated.

According to research carried out by Tallaght Traveller Youth Service (2006), 18 young Travellers living in the Tallaght area, committed suicide within the 19 month period prior to 2006 which would be far in excess of the suicide rate of the local settled population. Nationally,

statistics from 2008 (Hutton, 2008) show, that Travellers have a suicide rate that is five times higher than that of the settled population.

Poor accommodation affects Travellers' physical health and their psychological, emotional and cultural well-being. A pre-requisite of learning is that one is relatively at ease with both one's body and mind and poor accommodation strains both the physical body and psychological wellbeing (Mullins, Western and Broadbent, 2001; Evans G.W. and English K, 2002; Reacroft, 2005 and Amery, Tomkins and Victor, 1995). For example, Evans, Saltzman and Cooper (2001) found that children in poor housing suffered an increase in depression, anxiety and inability to persist with tasks that led to poor academic uptake (Evans, Saltzman and Cooper, 2001).

## **2.4 The Marginalisation of Travellers in Education**

While accommodation may form the crux of Traveller marginalisation, it is followed closely by the lack of participation in the educational process, for example, in 2003, only 46% of Traveller youth who were of school going age were enrolled in secondary school (ITM, 2003). Despite this figure no attempt has ever been made by the Department of Education to provide long distance learning to Traveller children as is done in some other European countries (Scottish Traveller Education Programme, 2003). Interculturalism and the nomadic way of life have not been reflected in the school curriculum and the Traveller language Shelta has not been given any recognition. It is taught in only one Traveller educational centre in the country which may contravene the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child which states:

*“In those states in which ethnic religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, the child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess or practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language”* (Article 30, UNHCR, 2002).

Again the need for cultural sensitivity and respect of ethnic differences are highlighted by a study in Great Britain by Bhattacharyya, Ison and Blair (2003) which found that children of Irish Travellers in Britain did significantly better when they were:

*“in schools that placed greater emphasis on equality of opportunity, and of the acceptance of cultural and ethnic diversity and establishes an ethos which fosters self-esteem and pride in individual and group identity”* ( Bhattacharyya, Ison and Blair, 2003, p.19).

That failure of Travellers at school is exacerbated by poverty and poor quality accommodation is relatively clear, however, what may not be so transparent is the effect of a dominant culture on a minority one, without any concessions towards interculturalism. The nomadic way of life has not been reflected in school curricula. The Traveller language Shelta is only taught in one Traveller Educational Centre in the country thus denying any recognition of Shelta as an integrated part of the cultural fabric of the Community.



*“Knowledge as it is constructed informally outside of the culture of school instruction is regarded by the teachers as threatening the universalistic and decidedly Eurocentric ideal of high culture that forms the basis of the school curriculum”* (Kinchloe and McLaren, 1994, p. 145).

Children of Travellers, while having strong social and familial supports within their own community do appear to disengage with school during the secondary school years perhaps due in part to the lack of visibility of Traveller culture within schools (Pavee Point, 2006). The average retention in secondary school to Junior Level is 94.3% while it is only 51% for Travellers (Pavee Point, 2006). The progression rates from Traveller educational centres to full time employment or third level education remains low. In 2005, 671 Traveller children started secondary school and in the same year only 72 Traveller students completed the cycle (ITM, 2006). Only 28 Travellers have advanced to third level education (ITM, 2006). Traveller parents cite the prejudicial attitudes of their children’s teachers as the greatest single barrier to their children’s education (Zappone, 2002). Work by MacGreil would support that claim, revealing that 96% of young urban professional females hold strong prejudicial attitudes towards the Travelling Community, a sector that surely represents many teachers (MacGreil, 1996). On a positive note the Visiting Teacher service, (by which a teacher is employed by the Vocational Education Committee solely to liaise between local secondary schools and Traveller parents in an effort to promote retention and improve outcomes) has been somewhat successful (Department of Education, 2005). However, in response to the economic downturn this provision has been curtailed since 2011. The provision of homework clubs and preschools has, also, been helpful in building a positive profile of education for young Traveller children.

The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community states that:

*“teacher opinion is that many (Traveller children) underachieve and are at least three years behind the norm in the core subjects, and that poor attendance though a problem in many cases, is not a sufficient explanation”* (1995 p.186).

Travellers are not the only nomads worldwide whose children fare poorly in conventional education. Nomadic peoples in North America (Grigg, Moran and Kuang, 2010) and Australia (Steering Committee for the Review of Governmental Service Provision, 2011) all have problems with underachievement in school, particularly at second level. It is interesting to note that if the continuum of education is maintained for marginalised youth, problems with underachievement appear to disappear at third level (Kinchloe and Steinberg, 1997).

#### **2.4.1 The Development of Traveller Education Centres**

The first Traveller Educational Centre opened in 1974 but was further developed in the early 1980's as a result of the Report of the Travelling People Review Body (1983). After the introduction of free secondary education by Donnacha O'Malley in 1966, the gulf between the settled and Traveller communities widened due to a number of factors (Griffin, 2001). While retention rates in secondary schools rose dramatically for the settled community, free education had little effect on the education of the Travelling community. In fact it appears to have acted as a catalyst in furthering the ever-widening gulf between the two communities due to an increase in the standard of the educational opportunity presented to the settled community by free education which in turn led to the opening of the labour market to a more educated workforce.

Travellers then found it increasingly difficult to find work of any sort at the very time that their own traditional crafts (e.g. tinsmithing and horse husbandry) and markets were contracting as a result of increased urbanisation and the introduction of cheap plastics for buckets and kitchenware (Griffen, 2001).

In 2009 there were thirty-three Traveller Educational Centres throughout the country catering for youths of 15 years and over with no upper age limit. A wide range of subjects were taught in many centres though there was a strong emphasis on a vocational style education. The level to which subjects were taught also varied with some offering Leaving Certificate or the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) Level 5 accreditation while others were only able to offer lower FETAC accreditation levels (Griffin, 2001). FETAC is the national statutory awards council for education and training in Ireland and is part of the National Framework of Qualifications.<sup>1</sup> The FETAC based curricula allows for more flexibility in the deliverance of education as much of the work involves portfolio assessment or skills demonstration with written examinations kept to a minimum and also, allows learners to build on previous learning to attain a full award.

The Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) reported:

*“Traveller Training Centres have enabled many Travellers to acquire a basic education which has compensated somewhat for the incredible shortfall in education that many experienced through primary school. The majority of the Travellers who have attended Senior Traveller*

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<sup>1</sup> Since November 2012 FETAC has come under the auspices of Quality and Qualifications Ireland

*Training Centres are parents of the current generation of primary school Traveller children. Their training experience encourages them to value and foster the education of these children”* (1995, p.221).

Centres varied in the service that they were able to provide. Some centres were located in old schools or on the grounds of a local school while others were located on accommodation sites or in industrial complexes which presented a greater challenge to the teaching staff as good quality, bright, airy and well-heated environments are a pre-requisite of learning (Heschong, 1999; Lyons, 2001 and Dyck 2003). The lack of a formal tracking system or a developed long distance learning system inhibited Travellers who were still nomadic from availing of the centres, though some centres did try to maintain their own informal tracking of past-pupils (Griffin, 2000).

The Vocational Educational Committees and the European Social Fund provided the funding for the centres and they represented one of the few examples of positive affirmative action on behalf of the state towards the Traveller Community though the Irish Traveller Movement (2006) has stated concern about the educational centres on two fronts. Firstly, they felt that it was divisive to offer a training allowance to students who were under 18 years of age since that may have acted as a stimulus to leave mainstream education. Secondly, they noted that progression rates from educational centres to employment were extremely low and that though people spent two years in an education centre very little tangible outcome in terms of employability or third level entry ensued. However, Pavee Point (2002) pointed out that only 40% of Traveller children transferred to secondary schools and that a minority of Traveller children arrived in centres to commence secondary education at 15 years of age having dropped out after primary school at

age 12 years, thus, mainstream school while appearing to be the ideal school for academic progression may not be the choice of some Traveller youth or their parents.

## **2.5 Summary**

As already stated Travellers have been described as our oldest ethnic minority (Gmelch 1976) and comprise somewhere between 1% (Pavee Point, 2005) and 0.6% (CSO, 2011). According to the ITM (2004), 641 families live in Fourth World conditions which would greatly undermine the educational prospects of the children of these families. According to the Department of Education (2006, p17) 671 Traveller students enrolled in secondary school in September 2004 while only 72 sat the Leaving Certificate in 2005.

According to the ITM (2006), 90% of Travellers have experienced prejudice in their lives while McGreil (1996) maintained that 86% of Irish people held strong prejudicial attitudes towards Travellers. Travelling which forms the basis of Traveller culture has been effectively banned by the Housing (Miscellaneous) Provision Act 2002 (Office of the Attorney General, 2002).

Travellers' health is affected by poor accommodation (National Traveller Health Survey, 2005), enforced sedentarism and the subsequent suppression of Traveller culture may account for their high rate of suicide (Tallaght Traveller Youth Service, 2006; Irish Independent, 2008; Irish Examiner, 2006) which is five times the national average.

Only 46% of Traveller children transferred from primary school to secondary school in 2003 (ITM, 2003). The retention to Leaving Certificate is only one out every nine students (ITM, 2006) while only 28 individuals progressed to third level (ITM, 2006).

The Traveller Educational Centres offered an alternative form of mainly vocational style education to teenagers and adults and offered a small training allowance which may have acted as an incentive to participation. Traveller parents may also have seen the educational centres as safer places for their children to attend as they cited the prejudicial attitude of their children's teachers as a major block in their ability to progress (Zappone, 2002) which supports research by McGreil (1996) that shows young urban female professionals to hold the highest levels of attitudinal prejudice towards Travellers.

The force against the maintenance, even the recognition, of ethnicity of the Roma and Traveller peoples of Europe, of which Irish Travellers are a part, is formidable. The need for an effective educational system for their children to allow for integration into an intercultural society where their culture is valued and appreciated is long overdue. Therefore, this study on the impact of the Arts on Traveller education should add a little knowledge to the ongoing debate.

## **3. The Arts in Education**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the literature relating to the effect that the Arts have on education is explored.

The role of the Arts in education worldwide and in Ireland is examined while the history of the aesthetic movement and its effect upon education from the late eighteenth century through to the present day, are reflected upon.

Csikszentmihalyi's work on 'flow' or the optimal experience as it relates to artistic endeavour and the behaviour of youth is examined Gardner's (1983, 1993, 1999 and 2006) theory of multiple intelligences is explored as are recent studies from Harvard's Project Zero (Deasy, 2002).

The effect of the Arts upon political consciousness is examined particularly in relation to the work of educational liberationists such as Freire (1972) and Boal (1979, 1993, 1998, 2006) and how this effect translates into academic success for certain ethnic minorities, including the Traveller Community. Finally the work of emancipatory critical race educationalists Du Bois (1903, 1983), the Frankfurt School and Ladson- Billings (1994, 2000) are reviewed and parallels drawn between the benefits of a classical aesthetic education and a functionalist vocational based paradigm.

### **3.2 The Function of the Arts within Schools**

According to the booklet, *Schools and the Equal Status Acts* (2005) published jointly by the Department of Education and Science and the Equality Authority,

*“The inclusive school prevents and combats discrimination. It is one that respects values and accommodates diversity across all nine grounds in the equality legislation – gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community”* (2005, p.1).

It goes on to state that the purpose and function of schools should be to garner positive experiences, a sense of belonging initially to the school and later to the wider community and the acquisition of positive outcomes for all students. The outcomes envisaged are access to all courses, school tours and extra-curricular activities; participation in the full cultural, social and sporting activities within the school; personal development and the achievement of educational accreditation (Department of Education and Science and The Equality Authority, 2005).

Kenny (1997) states that it is racism impinging from the outside world that creates what she calls “*routes of resistance*” to learning and authority for many Travellers in a classroom setting. This creates a self-destructive pattern that affects both the individuals involved in the educational process and ultimately the community as retention rates and success within second level education is so low that it effectively denies the benefits of education to the majority of the community. Her study found that the Irish education system failed Travellers by not supplying



sufficient intercultural education for teachers or ethnic indicators or resources to draw an inclusive response from students.

It is widely recognised that Travellers have a rich oral, musical and visual heritage (Task Force of the Traveller Community, 1995). They have a distinct visual and musical style that is unique to their community on the island of Ireland (Cullen, 1995). Many Travellers and Roma excel in artistic or musical fields and as such have contributed widely to European and world culture (Im' Ninalu, 2007) though their Traveller /Roma heritage is rarely afforded recognition by the popular press. Neither is Roma/Traveller culture acknowledged in current school curricula nor is their history or language, thus respect for cultural diversity is not being maintained within our school system. This lack must be acknowledged as a factor in the failure of progression of Travellers to third level and their general disillusionment with the educational process (Kenny, 1997; MacDonagh, 2000).

Interestingly, research shows that with support the traditional nomadic lifestyle is no barrier to educational or economic success (MacDonagh, 2000; Clarke, 2002; Scottish Traveller Education Programme, STEP, 2003). The exploration of cultural capital<sup>2</sup> opens students to their own indigenous ethnicity and this process then awakens an appreciation for the art, culture and lives of the wider dominant culture and ultimately various world cultures which lead an individual to the intellectual awareness by which issues may be dissected in a critical and global manner

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<sup>2</sup> The term was first coined by Bourdieu in 1973 to describe the non-economic assets that an individual may acquire within society such as an appreciation for the Arts or educational attainment (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990)

(Fiske, 1999; Grandin, Peterson and Shaw, 1998). Despite this evidence, there continues to be a debate about the value of the Arts in education.

*“The Arts are often considered to be frills or even extra-curricular activities; and when the time for budget cuts is at hand, courses or teachers in the Arts are likely to be among the first casualties”* (Gardner and Grunbann, 1986).

This is reflected in school curricula all over the western world. In Great Britain the Education Reform Act (Government UK, 1988) established English, mathematics and science as core subjects complemented by a modern foreign language, technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education. Accreditation is not given to either dance or drama, so why waste valuable classroom time in pursuing them (Hargreaves, 1989).

In Ireland, as far back as 1966 the Department of Education’s paper, *Investment in Education* (1966) mirrored a movement in American education (Callaghan, 1962; Lillard, 2005) that perceived an industrialised management regime as the most efficient and socially attuned model to produce mass education for a modern society. The role of the Arts was subsumed to a peripheral role, at best, in the classroom. A report commissioned by the Arts Council in 1979 (Benson, 1979) found that the Arts were underappreciated in Irish schools to a degree not found elsewhere in Western Europe. Benson suggests that as a post-colonial nation educational resources were confined to the three ‘Rs’ of reading, writing and arithmetic with an emphasis on

the quantity of educational provision rather than the quality of the educational experience, as limited resources of funds took precedence over aesthetic exploration (Benson, 1979).

By 1995, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD/Department of Education Report (1995) clearly saw education in a functionalist role to supply a job market. In a review of this report Drudy and Lynch found:

*“the education system is seen as playing a crucial role in identifying ability and talent, nurturing it, accrediting it, and eventually assisting in slotting it into appropriate positions in the social and economic hierarchy”* (Drudy and Lynch 1993 p.31).

One group, in Ireland, for whom mainstream education appears not to have met their needs, is the Traveller Community. In response to their particular needs, in 1983, Senior Traveller Educational Centres were initiated to provide compensatory education for the community.

*“Senior Traveller Education were specifically developed to provide training opportunities for young Travellers in the area of vocational oriented skills, with a view to achieving employment in the labour market”* (Griffin, 2001,p.25).

The emphasis on vocational style education geared solely for the labour market ignores the potential effect that the Arts have on education. The centres are for training, to supply a labour market that holds strong prejudicial attitudes (MacGreil, 1996; Task Force of Traveller Community, 1995) towards the students, regardless of achievements. Rather than institutes of

learning -in the classical sense (where a formal education is undertaken that would lead to personal intellectual growth) that would act in a true compensatory manner for lack of primary educational input by the state. It is interesting to note, when viewing this issue from a historical perspective, that the same debate as to the value and worth of a classical style education as opposed to a training style module, was evident in the African –American community over a century ago (Du Bois 1903, 1997).

### **3.3 The Effects of the Arts on Academic Attainment**

Hargreaves (1983, p.141) argues that youths respond in a manner “*of converse traumatic experiences*” while engaging with an Art subject or form. He says this experience encompasses four elements; that there is an initial concentration of attention, the subject (i.e. the youth) becoming ‘*lost*’ in the object of Art; this is accompanied by a “*sense of revelation as if some already existing core of the self is suddenly being touched and brought to life for the first time*” (Hargreaves, 1983 p.141). This is followed by a period of inarticulateness as the youth is rendered ‘*speechless*’ by the impact of the revelation. Followed by this is an arousal of appetite for the subject. The youth becomes ‘*hooked*’ on the object of Art and desires to repeat the experience and search for background knowledge about the object. If the youths involved in this engagement are from a disadvantaged group could the effect of the ‘*arousal of appetite*’ to background knowledge stimulate learning in general? This theory is reflected in Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of the psychology of optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) which is also known as ‘*flow*’.

### 3.4 'Flow'-the Optimal Experience

The principle of 'flow' is present when a person becomes fully concentrated on the task at hand. They lose track of the passage of time. They feel a sense of clarity as to what needs to be done from one moment to the next. Their intrinsic motivation is not that of reward, but rather the enjoyment of the task at hand. Thus a person feels happy rather than anxious or bored by the experience. Csikszentmihalyi points out that this may appear to be a very simple phenomenon *"Every other goal – health, beauty, money or power - is valued only because we expect that it will make us happy"* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.1).

He argues that after experiencing 'flow' one's consciousness becomes re-arranged and more synergic allowing for ever more complex and deeper (holistic) learning experiences to occur. This occurs through two psychological processes differentiation and integration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Differentiation results from an awareness of one's own uniqueness which has been stimulated by the creative process or the arousal of that process, while integration implies the exact opposite – the realisation of the relationship that exists between all of humanity, and for some, beyond that to God or a spiritual dimension. For both elements (differentiation and integration) to exist in harmony within one's consciousness results in a state of heightened self-actualisation that optimises peace of mind.

*"'Flow' helps to integrate the self because in that state of deep concentration consciousness is unusually well ordered. Thoughts, intentions, feelings, and all the senses are focused on the*

*same goal. Experience is in harmony. And when the 'flow' episode is over, one feels more together than before, not only internally but also with respect to other people and to the world in general” ( Csikszentmihalyi 1990, p. 41).*

Csikszentmihalyi goes on to explore 'flow' and its connection with the aesthetic experience in his study and book, *The Art of Seeing* (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990). Through a series of interviews with art curators they examine the criteria involved in experiencing an aesthetic encounter and how this relates to the optimal experience of 'flow'. They examine the aesthetic experience and explore it in a historical context tracing the concept to the German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgartner who first described the phenomenon in 1735.

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) further analyse the aesthetic experience as a form of understanding; that is the visual representation of “*something that has hitherto been hidden and inaccessible to logical understanding*” (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990, p.11).

Describing the experience as that of a sensory pleasure; whereby one experiences pleasure following one's exposure to pleasing stimuli. The emotional harmony that Art may trigger is identified, as Art can act in a cathartic manner – ridding one of unwanted emotional baggage and creating emotional equanimity. This experience may create insights of an intrapersonal nature. Thus, one can see that since as early as 1735 philosophers and artists have been aware of an altered consciousness as a result of an aesthetic experience and one that may result as an entry point into learning or perhaps, more importantly, an entry point into psychological equilibrium.

This analysis again mirrors ‘flow’ and Hargreaves’ criteria for aesthetic encounters, but they emphasise that:

*“Aesthetic enjoyment differs from other kinds in that the skills required are interpretive and lead to a sense of unfolding discovery - a discovery to be precise of human experiences”*

(Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990, p.183).

Perhaps, it is this criterion that leads to the effect that the Arts have on academic performance by the widening of emotional and intellectual experience. It is interesting, also, to note that linguistic anthropologist Brice Heath (1999) found an 80% increase in academic performance with athletic involvement and that with Arts engagement it increased to 83%. According to Brice Heath, the intrinsic value of the Arts is that it gives young people the chance to engage in the adult world but within a ‘safe’ environment.

*“Young people in Arts-based organizations gain practice in thinking and talking as adults. They play important roles in their organizations; they have responsibility for centering themselves and working for group excellence in achievement. Their joint work with adults and peers rides on conversations that develop ideas, explicate processes and build scenarios for the future”*

(Brice Heath, 1999, p.40).

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson also explore the nature of Art as an agent for social change due to its ability to reveal human potentialities that have been repressed by the social system and by

showing the causes of that repression. They cite the works of Goya, Daumier, Picasso, Oroczco and Rivera as painters who have illuminated society on the barbarism of war and poverty.

The pre-requisites of this state is that the physical environment that the process takes place in is comfortable and life enhancing.

*“If one assumes that we are prepared by evolution to follow a path of unending development and if the key to such a development is intrinsically motivated concentration, then how can adults prepare an environment for children that facilitates deep concentration and flow, and is thereby consistent with our normal, inborn capacities?”*(Rathunde, 1997, p.28)

According to Lyons (2001) the American Environmental Protection Agency Science Advisory Board has consistently ranked indoor air pollution amongst the top five environmental risks to public health. Lethargy and dullness can be experienced in an over-crowded stuffy room while the use of modern building materials that release toxins into the environment may be subtle enough to inhibit a ‘flow’ state.

Sound can both stimulate and stifle creative thought and learning. Noise from outside, noise from within centres and noise generated within the classroom can all lead to a bombardment of the senses for the learner. The auditory system is not fully developed until the late teens and approximately 15% of teenagers are suffering from hearing-loss due to genetics, infection or noise induced loss on any given day (Nisker, Kieszak, Holmes, Raben and Brody, 1998). A New York survey found a 20% increase in word recognition in schools situated away from flight



paths (Maxwell and Evans, 2000). The inability to hear fully either due to external or internal causes must be recognised as a serious impediment to the process of learning and the inducement of ‘flow’.

A study by Heschong (1999) into the relationship between daylight and human performance found a 20% increase in maths proficiency and a 26% increase in reading proficiency in schools that had maximum daylight. Interestingly she found the highest increase occurred when the windows in question were able to be opened. Teaching methodologies have changed over the last two decades from a group-lecture scenario to a multi-tasking environment that are again more conducive to the ‘flow’ state and require a whole new set of design criteria, yet, in many instances classrooms have virtually stayed the same. A study by Lyons (2001) showed a 5% - 17% decrease in test scores for youth in sub-standard school buildings.

### **3.5 ‘Flow’ and Preparation for the World of Work**

In *Becoming Adult* (2000), Csikszentmihalyi examines with sociologist Barbara Schneider how ‘flow’ and aesthetic encounter affect educational outcome and potential during the transition from school to work in an age where:

*“Rather than drawing one’s identity from the job, a job is more and more perceived as an extension and fulfillment of individual potential and therein lies its main value”*

(Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000, p.10).

The development of 'flow' in teenagers and the degree to which they develop the potential of becoming involved in an activity will affect their absorption or alienation in the world of work (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000). They go on to state that:

*“Few children have the background to experience academic tasks with this kind of intensity. The more readily available activities such as music, art, drama and even athletics are disappearing from the repertoire of more and more schools because of pedagogically uninformed budget decisions”* (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000, p.13).

Their qualitative study of three American secondary schools, which were from diverse social and economic settings, examined which classes most stimulated the 'flow' process. They found that students developed 'flow' when engaged primarily in art, creative writing and computer programming classes but also in classes of a *“a vocational or technical nature”* (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000, p. 234) where the potential for project work is fully implemented. They also discovered that the least engagement took place during lecture style traditional classes (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000, p.162), a finding common to other studies (Gardner 2000; Levine 2002 and Russell, 2006) and which again pinpoints the need to find alternatives to orthodox methods for youth who are disengaged with the school process.

Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider conclude by making the following recommendations which again, synthesise the need to integrate Art subjects into standard curricula and which allows youth to develop flexible attitudes and 'flow' techniques that will, in turn, be indicative in the

process of transition from school to work They outline the need to “*develop curricula in academic subjects that stress creativity, flexibility and emotional intelligence*”

(Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000, p.234). They call for the wider use of group projects and personalised learning methodologies to ensure learning becomes an exciting and enjoyable activity that may be on-going throughout one’s life and is reflective of one’s interests and talents. As a result, an intrinsic enjoyment of the task at hand is experienced that emphasises the process rather than the outcome. The link between discipline, direction and future outcome is thus further synthesised.

Play and leisure opportunities must exist for youth to develop creativity and spontaneity. One of the outcomes of this study was that students “*who perceived their lives in more play-like terms were more likely to matriculate in selective post-secondary schools*” (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000, p.235). Yet, it appears that youth from disadvantaged situations had limited time and space to engage in play-like activities, as it is seen as a luxury commodity not a pre-requisite for learning. Parental involvement and time spent with parents (as opposed to peers) outside of school hours, is also seen as highly beneficial in terms of acquisition of knowledge and skills (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000).

Thus, youth need both direction and discipline in their quest for a fulfilling adult working life and while both of these are pre-requisites, ‘flow’ helps to guide the engagement of the mind to these attainments and acts as a potential source of educational and emotional well-being (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000; Rose and Nicholl, 2000; Rathunde, 2001). It lends further credence to the importance of the Arts in any school setting but particularly in terms of

the marginalised, because of the impact that the aesthetic encounter may have on individualised learning.

### **3.6 The Therapeutic Effect of Art**

Art, also has, a therapeutic effect upon individuals and hence on students even in a classroom setting. Art was first used in a therapeutic context as early as 1914, by the New York educator Margaret Naumberg, (Schugeuerensky, 2002). She developed her theory throughout the first half of the century and was heavily influenced by the work of both Freud and Jung, and also by Eastern philosophy, surrealist art and primitive art. Her work formed the premise for the first art therapy degree course, which began in New York University in 1969. Since then art therapy has increased in popularity, as have music and drama therapy and has found its way into conventional psychiatric practice (Shreeve, 1986; Cohen, Hammer and Singer, 1988; Hogan, 2001; Malchiodi, 2003).

According to Fleming and Gallagher (Fleming and Gallagher, 1999), Art participation had a positive effect upon the mental and physical well-being of a group engaged with the practice. In a study of 13 senior citizens who were engaged in a painting group and subsequent exhibition of their work in the Irish Modern Museum of Art, all the participants claimed that the effect of the programme kept them healthy due to the stimulation of mind and body that occurred during the Art classes. They contrasted this effect with neighbours and friends who were not engaged in Art education but who were of a similar age and socio-economic circumstance and found a profound variance in health and mental outlook (Fleming and Gallagher, 1999).

### **3.7 The Theory of Multiple Intelligences**

Gardner's theory (1983, 1993, 1999, and 2006) of multiple intelligences has emerged separately but appears to link in with Montessori's use of the five senses (Montessori 1948, 1994). This in turn, introduces another factor that we are more likely to excel and to fall into a 'flow' state if we are engaged in subjects in which we have some talent (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi and Gardner, 1994). Gardner's theory identified seven different forms of intelligence which he classifies as: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, kinesthetic and visual/spatial. In recent years he has added naturalistic intelligence and theorised about the existence of two more - existentialist intelligence and moral intelligence. The great impact of his theory is that it allows the educator eight different entry points into the learning process depending on the pupils profiling. *"My mode of presentation implies a distinct order: begin with entry points, then offer analogies, then coverage upon multiple representations of the core idea"* (Gardner, 2000, p.209).

### **3.8 Project Zero – the First Research Group on the Effect of the Arts**

Since 1967 a research group in Harvard Graduate School of Education has examined the development of the learning process in children. Gardner served as co-director of this project from 1972 - 2001 in which time numerous studies were undertaken about the effect of the Arts on cognition and learning in non-Art domains. Interestingly, the name of the project 'Project Zero' came from its founder, the philosopher Nelson Goodman, who surmised that nothing at all was known about the effect that the Arts had on the learning process at that time and hence they

were starting from zero. What has emerged is the study of the effect that learning in the Arts plays on other subjects, known as transference and whether this comes from “*transfer of cognitive skills, transfer of working habits, transfer of motivation and attitude or of some other type of mechanism*” (Winner and Hetland, 2000, p.7).

Strong transfers have been shown to exist between the study of music and spatial-temporal reasoning and the study of mathematics (Graziano, Peterson and Shaw, 1999). Brain imaging studies show that proximal regions of the brain are activated when either musical or spatial-temporal tasks are carried out. Likewise, when an optimal level of music is played in the background, mathematical performance is enhanced. This enhancement is even stronger for emotionally disturbed children (Graziano, Peterson and Shaw, 1999). Music also, appears to affect reading ability and students studying music attain higher scores for reading on standardised tests than those who do not study music (Hetland, 2000; Butzlaff, 2000).

There is a very clear link between the study of drama and strong linguistic skill, “*Drama is an effective tool for increasing achievement in story understanding, reading achievement, reading readiness and writing*” (Podqlozny, 2000, p.268) and there is also evidence of what they termed as near transfer in relation to competent cognitive skills and reading ability (Keinder, Hetland and Winner, 2000).

### **3.9 Transference of Learning in the Academic Sphere**

Catterall points out in his essay on transference in the compendium *Critical Links*, “*that transference is a reciprocal process involving multiple interactions among domains and disciplines*” (Catterall, 2002, p.iii). *Critical Links* comprises 62 studies on the impact of the Arts on the transference of learning in the academic sphere that shows an effect exists and the extent and the nature of the phenomenon (Catterall, 2002, p.152).

The compendium shows transference in the area of visual arts with an increase in the abilities to organise writing, interpret text, reason about scientific images and reading readiness. Music study shows correlations with cognitive development, prolixity and verbosity of writing, spatial reasoning, mathematical proficiency and self-efficacy. Among the benefits of drama study are an understanding of complex situations and social interaction, peer interaction is increased, writing proficiency and prolixity is increased and self-concept and problem solving strategies are heightened. While dance study shows an increase in social tolerance and the ability to write poetry creatively along with many other physical, social and intellectual benefits including an increase in reading skills. When children and youth are educated in an Arts-rich environment these results are compounded and attendance, engagement, creativity, personal and social development are all enhanced.

From the above one can see that the effect of the Arts on a wide range of learning experiences is profound. It also, highlights the need for more definitive research on the subject of transference so that the essence of the phenomenon is granted full recognition as a source of educational

wealth. However, there are some criticisms of the claims made in the *Critical Links* compendium. Winner and Hetland (2003) made a detailed critique of some of the studies involved in the claim that the Arts affect cognitive and academic outcomes. By the use of meta-analysis, the effect of over two hundred unpublished and over 1,000 published studies were quantified thus synthesizing research data. The distinction between causality (that is notoriously difficult to quantify) and definite correlation was also emphasised as was the need to find appropriate comparison groups (Winner and Hetland, 2003).

On meta-analysis of these studies positive correlations were found in relation to scholastic assessment testing (SAT's) and the Arts. In the area of Arts education and creativity a causal relationship was found to implicate a near transference for original problem solving and Art. A causal relationship was also established with the study of mathematics and the study of a musical instrument and a strong correlation element was proven by extensive studies on brain mapping which shows music stimulating the spatial-temporal lobes (Graziano, Shaw and Wright, 1997; Grandin, Peterson and Shaw, 1998).

### **3.10 Involvement in the Arts and Academic Outcomes**

An earlier study by Catterall et al, entitled *The Imagination Project* analysed by the American Department of Education's database of 25,000 students over a four year period showed that students with high levels of Art participation can be found to outperform other students on nearly every level (Catterall, Chapeau and Inauga, 1999). The sheer scale of their study enabled them to find statistical significance in comparisons of high and low socio-economic groups.



Interestingly, they found that while all students benefited, those from lower socio-economic groups showed an increase in academic achievement that peaked at an 80% achievement rate in the final years of secondary school compared to those who were not engaged in the study of an art form.

The 'high-Arts' involved students were less inclined to be bored during school hours, they considered community services to be very important and they watched significantly less television. If involvement with the Arts was maintained, the effect was found to magnify over time and peaked in the students' final year. Therefore, the effect compounds both on individual learning and on the collective consciousness of the classroom.

A second part of this study (Catterall, Chapeau. and Inauga, 1999), again using the American Educational Longitudinal Study Database, examined the effect individual Art forms (music and theatre) had on students academic outcome. Their findings show a clear correlation between cognitive development in mathematics and music and reading skills and involvement in theatrical studies. Earlier studies (Boettcher, Hahn and Shaw, 1998) show that cognition in music, mathematics and complex games are activities driven by pattern recognition and manipulation and as such are affected by spatial-temporal reasoning ability. Furthermore, it was found that keyboard training as opposed to arithmetic and computer training had affected students' ability to classify similarities and relationships between objects – further evidence that music and mathematics are linked to the ability to evaluate patterns and relations.

Catterall et al's second study shows that while students from higher socio-economic groups do better in mathematics than average, those with high musical involvement do best of all.

Secondly, while students from lower socio-economic groups generally perform below average in mathematics, students with high music involvement perform well-above average. Their performance increases, peaking in their final year until it is at 33.1% proficiency as compared to 21.3% for the average student and 15.5% for lower socio-economic group students with 'no music' training (Catterall, Chapeau and Inauga, 1999).

The third part of Catterall et al's study examined the effect that involvement in theatre studies had on reading proficiency, self-concept, empathy, tolerance and race relations. The data was again collected from the American Educational Study Database. At age 13, a nine per cent above average increase in reading proficiency could be accredited to the theatre group but by age 17 this had increased to nearly 20%. In regard to empathy, tolerance and race relations 40% more 'no-drama' students felt that making racists remarks was alright, than theatre involved students. When asked if they would be inclined to be friendly with other racial groups 27% as opposed to 20% said that they would. This reflects findings of empirical studies done in Great Britain by Heathcote (1984) and qualitative studies by Bolton (1984) and Jackson (1993) that the study of drama and theatre has a positive effect on empathic attitudes and ultimately race relations. This could be particularly useful as a tool for intercultural development within the Traveller Community as they are so often the victims of prejudice – it may help to understand the dynamic both to combat it and to avoid internalisation, with the resulting alienation that further infringes on personal development and ultimately, student outcomes.

### **3.11 Factors that affect the Learning Experience**

One may dissect learning styles into three factions (Marton and Saljo, 1976; Ramsden, 1979; Marton, 1986; Marton., & Booth., 1997). Firstly, there is the atomistic learner who concentrates on the memorisation of facts or rote learning. Secondly there is the deep or holistic learner who personalises the learning structure and transforms and integrates the new knowledge to fit in with existing patterns of thought. Knowledge is seen as an ever expanding realm of thought that forms circuitous paths through personalised experiential modes forming integrated patterns resulting in an overall framework of subjects that allows for the likelihood of sometimes inspired connections. This optimises neural connections thus creating significant cognitive development. Finally, the strategic learner is only interested in acquiring enough knowledge to pass whatever examination is at hand. Little cognitive development takes place and very little retention (Wisker, 2001).

Altruistically, education's purpose is to facilitate an individual's desire to reach their full potential - intellectually, physically and emotionally (Read, 1943). The Arts being innately creative in function harness both the intellectual and practical, thus they ideally fulfill the holistic paradigm. Read goes on to state that it is the creative element of education that is so important for the advancement of civilization and culture and sees this creativity as the prime function of the educational process.

According to Fiske (1999), the factors that change the learning experience for students involved in the Arts area are that they reach students, who may have previously disengaged with conventional classroom practice. Students draw upon their personal experience to generate artistic experience which in turn generates empathy thus creating and nourishing inter-group and inter-community relationships while emotionally connecting students to themselves and others. This leads to the discovery of the wonders of the world and life and according to Burton “*the very school culture is changed*” (Burton et al, 1999, p. 35).

The Arts also provide new challenges for those students who are already considered successful in school as boredom may be perceived to be the enemy of both the teacher and student. The Arts appear to act as an antidote - providing ever new vistas to be explored and developed and in doing so enriching the whole school process. “*For those young people who outgrow their established learning environments, the Arts can offer a chance for unlimited challenge*” (Fiske, 1999, p.12). Students learn and practice future workplace behaviors through the Arts and thus, connect their learning experience to the world of real work which in turn engenders their ability to communicate. This can lead to future successes in the workplace later in life. “*Ideas are what matter, and the ability to generate ideas, to bring ideas to life and communicate them is what matters to workplace success*” (Fiske, 1999, p.12).

Steinberg (1998) maintains that study of the Arts enables young people to have direct involvement in their artistic fields of choice - acting as young apprentices in their field and becoming and seeing themselves as novice artists. In three American studies, *Creating Original Opera*, *Fall Festival Shakespeare* and *Arts Connection* similar changes appeared to occur in the

lives of the young people involved. They identified with their respective roles as performing artists (Orack et al, 1999). Meanwhile, the schools' staffs are significantly affected as teachers are maintained in a state of flux constantly learning and reinventing their own knowledge which in turn leads them to be more stimulated and enthusiastic. When engagement occurs, it is difficult to confine it to the average forty-five minute classroom session (Fiske, 1999) thus extended learning periods tend to occur. 'Practice' is associated with superior results in all of the Art forms. To get in one's 'practice' becomes a goal that stimulates order, discipline and structure into the lives of students, and lengthens enhanced learning opportunities (Orack et al, 1999).

Students become motivated to learn, not just for exam results but also for the intrinsic pleasure of the learning experience. According to the *Arts Connection* study, students develop the capacity to experience 'flow', self-regulation, identity and resilience – all qualities associated with personal success (Orack et al, 1999). Unlike other learning experiences engagement in the Arts allows for multiple outcomes. Fiske cites a study of 'low-achievers' who became fascinated with Shakespearian English while performing one of Shakespeare's works. Learning in the Arts is multi-dimensional in that it encourages self-directed learning and promotes complexity in the learning experience (Fiske, 1999).

The Arts also allows management of risk by students. Artistic outcome demands risk-taking by its creators who in this case, would be the students involved in the project. Thus, students become managers of 'risk'. An interesting point to note is that youth from lower socio-economic groupings have less material and societal choice than youth from families with

average or affluent incomes - the lower income having a depressing effect on material wealth and experiences. The increase in risk taking associated with artistic endeavour appears to partially compensate for the lack of risk (choice) in the material sphere of their lives (Fiske, 1999).

The Arts also engage community leaders and with effective Art learning outside school requiring the active engagement of both parents and the wider community. Even in school time, artistic projects generated by funds from the private sector can produce results that the budget limitations of ordinary state schools rarely allow (Heath and Roach, 1999; Catterall and Waldorf, 1999). For example a project led by the artist Natasha Fische and financed by South Dublin County Council with the cooperation of the Square Shopping Centre produced a fine exhibition of pictures that were on permanent display in the Square (personal communication to the author, 2003).

### **3.12 The Effect of the Arts on Political Consciousness**

*“Academic subjects assumed to require talent and gifts and associated with the possession of considerable inherited cultural capital (such as philosophy, French and. in its place, mathematics) contrast with those that require primarily work and study (such as geography and the natural sciences, with history and the modern and ancient languages holding an intermediate position). The major difference between the two types have to do with indices as to the modality of their relationship as to what it means to be educated” (Bourdieu 1996, p. 11).*

The term cultural capital was coined by the French sociologist Bourdieu (1977). He claimed that western society rewards attainment of 'high' European culture by recognition through educational meritocracy whilst ignoring the culture of marginalised groups and non-Europeans. Willis (1977) qualified this claim in his seminal work, *Learning how to Labour; how Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs*.

This would concur with the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1972), who describing the changes that can occur when cognitive transformation takes place, states:

*“A deepened consciousness of their situation leads men to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation. Resignation gives way to the drive for transformation and inquiry, over which men feel themselves in control”* (p. 88).

Fellow Brazilian and associate of Freire's, Augusto Boal, (1979) took this theme further by developing group theatre along these lines to emulate insurrection from within his theatre group. He believes that by the use of emotion; ideas, issues and political questions arise that have been oppressed in the consciousness of the marginalised. According to Boal (1979, 1993, 1998, and 2006), dramatic art can be used as a force of liberation and transformation. In his seminal work, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1973) he describes how theatre may be used as a means of awakening the individual to the societal forces that constrain their existence or it may be used by the dominant society to further subdue the individual by echoing the dominant values of that society. He developed group theatre along these lines to emulate insurrection from within his theatre group and believed that by the use of emotion - ideas, issues and political questions arise that

have been oppressed in the consciousness of the marginalised. He states that human beings are capable of seeing themselves in an objective manner and that the Arts are instrumental in generating a prismatic view of society.

*“Human beings are capable of seeing themselves in the act of seeing, of thinking their emotions and being moved by their thoughts. They can see themselves here and imagine themselves there, they can see themselves today and imagine themselves to-morrow”* (Boal, 2000, p.12).

In 1971, Boal was arrested by the military Junta that had assumed governmental control in Brazil in 1964 and was tortured before being exiled to Argentina. From there he eventually made his way to Paris where he published his acclaimed work *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1973). His work as a cultural activist was seen as such a threat to that suppressive regime that he narrowly escaped with his life. He returned to Brazil after the restoration of democracy in 1985 and founded over a dozen community based theatre companies that expound the ideals of individual empowerment in the face of institutionalised oppression. In 2008, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Peace and died in Paris in 2009.

Boal was heavily influenced by the work of Freire (1972) whose monumental work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) and subsequent work *Cultural Action for Freedom* (1972) laid the foundations for educational liberationist philosophy. He maintained that the material read by adult literacy students must be contextualised and identified within the reader’s culture before recognition of the material transpires and the leap to literacy takes place. He states:



*“Problem- posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of men as beings who are authentic only when engaged in enquiry and creative transformation” (Freire 1972, p.56).*

He states that it is only on critical reflection of language and the need to transmit that language into the written word that one’s own self expression is crystallized and progress takes place. Therefore he claims, like Boal, that the Arts are a force in creating political and social consciousness because oppressive regimes and marginalisation can only be maintained by a culture of silence. If illiteracy and a cultural vacuum exist – individuals are unable to express their feelings or thoughts surrounding the conditions that they find themselves living in, so they identify with the dominating oppressive societal force and start to believe that they are in some way at fault for the conditions created by these forces. The act of artistic endeavor gives the mental space and distance to see beyond this.

The Arts were seen by them as a force of liberation – a means to transcend boundaries of race and marginalisation and to create connections to lives of people who otherwise would have remained obscured and inconsequential. The release of emotion that Art work allowed, gave rise to clarity of thought that was reflective upon the social situation in which the participants found themselves and focused their minds on a collective resolution to their dilemmas. This in turn led to an interest and awareness of the power of political action to promote social transformation.

*“It becomes ‘the practice of freedom’, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world”*  
(Schauill, 1972, p.14).

### **3.13 The Impact of the Liberal Arts Education**

*“And when we call for education, we mean real education. We ourselves are workers but work is not necessarily education. Education is the development of power and ideals...They have the right to know, to think, to aspire”* (Du Bois, 1906, 1995, p.367).

W.E.B. Du Bois was the first African American graduate from Harvard University in 1890 and later became professor of history and economics at Atlanta University. During his life he advocated for a classical style (liberal arts) education for members of the African American community while the accepted norm of the time, was that a vocational styled education was more suited to African –American children and youth. He believed that it was only through the transformatory effect that an arts and science based education gave that the full potential of an individual could be realised. This brought him into conflict with notable African American educationalists, such as Booker T. Washington who believed that a vocational styled education and adherence to the modus vivendi of the day and circumstances would bring forth a more peaceable advancement for their community (Levering Lewis, 1993).

In 1903 Du Bois wrote a seminal work on the lives and conditions of the African- American Community entitled *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). What made the work so special was that he incorporated the words, feelings and perspectives of the community – constructing their world from within looking outward. It was according to Ladson-Billings (2000) the first attempt made by an author to use a critical-race theory methodology. His book, *The Black Reconstruction* (1935) challenged the predominant view of the reconstruction years in the American South following the Civil War. Again, he used primary source data research to establish his arguments that the Reconstruction was a positive period of renewal in the South and that the African- American Community had made substantial contributions to that period especially in the fields of education, welfare and public health.

In 1930 Max Horkheimer took over as head of the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt University that had been founded in 1923. He recruited a number of talented social researchers including Theodore Adorno and Herbert Marcuse who further developed Critical Race Theory (Kinchloe and McLaren, 1994) only to draw unwanted attention from the Nazi party, five years later. They were granted asylum in the US in 1935 and became affiliated with the New School an adjunct of Columbia University. In 1953 Horkheimer and Adorno returned to Germany. Marcuse taught in the University of California until the early 1960's when their methodology was adopted by the emerging African-American Civil Right's Movement and they again came to prominence.

Critical Race theory relies upon the narrative of individuals or groups to identify experiences of prejudice and marginalisation. It works from the bottom up – projecting the views and feelings

of the minority while deconstructing the commonly held views of history and society. Delgado and Stefanic (1993) have identified a number of themes which are fundamental to the methodology. It critiques liberalism and multiculturalism, while favoring a consciousness that is aware of the challenges facing ethnic minorities and that emphasises social integration and interculturalism rather than multiculturalism. It uses narrative to defend and to recount the experience of life through the eyes of the oppressed or marginalised minority. It revises the historical view from the vantage point of the oppressed race or sector of society, for example in women's studies it would re-examine the role of women in conflict or war or their contribution to the Arts or science that had previously been overlooked. It looks for remedies to societal problems by intersecting race, sex and class in an effort to find solutions. By the use of narrative, related to individual experience it reduces reality to the level of the individual or to the micro level of societal interaction which is also known as essentialism.

Usually, Critical Race Theory is used as an instrument to affect social change, (as earlier stated by the African-American Civil Rights Movement and later by the Feminist Movement) but both Ladson-Billings (1994) and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Lacey, 1970; Willis, 1977; Quantz, 1992) at the University of Birmingham have used it in an educational context. Its importance lies in the understanding of the sociological forces at work within a classroom (Ladson- Billings and Tate, 1995).

### **3.14 Summary**

Travellers have an obvious educational disadvantage that is well documented (Task Force of the Travelling Community, 1995).

*“The absence of basic research and official statistics on the subject of Traveller participation and attainment is itself an indication of the lack of importance accorded to the education of Travellers”* (Kenny, 2004, p.94).

The evidence of the linkage between the study of the Arts and academic achievement, emanating from Harvard’s Project Zero, for the last thirty years is overwhelming and calls into question not whether the Arts affect academic outcome, but to what degree, and how this phenomenon may be maximised to serve educational equity. Much of this work concurs with Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligence (Gardner, 1983) and the ‘Flow’ theory (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). It also appears that the criterion by which Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines the ‘flow’ state - that is the subjects lose track of the passage of time, they concentrate solely on the task at hand, their motivation for performing that act is enjoyment and that they feel clear as to what must be done from one moment to the next. Secondly, that this phenomena is present for considerable lengths of time during engagement with an art form.

Freire (1972) and Boal (2000) have demonstrated that education and the Arts are fundamental instruments in producing lasting social change and in liberating people from the bondage of physical and intellectual poverty. They appear to induce a ‘flow’ state, as described by

Csikszentmihalyi (1990), and from this relaxed state and the self awareness it generates, the desire to induce social and political change manifests in their consciousness.

It appears that, despite whatever the nominal methodology that may be applied in a particular setting, it is the advocacy of the beautiful (Art) as a central theme running through good practice, which in turn lends itself to a holistic learning style that optimises the potential of students. Evidence from this review appears to indicate that it does. In the following chapter the methodology that was used to explore the effect that the Arts have on Traveller's studying in educational centres is discussed.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

*“The design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and ultimately, to its conclusions” (Yin, 1989, p.28).*

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of the Arts on Traveller Education. It is hoped that this will add to the body of work relating to the effect of the Arts on individuals and society and that it will add, also, to knowledge of the effect it has on marginalised education in general and for the Traveller / Roma communities in particular. Ultimately, it is hoped that it will add to the quality of educational opportunities for Travellers.

This study is essentially exploratory in nature. The assumptions that are made concerning the impact emerge from the international canon of knowledge on the subject but have not to date been widely explored in an Irish Traveller context.

*“Exploratory research is commonly used when new knowledge is sought on certain behaviour and the causes for the presentation of symptoms, actions or events need discovering” (Wisker, 2001, p.120).*

Methodologies chosen for research must reflect the inquisitive nature of the study. In this case three different data sets were gathered in an effort to present the reality of the participants who were working and studying in centres

A mixed method approach was used. The instruments being- a survey to gain a descriptive base-line of centres nationally; interviews of the art and drama teachers employed in the service and focus groups to capture the perspectives of all three protagonists within the centres - the director, the art/drama teachers and the students. This supports the research tradition of exploratory investigation which endeavors to throw light upon the realities and perspectives of the participants. The study was designed, along the lines of action research, as identified by Kurt Lewin in the 1940's to have a planning stage, an observatory stage in which the data is collected and a stage of critical reflection in which the data is analysed (McFarland and Stansell, 1993, p.14).

The learning process is a complex procedure with multiple variables both external and internal that contribute to the outcome. The effect that was assessed was whether the impact that the Arts have on marginalised education, that may have been reported internationally, is applicable to Irish Travellers. It was hoped that by carrying out a survey of educational centres, as an initial finding a concrete base for future study would be created that would lead to the revelation of the nuances and deficiencies that could be explored in a more qualitative manner through interviews of teachers involved in teaching the Arts subjects and through the use of focus groups with some of the students involved.



In this way, all three groups who are occupied within the centres (i.e. the directors through the survey, the teachers through their interviews and the students through their focus groups) would be included in the study. One would gain from the perspective of all three and would further increase the likelihood of maintaining a valid and reliable outcome. The tradition of enquiry within the study adheres to the philosophy of emergent action research set in a triangulatory paradigm.

*“By analogy, triangulation techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and in so doing, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data”* (Cohen and Manion, 1980, p.233).

In so doing it was hoped to emphasise the importance of understanding the underlying social and educational context in which the study is set and hopefully to move towards a deeper understanding of the dynamics that occur as engagement with an Art form takes place.

Between April and June 2004 a postal survey was drawn up and sampled by one director. It was found to be adequate and it was then sent to all the Traveller Education Centres in the country through the office of the National Co-ordinator of Senior Traveller Training Centres. Sampling of the interviews occurred in October 2004 with two teachers from an educational centre. Changes were made to the outline of the questions to allow for more open-ended queries which it was hoped would garner more fluidity and insights in the responses. In June 2005 a small

group of five Traveller women volunteered to act as a sample group for the focus groups which commenced in September, 2005 in the same centre.

## **4.2 Research Design**

*“Qualitative inquiry represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration without apology or comparisons to quantitative research” (Creswell, 1998, p.9).*

Since the summer of 1998 the author worked as a drama teacher in a Traveller Education Centre. Classes comprised of teenage Traveller girls and adult Traveller women of mixed literacy ability. Mixed results in their response to the drama classes were noted, from strong enthusiasm from the more literate to total non-participation from those with poor literacy skills. The author also taught childcare and intercultural studies at various times throughout the years that the study took place in but no perceivable change occurred in these classes or as a result of these classes that warranted deeper study other than a deepening appreciation for the craft of childcare and an interest in other cultures. The teaching of intercultural studies was confined to the adult group only.

The study used an action research mode of inquiry as the researcher was also a teacher and reflected the tradition of the teacher as a researcher and curriculum developer. Action Research could be defined as the study of a social situation with a view to improving it and is emergent in character developing through the planning, doing, implementing and reflective stages (Noffke and Stevenson, 1995, p.2)

The questions in the survey, interviews and to a lesser degree in the focus groups moved from general, to non-specific, to specific and back to general again in a funnel like design concept that incorporated open-ended questions into the interview because according to Cohen and Manion (1994) they allow flexibility which in turn allows the interviewer to test the limit of the respondents' knowledge. This also allows for a safeguard by which one can clear up misunderstandings while establishing rapport and allows the interviewer to elicit a clear response from the interviewee.

*“(It) is not the discovery of new elements, as in natural scientific study, but rather the heightening of awareness for experience which has been forgotten and overlooked. By heightening awareness and creating dialogue, it is hoped research can lead to better understanding of the way things appear to someone else and through that insight lead to improvement in practice” (Barritt, 1986, p.20).*

Thus, the perspectives were chosen to express the realities of three components - quantitative reality from the directors, upon which a more observational reality could be built from the teachers and the feelings and thoughts of the students were recorded and analysed as to how they perceived the effect that the Arts had on their education.

## **4.3 The Methods of Measure**

### **4.3.1 The Survey**

A survey was designed and piloted prior to being sent to all 29 Educational Centres in the country (at that time) through the offices of the National Coordinator of Traveller Educational Centres. The survey was then completed by their directors. Twenty replied, initially and following a follow-up call one other replied bringing the number up to 21. Hence, the survey served to map the Educational Centres and eventually touched upon the lives of three-quarters of all students attending them as three-quarters of directors replied to the survey equating to approximately 720 students.

A survey describes a reality. It is a detailed and quantified description of that reality. The first recorded survey took place in the eleventh century and was known as the Domesday Book. It aimed to list and describes all the manors and farms in England under Norman rule (Sapsford, 1999). The first census, which is of course a survey on a much larger scale than normally carried out, took place in England in 1801 and has continued every ten years since, with the exception of 1941, when Britain was at war. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen a more precise technology grow up around the concept of survey and taken to its ultimate form in the census. According to McCarthy et al (2004) surveys are useful for identifying the level of Art activity in a specific sector or organisation and accruing the social benefits that it generates within that group. Hence, it was hoped that the survey would render details that might align with these concepts. However, the disadvantage was that by being on a relatively large scale and quantitative it lacked the immediacy and the descriptiveness of a qualitative methodology.

This survey was designed to capture the setting in which Art study takes place and includes basic background information on the participants and the directors to synthesize any nuances that might produce variables. It did reveal an overall view of three-quarters of the country's 29 educational centres and as such formed a basis for descriptive and exploratory statistics of centres and was used as a baseline for the development of the two subsequent instruments of measure.

The survey was divided into subsections relating to the various influences that may or may not occur when the Arts converge upon the educational process within centres. The first section related to the directors of the centre and the physical environment in which centres dwelt and also, if any mentoring or tracking occurred within centres. The next section listed the subjects that were taught and the level to which they were taught during the year that the survey was carried out (September 2003 -June 2004). The lists of subjects was deemed an important feature of the survey as it was hoped that correlations could have been made between centres that had a high level of Art activity and the outcomes within certain subject areas. It was, also important to determine what subjects were taught in order to clarify the type of education that was being delivered and again if involvement in the Arts in 'Arts rich' centres led to a specific type of curricula. The third section attempted to elicit background information on students attending centres and in the final section the amount of involvement (or lack of involvement) in artistic endeavor was addressed.

A copy of the survey may be found in the Appendix 9.2.

### **4.3.2 The Interviews of Art and Drama Teachers**

*“This means that it (interviews) has an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about how things work in particular contexts”* (Mason, 2002, p.1).

Ten art/drama teachers were interviewed. Most of the interviews took place in the educational centres though two took place in adjacent coffee houses. They lasted for about an hour and were audio taped and later transcribed before being analysed. The questions were open ended and flexible but used the questions in the survey as a basic template on which to build more in-depth insights. Some of the interviewees seemed to be inhibited by the use of the tape recorder initially and an effort was made on which to build rapport and relax the interviewee. All the interviews were arranged by phone and took place in the Leinster area over a year. Every effort was made to remain impartial and allow the teachers to speak of their own experiences.

The interviews gave an insight into how teachers felt the Arts impacted on their students' educational and cultural life. In this way, they incorporated the post-modern perspective of deconstruction and the use of narrative to investigate a particular phenomenon. By the use of a semi-structured format there was a conscious effort made to allow the interviewee delve into their own unique perspective on the subject rather than to confine them to the focused questionnaire developed for the survey. In this way, it was hoped to glean fresh nuances on the subject and to create an atmosphere to gain greater reflexivity in the interview.

Initially two interviews were piloted to determine the initial response to the queries and subsequently changes were made in the format to establish more open ended questions. A

substantial purposive sample within a set geographical area of ten centres that taught either art or drama was drawn up.

Approaches were made to these centres by telephone and with the permission of their directors, eight responded positively – two of which, had two teachers, leading to a sample of ten teachers willing to be interviewed who were involved with the Arts. The interviews started in December 2004 and concluded in December 2005 and were carried out in a semi-structured format using the survey as a template but allowing flexibility should the conversation indicate. They lasted for approximately one hour. Permission was granted in all cases to allow the interviews to be audio-taped and field notes were also taken. Anonymity was assured in all cases and names and places were known only to the author.

At the interview, an explanation was given to the respondent of the nature and purpose of the interview to assess the impact or otherwise of the Arts on academic awareness within educational centres. An attempt was made to build rapport with the respondent, out of courtesy but also in recognition of the role rapport plays in diminishing bias and creating clearer pathways of communication on the behalf of the interviewer and the respondent during the course of the interview thereby gaining greater clarity in the transfer of information

The interviews were subsequently transcribed, read and re-read. Following this each individual interview was further analysed using the central matrix of academic outcome. Phrases and words that indicated or described outcomes were grouped and coded. Finally overlaps and distillation of the coded groupings occurred to create a final matrix from which the dominant themes and

sub-themes emerged. Some of the themes were apparent during the interviews and were recognised as being important to the subject and hence were delved into at depth during the interview. Others arose during interview and were not recognised as such until coding occurred.

The themes were numerically ordered to allow for the most common recurring theme to be prominent and subsequently, in order of their recurrence within the interviews, they were listed. At this point the transcripts were re-examined and each interview was individually broken down to access the sub-categories more precisely. The transcripts were then further re-examined and the themes were supported by text from the transcripts to reassert the context in which the assertions of the analysis were made.

The timetable and examples of questions and transcripts of interviews are in Appendix 9.5

### **4.3.3 The Focus Groups of Traveller Students**

Two focus groups were formed in an educational centre and were known to the author as her students, who were in their second year of attendance at a Traveller Education Centre. The students were informed of the purpose of the focus groups, that being, research into the impact of the Arts on Traveller education. The students were fully aware that they were participating in a research project and that this was a voluntary act and did not constitute class work. They were second year students who were studying art, music and video expression at FETAC Foundation Level and some were studying painting or drawing at FETAC Level Four so, differentiation between what constituted an ordinary class and the focus group session was highly apparent to



all.. By June of that year, they had successfully completed their FETAC programme while the women's group had also taken part in the Irish Modern Museum of Art Outreach Programme which culminated in a multi- media exhibition in the local Community Arts Centre. Thus, the interviews mirror their progression and development through the course of that academic year.

If the students did not wish to take part an alternative class was available but participation levels were very high. Verbal permission was sought and granted to tape and transcribe the focus group sessions and confidentiality was assured - the names being known only to the author. They were held over the full academic year from September 2005 until June 2006, comprising of eight focus group sessions. The groups were comprised of one class of young teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 21 and one of mature women who were between 22 and 55 years of age (the classes were divided on grounds of age and marital status) and each session lasted for approximately one and a half hours.

The groups chosen as focus groups are very typical of the sociological demographic profiles of Traveller women within educational centers throughout the country. About half came from families with strong ties to the west of Ireland, who spoke Cant as their daily language amongst themselves and maintained a very traditional lifestyle. The other half were Gammon speaking (though the younger ones spoke Standard English and had only a limited grasp of Gammon) and were originally from Munster and the south Leinster region. While maintaining many Traveller traditions, they tended to be less conservative than their counterparts.

Focus groups were perceived as the most culturally appropriate form of data collection for a marginalised all- female group as it was collective in nature, encompassing the interaction of the group and the teacher /researcher (the author). It included both micro and macro concepts of individual experience and political thought. Care is needed to ensure that all voices are heard in a study, especially that of the marginalised and thus care is needed in developing instruments to work with marginalised groups. As is true of many indigenous peoples, the core of much of a Traveller's life experience is in the collective thus a collective response to this phenomenon was deemed the most appropriate.

Focus groups became popular in the 1950's with marketing researchers (Fontana and Frey, 1994) after the advent of television advertising, to measure viewers' response to television advertisements. During the 1980's they became popular with American sociologists who were attempting to discover new paradigms by which to measure experiences of women and marginalised groups (Vaughan, Schumm and Sinagub, 1996). Their great strength lies in their collective nature which gives a stronger voice to groups that traditionally may be acquiescent – allowing the subject being investigated to define themselves and to help combat powerful stereotyping of the subject by the dominant society and by extension the investigator.

*“Thus no matter how people..... define themselves, there are still the more powerful stereotypes embedded in public culture that define their status and identities within the cosmos of the dominant”* (Stanfield, 1994, p182).

The sessions were carried out in a semi-structured manner to allow the voice of the participants to emerge. It became apparent from the commencement of the groups that the younger group needed more structured questions to glean response while the older group was happy to talk at length about the given subject. The interviewer felt that her role was more participatory than observatory as she was known to the interviewees as their art tutor and childcare teacher. It became obvious very early on that the two groups varied greatly in their responses and their discussions as to how the Arts impacted on their education (this had not been anticipated initially). Therefore for clarity the findings have been divided between the common ground found between the two groups and the issues on which they had separate stances and include issues that relate directly to Art education, general education and peripheral issues that arose as a result of the process of Art education and the observations that it engendered. The focus groups provided the final element and gave voice to the students engaged with the learning process.

The data was then transcribed by the author, read and re-read in order to gain manageable material for further analysis but also to obtain a primary form of analysis. Open-ended coding was then initiated in which categories were formed and from them sub-categories were dimensionalised. They were later coded and categorised until several themes emerged. This data was then further analysed discussed and conclusions drawn. Finally the text was re-examined to provide narrative examples of the themes identified.

The timetable and examples of questions and transcripts of focus group transcripts are in Appendix 9.6.

#### **4.4 Limitations of the Study**

It became evident during the drafting of the survey that lack of fundamental governmental statistics to support Traveller education (Lodge and Lynch, 2004; Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995) would inhibit the effectiveness of the survey. It was also hoped that the figure of 24 replies would materialize (29 surveys having been sent out) to allow analysis by the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) which would have allowed for a more in-depth exploration of the statistics. As only 21 replies were received this inhibited the use of the programme and led to a mere map of the centres at a particular place in time and also, as a postal questionnaire the answers were limited and one dimensional. A more complex layout could now be developed for further research.

The teacher's interviews were limited by time in which to establish full rapport with some of the subjects and while some of the interviewees were very talkative before and after the formal interview the presence of the tape recorder limited some of their answers to more monosyllabic phrases. Initially the questions asked to the teachers were designed to determine if 'flow' was present during art classes without framing a specific question on the phenomenon, however during the course of the interviews it became apparent that an overt question about 'flow' was necessary to obtain clarity during some interviews.

Focus groups may be construed to be subjective but according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) they are the ideal way to interview women from collective marginalised cultures (as Travellers are perceived to be), as due to the collective nature of their lives, the most accurate measure of their response comes from collective social interaction. This has also been the experience of the author to date.

Thus, while drawing on material from the focus groups, that were comprised of students known to the author, may be construed to be subjective and therefore a limitation this can be defended by the collaborative nature of action research, whereby the focus of the research, in this case the students are also active participants in that research. If one takes as an axiom that “*Access and entry are sensitive components in qualitative research, and the researcher must establish trust, rapport, and authentic communication patterns with participants*” (Janesick, 1994, p.211) it follows that the establishment of effective communication pathways with women, who are traditionally a very introverted group, must be highly comprehensive. It may also be viewed as advantageous, as it was felt that it acted as a catalyst in opening up the group to discussion that would not have taken place but for the rapport and respect that had been previously established between the group and the author. This is also in keeping with the tradition of action research in so far as the subjects are also aware of the nature of the research, not as passive observees but as active contributors to the reliability of the study.

As the author was also a teacher of three different subjects - art, intercultural studies and childcare an insight was established into the nature of the effect of Art upon students and this helped to frame questions about Art and its place and effect in the classroom. This may also be construed as a limitation and care was taken in analysis to limit any bias by strict and rigorous attention to detail.

## **4.5 Summary**

This was an exploratory action research project designed to study the role of the Arts in Traveller education. Through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups the study gathered data from twenty one directors, ten teachers and sixteen students. The results are presented in the next chapter.

## **5. Presentation of Results**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The following are the presentation of the results of this study. The results are presented in three sections. The initial results are of the survey sent out to all the directors or acting directors.

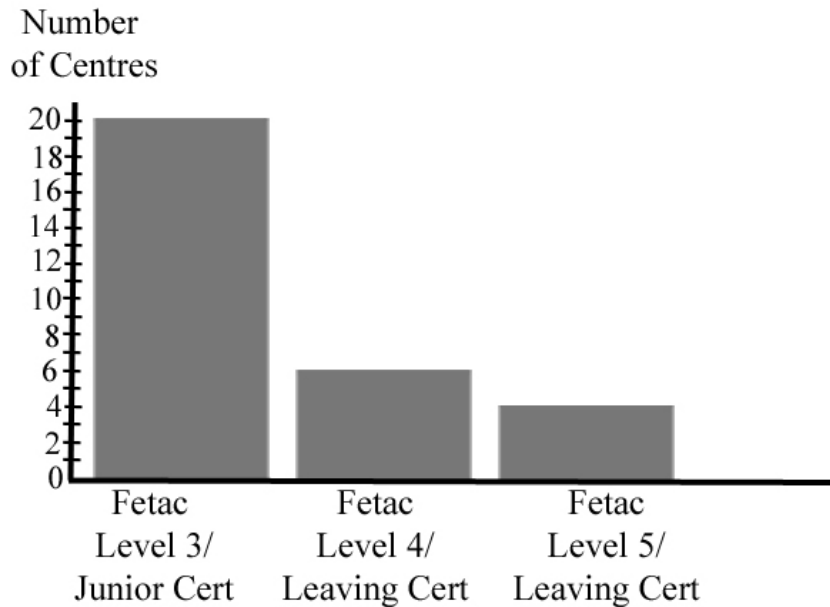
Following this is an analysis of the transcripts of ten interviews of art and drama teachers which took place in the Leinster area and who were employed in Traveller Education Centres. Finally the focus groups conclude the study, with an analysis of the transcripts of eight focus group interviews held over the academic year that took place in an educational centre.

### **5.2 The Survey of Traveller Educational Centres**

#### **5.2.1 Background Information on Traveller Education Centres**

The survey was sent out to all 29 centres. A response was received from 20 and with a subsequent response of one other following a telephone call. Of those that responded 12 were female and 9 male. The age of the directors ranged from over thirty years in six cases to over 60 in four cases as outlined below. Of these six were in the 30-40 yrs. age group, five were in the 40-50 yrs. age group, six were in the 50-60 yrs. age group and four are over 60 yrs of age.

**Table 1 Levels of Certification within Centres**



Of the 21 replies, only 20 centres had certification levels at Junior Certificate or FETAC Level Three but not Leaving Certificate or higher FETAC levels. Three centres offered full Leaving Certificate courses and one a full Junior Certificate, FETAC Level Four was offered in six centres while one centre offered a full FETAC level Five.

### **5.2.2 Buildings in which Centres are situated**

The third variable is related to the physical environment in which the centre is situated. Learning is a subtle activity and environmental factors such as air quality, heat and light even colour and the acoustics and shape of a room all blend to influence the learning outcome. Though budgetary constraints may affect the ability of the director to create an ideal physical environment for students in any given centre still, recognition must be given to the affect that this creates and



ultimately relates to outcomes. Questions were asked concerning the following as part of a section of questions detailing the centres

#### Acoustics:

Four centres of those surveyed, reported moderate levels of noise outside of centres which would account for approximately 16.7% of all centres , another 16.7% (three centres) described average levels of noise while 33.3% (eight centres) described slight levels of noise and 20.8% (five centres) noted non-existent levels.

#### Lighting

Six centres (25% of centres) described light levels within centres that were excellent while 12.5 % (three centres) said that lighting was very good, 25 % ( six centres) thought that their rooms were lit in an average manner and 12.5 % ( 3 centres) noted poor lighting and 8.3 % (two centres) had windowless rooms with artificial light constantly needed.

#### Spatial Context of Classroom:

Just over 25% of centres (6 centres) were situated in buildings that are custom built, 16% (four centres) were situated in old school buildings, 8.3% (two centres) were pre-fabricated buildings, and 33.3% (eight centres) were originally industrial complexes and 4.2% (one centre) was another types of building that did not fall into any of the above categories.

#### Grounds:

Two centres (8.3%) reported grounds that were showpieces of flora and fauna, 12.5% (three centres) reported well maintained grounds, and 33.3 % (eight centres) found average conditions while 20.8% (five centres) reported that they could do with a bit of upkeep and with 8.3% (two centres) reporting grounds that they were unkempt and vandalised.

#### Decoration:

Directors in two centres (8.3%) described levels of décor within centres that were excellent. Nine centres (37.5%) thought that levels were very good within their centres. Seven centres (29.2%) considered the level of decoration to be average while three centres (12.5%) thought of it as poor.

#### Mentoring and Tracking:

Five centres (20.8%) of centres had a mentoring system in place while nine centres (37.5%) described tracking of former students taking place within centres.

### **5.2.3 Background of Students attending Centres**

The mean average of students attending a centre was 32 students; hence, the study was examining features that would affect approximately 672 students. Female students attended educational centres at a 2:1 ratio to their male counterparts with 194 female students and 97

male students under the age of 21 attending. The age at which formal education ends presents another variable. According to the survey the age that Traveller children left mainstream primary or secondary school before enrolling in an educational centre varied between five years in one centre to 15 years in seven centres. Six centres claimed that the average age at which their male pupils left school was 12 years, five reported it was 15 years, three stated 13 years, one said 14 years and one – five years. The average age that female students' left school was 11 years in one centre, six centres had an average age of 12 years, four of 13 years, one of 14 years and seven of 15 years.

Traveller educational centres aimed to provide compensatory education to the Traveller Community at secondary level. The following certification levels of pupils show the academic level that students had already attained before commencing the two year education course in centres. (There was an option for an extension at the end of the second year to a third year to complete course work if a student was undertaking a particular study).

One pupil in one centre had FETAC Level Three certification before commencing the course. Eighteen students from nine centres had their Junior Certificate. One pupil in one centre had their Leaving Certificate Applied when commencing study while two pupils in two centres had their Leaving Certificate on commencement of study within educational centres. Hence, the levels of academic achievement that had already been obtained and related levels of literacy varied widely between centres and within individual centres.

#### **5.2.4 Barriers to access for students**

Crèche facilities were available in only 30% of centres while 311 students were parents. An attempt was made to determine if the academic success of youth from traditional highly nomadic families and those who may be deemed 'settled' was similar or if a difference existed.

Nomadism was practiced by 30% of Travellers attending Educational Centres. Long-distance learning was not in evidence in any centre though tracking of students as previously stated took place in nine centres.

#### **5.2.5 Centres involvement in the Arts**

Fifteen of the centres had a public display of the artistic endeavors of their students which would imply a high level of appreciation of the Arts within centres and by the directors. Thirteen centres took part in various exhibitions of Traveller Art in local and national centres. Six of those surveyed exhibited in more than one location and one exhibited via the Internet. Three centres staged plays in local venues and one centre performed at a rap concert.

When one examines if any relationship occurs between a high level of Art involvement within the centres and certification levels offered it is interesting to note that the three centres that offer Art, Design and Craft at Leaving Certificate level are also the three that offer a full Leaving Certificate. It appears to support the contention that a higher degree of Art involvement leads at least to a greater openness to more advanced certification levels within centres. The question posed, to access knowledge of the extent, to which centres introduced students to different Art

styles was addressed by “*How many times would your centre have visited the following over the past year - An Art Gallery; Museum; Theatre; Cinema; Dance Recital or Concert?*”

Results showed that a theatre performance was enjoyed by 50% of centres; another 50% visited an art gallery; 58% had a trip to the museum while 16% went to a concert. Two centres did not partake in any field trips at all during the year while one centre took them on a monthly basis. Four centres took them at least twice a term.<sup>3</sup> Five centres had trips once in each term and nine centres had one trip at least once, in the school year

All but two of the centres offered a field trip at least once a year, with some on a regular basis. One centre (that did not offer field trips) offered relatively low levels of certification, offering only level three in all subjects and the other one offered level four in literacy, mathematics, computer studies and childcare with other subjects taught at Foundation level (Level Three). At the other end of the scale, one centre offered field trips on a monthly basis and though it was not one of the centres offering the full Leaving Certificate it had a high level of attainment through more unconventional routes offering equine studies, Traveller studies, English and mathematics to Leaving Certificate level and childcare to FETAC Level Four.

### **5.2.6 Summary of the Survey**

This survey was designed to explore a number of variables that may affect the engagement of the students with the Arts. The criteria incorporated into this survey was that it should be

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<sup>3</sup> Traveller Educational Centres had four terms as they finish the school year in mid –July.

systematic and standardised which was achieved by sending it simultaneously to all educational centres through the office of the National Coordinator of Traveller Educational Centres. The target population, of this survey, was the directors of the 29 centres in Ireland. The survey was responded to by 75% of the directors.

The survey found that of 21 directors in the country, 12 of them are women, and the majorities are relatively young with 11 under 50 years of age and 10 having less than five years experience as a director, which may suggest a high turnover of staff.

Eight centres were situated in either industrial complexes or old industrial buildings and two were located in pre-fabricated buildings. Out of these eight, five reported very poor light with two indicating that the classrooms were windowless. Seven reported grounds that were unkempt or in need of upkeep. The other half of centres were either custom built or to be found in old school buildings and 25% described centres located in well maintained grounds.

The level of mentoring was poor with only 20% of all the centres having a system in place, although 37% had a tracking system in place for former pupils.

The courses on offer had a distinct vocational leaning with woodwork and metalwork offered in fourteen and thirteen centres respectively. Crafts were popular, with seventeen centres teaching them. Hairdressing was very popular with ten centres teaching it. The option of taking academic

subjects was in some cases non-existent, with no centres in the country teaching any science subject or history to any level, though French was taught in two centres, with Spanish and geography being taught in one centre. Irish was taught in three centres. All these subjects were taught at Leaving Certificate level only, except for French, which was taught in one centre to FETAC Foundation Level.

Three centres reported that they had pupils who already had the Leaving Certificate on commencement, while a total of eighteen pupils in three centres, started with their Junior Certificates.

The centres involvement in the Arts was assessed by referencing the level of Art involvement which took place within centres. Eighteen of the centres took part in a public display or demonstration of an Art form with over half organising a trip to a venue of cultural.

### **5.3 Teacher's perspective on the impact of the Arts**

Ten interviews of art and drama teachers, who work in eight Traveller Educational Centres in the Leinster area, were undertaken to garner information on their views and opinions as to how the Arts impact on their centre. The interviews were recorded and field notes were made at the same time. Later the interviews were transcribed and analysed. Upon careful reading of the

transcripts a number of themes, named by the teachers and found on analysis, arose that led as entry points into further analysis of the interviews.

The following themes were identified as important strands of thought that came through many of the interviews, some were formulated through questioning during the interview while others arose spontaneously from the observations that the interviewee made.

### **5.3.1 Themes arising from Teacher’s Interviews**

- Theme A.....Academic Achievement
- Theme B.....Positive Impact and ‘Flow’
- Theme C .....Increase in Creativity
- Theme D.....Breakdown of Barriers within Centres
- Theme E..... Enhancement of the Physical Environment of Centres
- Theme F..... Therapeutic Effect upon Individuals and Groups
- Theme G..... Exposure to Cultural Diversity
- Theme H.....Art as a Medium of Civil Rights
- Theme I..... Lack of Progression Routes for Students



### **5.3.2 Academic Achievement**

This refers to the level of academic achievement obtained by students in formal state examinations or the FETAC accreditation awards.

Only one of the eight centres in which the teachers worked who were interviewed, offered the Leaving Certificate. However, these students were exclusively streamed to the point where neither of the art teachers, being interviewed in that centre, taught them. This was an all- female centre as were two other centres that also, offered relatively high level of certification - FETAC Level Five in some subjects and Level Four in most.

*“FETAC at Foundation and Level Four and I think Childcare to Level Five but that would be the only subject to go to that level”* (Interview Six, March 2005).

### **5.3.3 Positive impact and ‘flow’**

‘Flow’ is referred to as a state of consciousness that is recognised when the following criteria are present during activity – the person is engaged in an activity that is challenging but which the person is capable of completing, though simultaneously stretching one’s abilities. The person becomes fully engrossed in the activity and loses a sense of self-consciousness and even sometimes of time. An example of such behaviour could be of a student completely engrossed in drawing a picture or a dancer completely absorbed in a performance.

All ten teachers felt that the Arts contributed positively to the centres on a personal and collective level. Seven of the ten teachers described behaviors that could be recognised as a ‘flow’ state and were asked to further, clarify if ‘flow’ was present in their opinion. Two of the ten went on to describe a ‘personal’ identity with work in which the students began to identify with and become emotionally involved with the work at hand.

*“In your opinion do they ever enter into a “flow” state in which they get lost in their subject?*

(Interviewer)

*“They do they get a total immersion into it. All they need is to be started off. Once they start they just keep going”* (Interview Seven, April 2005).

#### **5.3.4 Increase in Creativity**

Creativity was defined as a desire to initiate and carry out projects that had an artistic leaning.

Four teachers described an increase in creativity within the centres as a result of instruction with the Arts over a period of study and experience. It was felt that it created a “buzz” that led to an exploration of creativity that manifested in a desire to create, for example, a mural on a bare wall, within one centre, was painted.

*“It is a way for them to step away from the academic. They have that in metal work and woodwork but in the Arts they have the potential to explore their creativity. Mainly they are interested in making something to bring home and either bring it in to a room or show their parents so I think that mainly the impact is on self esteem”* (Interview Nine, November 2005).

### **5.3.5 A Breakdown of Barriers within Centres**

Travellers are widely regarded as a highly marginalised group and levels of prejudice are recognised as high amongst the general public thus segregational attitudes may exist even within educational centres.

When asked a how the study of the Arts affects the centres, seven of the teachers described the effect of the study to be very positive in so far as they enhanced the overall atmosphere. It was felt that the Arts led to an increase in empathy amongst both students and teachers and that this in turn had a humanising effect that reverberated in other areas. *“It creates unity and conversation and creates inclusiveness. Also it allows tutors to see the trainees in a different light* (Interview Four, February 2005).

### **5.3.6 Enhancement of the Physical Environment of the Centre**

The physical environment of centres may be affected by displays of art projects created by students in that they create a visual stimulating vista.

Three of the teachers felt that the physical environment of the centre was enhanced by the practice of Art. Those who worked in exceptionally aesthetic surroundings felt that it had a positive impact on their own and their students' performance in their centre.

*"Brightens up the place- a lot of them do enjoy coming into the classroom as well"* (Interview Ten, November 2005).

### **5.3.7 Therapeutic Effect upon Individuals and Group**

Since the early twentieth century Art has been recognised to have a therapeutic effect upon the mental and physical well-being of individuals. All the teachers interviewed felt that the Arts had a therapeutic effect on the individual with an increase in confidence and self-esteem being reported that in turn had an effect on overall relationships within the centres.

*"I can't say or think of any other subject that has that effect"* (Interview Three, January 2005).

*"Morale is improved. I suppose Art is such a therapeutic thing. It makes the place so much more pleasant. I suppose it makes it, also, much more alive, really"* (Interview Five, March 2005).

Some teachers suggested that it acted in a compensatory manner for pupils who had lacked the time and space to play as children. It was recognised that play acts as a catalyst for learning and lack of play opportunities was perceived as a block to formal education.

*“Art helps to develop imagination and many of the trainees would never as children have had time for fantasy. Art opens up the whole area of abstract thought. On a practical level it helps hand and eye co-ordination”* (Interview Two, December 2004).

### **5.3.8 Exposure to Cultural Diversity**

Art holds the potential to introduce aspects of other cultures to individuals. All felt that cultural awareness was increased with only one centre reporting that they never undertook outings. Six centres reported trips to art galleries on at least a yearly basis. Two centres had gone abroad on “*school tours*” solely to view galleries and places of cultural interest. It was felt that the study of Art created an entry point that engendered interest in these areas. It was also noted that it led to a general broadening of horizons and increased tolerance for other cultures. Some felt that it was a vehicle for societal change.

*“Originally from going on nature walks they now ask to go to exhibitions and to places of cultural interest like castles and this year we have been to the Continent twice to take in the cultural sites. Most of them had never been on planes so that alone was a big thing. While now they are thinking of taking holidays abroad so it is like people emerging from a cocoon”*  
(Interview Eight, April 2005).

*“We’ve also done some international trips as well. Over the years there has been trips to New York, Miami, and Las Vegas. The one to New York and Miami- they did it with an Indian group*

*and the one to Las Vegas - they visited the Hopi Indians. And they have gone to Lourdes, France, Sweden and Tuscany and next month in early March we are heading to Denmark for a week”* (Interview Three, January 2005).

### **5.3.9 Art as a Medium for Traveller Civil Rights**

Travellers are a highly marginalised sector within Irish society and have little political platform in which to express issues and grievances.

Three of the teachers thought that through the medium of the visual arts, Traveller culture is exposed and the innate humanistic quality of life unfurled, thus the Arts were a useful vehicle to project a positive image of the community that ran contrary to that often projected by the local and national media. It was felt that high profile competitions such as the National Traveller Art Competition went a long way to help promote Traveller culture and ultimately influenced civil rights. *“It is very good for public relations in that it raises the profile of the centre and the trainees and this in turn has led to the production of a leaflet about the centres”* (Interview Two, December 2004).

### **5.3.10 Lack of Progression Routes for Students**

Travellers are the most unrepresented community group within our third level institutions or mainstream professions.

All noted that while a happy productive atmosphere usually prevailed in their classes all the pupils suffered from a lack of progression once their time in the centres ceased. This was felt to stem from:

- A) A lack of societal supports;
- B) A lack of confidence on behalf of some of the students;
- C) Cultural unwillingness on behalf of some Traveller parents to allow their children to move on to apprenticeships or college and thus to move so far outside the traditional Traveller way of life.

*“Unfortunately there isn’t a habit of extending your education amongst Travellers. I have tried my best to encourage them but they haven’t a family back-up. I have had one who was an exceptionally good student who was very, very good at drawing and I was always talking about his Art to his family and his family were always talking about his Art to me and bringing in his drawings. I think for some people it can be so personal that they have to do it. It is linked to their ego as well – they like doing it to impress people but what ever way that permeates into a possible career I don’t know. I haven’t had a student yet who has progressed. It is unfortunate”*  
(Interview Nine, November 2005).

### **5.3.11 Summary of Teacher’s Interviews**

The Arts were described as having a positive impact in all centres with ‘flow’ cited as taking place during classes in seven centres. A therapeutic effect was described by all. It was felt that

Art acted as a positive force, against the prejudice that so often features within the national media (for example, by showcasing Traveller artistic talent through the National Traveller Art Competition). Local exhibitions were also felt to be powerful statements to counteract prejudice while some felt that even within centres art was seen to breakdown barriers between staff and pupils (other staff members gained new perspectives on pupils having viewed their art work). The physical environment of centres also benefited from art work being displayed.

All commented that progression rates to third level education were extremely low (or in general non-existent) due to lack of societal supports both from within and outside the Travelling Community. However, it was felt by some that the effect may be intergenerational –that by inspiring one generation that they would be more open to providing support for the next.

#### **5.4 Students Focus Groups on the Impact of the Arts on their Education**

Four focus group sessions were held with two groups of Traveller students over a school year, from September 2005 to June 2006, having first piloted an interview with a smaller sample group. The groups comprised of an adult female group of chiefly mature women and a group of younger teenage girls.

The focus groups were recorded and transcribed to obtain an initial analysis. Following this axial coding was carried out in which to identify a central phenomenon or theme within a coding



paradigm and at the same time to identify any causal conditions that might have influenced specific categories. Finally, selective coding was carried out to identify the main themes running through the categories. The following is a synopsis of the themes that emerged.

#### **5.4.1 The Themes that Emerged**

The themes that emerged from both the women and the girl's focus groups were an awareness of 'flow'; an increase in cultural awareness; an awareness that art stimulated creativity which in turn led to an enhancement of the learning process; that it had a general therapeutic effect upon the individual practicing it; an awareness of a broadening of intellectual horizons; an awareness that Art might be used as a means to communicate political and intercultural ideas to the wider community and an awareness of an intensification of memories during art practice.

#### **5.4.2 'Flow'**

No overt question was asked about 'flow' to the focus groups however the criteria associated with the 'flow' state was described by the groups. That is a state of engrossment in one's activity that leads to a loss of self-consciousness, resulting in an increase in confidence, which in turn, was perceived to affect academic outcome and clarity of mind while simultaneously becoming 'lost' in the object of art. *"When you feel relaxed you can see things clearer"* (Women's Focus Group, January 2006).

*"When you are doing Art you feel very relaxed. What is on your mind just goes and you forget everything. You just get into it"* (Women's Focus Group, September 2005).

*“When you are doing it because you get kind of lost in it”* (Girl’s Focus Group, September 2005).

The girls’ tended to prefer either drawing or painting but not both. It was felt that Art enhanced self-esteem, increased concentration, and that the experience of becoming engrossed in an artistic endeavour enlivened brain function.

***“So you were saying that you feel a certain peace or serenity when you are doing it don’t you?”***

*“You feel peace of mind when you are doing it don’t you”* (Girl’s Group, September, 2005).

*“It does help you in a way because when you come in sometimes –you’d be very, very tired and when you go into to do art –it sort of gives you energy because when you come out it makes you want to do more work after”*

*“It functions your brain”* (Girl’s Focus Group, June 2006).

While the settling and quieting of the mind was described thus: *“Art is just wonderful for getting rid of stress”* (Women’s Focus Group, January 2006).

There was, also, an awareness of the uniqueness of the self which led to a personalisation of the learning process. At the same time, there was an increased feeling of integration of the self with the rest of humanity. *“Yeah you are seeing how they think of it and that impression is their*

*drawing and how they are feeling when they are doing it” (Girl’s Focus Group, September 2005)*

It was perceived that the project based methodology used in Art classes was less boring than conventional class practice.

*“But when you are doing art or music or videos everyone is doing it together-do you know what I mean and you don’t feel bored. So you feel that you are learning more in the class” (Girl’s Focus Group, June 2006).*

The students enjoyed the unstructured nature of the class, although at first, before class bonding had taken place, they found it difficult and felt self-conscious. They also stated that they desired to draw but felt blocked, and that this in turn led to an increase in anxiety. They noted that as they became more acquainted with their classmates this anxiety decreased. They also described how they felt giddy at the start of the Art class and were inclined “*to mess*” but after a time settled into class work, hence feeling the need for longer classes and they also felt that this messing phase was on some level cathartic.

***Interviewer: “And then if I don’t totally lose it and kick you out of the class or something do you think then that after a while you...”***

*“I calm down” (Girl’s Focus Group, April 2006).*

Over time, these feelings were overcome, and they settled in quicker and felt that Art led to a personalisation of learning. The students also felt, that this appreciation increased with time and age! Some described a craving to sit and draw.

*“Yeh, definitely when you are doing it because you get kind of lost in it”* Girl’s Focus Group, September 2005).

*“Your mind is off everything, you just want to concentrate on your picture”* (Girl’s Focus Group, April 2006).

*“Yeah, when you are doing Art you are focusing on it and you are doing it all for yourself. You want to finish it while when I’m doing childcare I don’t want to do it. I only do it because I have to do it while when you do art you want to do it”* (Girl’s Focus Group, June, 2006).

#### **5.4.3 An Increased Cultural Awareness**

A broadening of horizons was described. *“Because you see things in a different way when you are doing Art, I think”* (Girl’s Focus Group, January 2006). As was an increased cultural awareness and this in turn led to the belief that the Arts could be used as a vehicle for communication to the dominant society.

*“You might get a lot of people who will go to see that but you might get one who will follow up on that. And who will look into the present life of Travellers and the past lives of Travellers and the way they are treated today,”* (Women’s Focus Group, June 2006).

The women felt that it fostered an interest in one’s own cultural background. It fulfilled the need to have a “*hobby*,” which was felt to be like insurance for women who already had very full lives in that it developed an interest outside of family responsibilities and ties. It was also, described as “*a stress-buster*”. “*Yes it gives you space and your own bits of time to yourself and your own interest, very much so, yes*” (Women’s Focus Group, September 2005).

The relationship between the teacher and the group that allowed continuous engagement of the teacher with feedback and support was thought to be a positive force in their progression during Art class. It was also felt that a supportive atmosphere had built up within the group that allowed for free expression and experimentation.

The women wanted to sell their paintings because they had a tradition of selling handicrafts.

*“But it would be great if they did sell one or two because it would give them such confidence in themselves and they would think ‘Gosh I didn’t think I was that good’”* (Women’s Focus Group, January 2006).

The girls' focus group, also, felt an emotional empathy with the artists that they studied and felt like artists while in class.

*“Now you know when I'm drawing or painting, now this is going to sound stupid, but you know when I'm looking at one of the books I like to think what the people were thinking or where they were sitting when they did this painting”*(Girls' Focus Group, April 2006).

They felt that Art increased their tolerance both in general and to other races, and particularly to members of the African community who were living in the area and whom they had met at the nearby intercultural centre. They felt that the influence of African American cinema and music had altered their own image of Africans and had increased their tolerance of racial differences. The girls' group noted that Travellers loved Reggae music and speculated on the links between Roma/Traveller culture and the marginalised Caribbean culture. They also thought that they had a much wider knowledge of music in general than settled girls their age. They had awareness that music may be used to alter mood and that it stimulates happiness.

They were aware that Art may be used to present a negative image of Travellers and cited the film, *Pavee Point Lackeen*<sup>4</sup> as an example. They desired to portray Travellers in a positive light.

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<sup>4</sup> *Pavee Point Lackeen: The Traveller Girl* (2005) this film was widely critically acclaimed, winning many awards including an Irish Film and Television award for its director and co-writer Perry Ogden.

#### **5.4.4 Stimulation of Creativity**

A stimulation of creativity was noted, that led to deep thinking that transferred into a holistic learning style which enhanced the learning process. *“Well I think that it does and it helps your skills like reading and writing and that it helps your imagination to run wild”* (Girls’ Focus Group, January 2006).

And that Art increased one’s potential for education. *“That is the point about it. You are interested in it and your learning from it and you are not just learning about Art – you are learning a lot of things even about yourself”* (Women’s Focus Group, January 2006).

The women, also, perceived that educational accreditation leads to social recognition.

*“Now you mean to tell me if you had a Training Centre that it wouldn’t be better for that child where he would be getting an education and getting to learn about computers and whatever”* (Women’s Focus Group, January 2006).

The girls’ focus group noted that historical and geographical referencing took place in the exploration of Art and that this in turn created interest in (acted as an entry point) academic subjects. They felt that Art added life to school. They also felt that it helped to build the imagination. One described only seeing her imagination and dreams in black and white and she reflected this in her drawings. Art classes had made her more aware of this peculiarity.

They said that they noticed that the quality of the Art materials used in the school was very good and they expressed appreciation for this and a desire to take care of them.

#### **5.4.5 Therapeutic Effect**

Art was felt to have a therapeutic affect that was described as stronger than “*talking out*” problems and that was more akin to anti-depressant medication.

*“It is like a pill. It is like a medicine to your own mind to get rid of the stress; to get rid of the pain that you are feeling. Because when you are stressed out, there is a pain going through your heart and you wouldn’t feel the like of it and I know because it often happened to me. I miss it terrible”* (Women’s Interview, April 2006).

Both groups used the word relaxing to describe Art sessions and reported that it gave “*mental space*”. Longer classes were called for by both groups.

The girls’ focus group were aware that at times that they or their fellow students were embarrassed at the emotional exposure that Art practice engendered and tried to hide it by denying, for example, that they were drawing pictures of family members. They also tended to negate personal accomplishments like the Leaving Certificate or Junior Certificate, or anything that would make them stand out from their collective community. Individual praise was met with embarrassment while collective praise was smiled upon. Some felt that peace of mind was



a pre-requisite to Art practice which was impossible to do if one felt agitated. They felt that it gave orderliness to the thought process due to the settling of the mind that occurs and the progressive nature of Art work.

#### **5.4.6 Political Awakenings through Art: Findings of the Women's Group**

*“And we want to express some of our points of view through our Art”* (Focus Group, January 2006).

The women's group thought that the Traveller cultural tradition was more visual and musical while they perceived the settled cultural tradition to be more literary. The standard of Traveller handicrafts were thought to be very high and they reported many old people as traditionally having their own unique, individual style of craftwork. They decided on a campaign, as part of their intercultural studies, to aim for 1% (approx 1% of Irish people are Travellers) of art space and museum space to be given towards Traveller art and historical artifacts.

*“Do you know.....the whole thing is that the Travellers' heritage is dying out and no one cares and that is the whole lot of it. It is dying out and there is nothing being saved. There is no records on Travellers - going back say maybe 80 yrs ago. - I never seen, say a side laced car. I never seen one in a museum, did you? There is nothing being saved for say, my great-grand children- there is nothing being saved”* (Women's Focus, June 2006).

*“It makes you want to go out there and get a place like a museum for the Travellers and look for that wagon, look for that car and build a tent and put it all together in a museum. And that tells you an awful lot about history and Art – it all boils down to Art and it tells you an awful lot about your past, present and what is left of your future”* (Focus Group, June 2006).

By the later focus groups, the women had started to voice concern about the lack of opportunities for Traveller artists and felt that a heritage centre should be founded to focus on Traveller oral histories and songs. This was at a time when they were building up bodies of work to present at a local art’s centre as part of the IMMA Outreach Programme. They also gave detailed descriptions of paintings and object d’Art found in Traveller homes and how they were reflective of a nomadic tradition.<sup>5</sup> They also felt that the government deliberately fueled an “*invisibility policy*” in regard to Travellers (e.g. by hiding sites from view of the public road, ignoring Traveller culture in children’s books and refusing to recognise their status as a separate ethnic group). They called for affirmative action to fast-track Travellers into mainstream society and felt that it was justified because of the suppression that their traditional lifestyle suffered. They noted that while the educational centres were perceived as safe secure places, little progression was made by the students and that job offers were of “*the Mickey Mouse*” type and were not linked with Traveller cultural capital. It was felt that illiteracy was also used as an excuse not to employ Travellers.

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<sup>5</sup> Interestingly the University of Limerick opened the first Gypsy/Traveller Museum in the Republic of Ireland during May 2005 and they included modules on Gypsy and Traveller history on their Bachelor of Arts in History degree for the first time.

The women also commented that the settled community did not understand the deep attachment Travellers felt to the concept and the act of travelling and they said that their old people in particular pined for it. It was felt, that if there was an increase in transitory sites that it would go a long way in alleviating much of this mental anguish. A by-product of the humanistic qualities highlighted by Art and the process that took place while delving into deeper aspects of the mind, was that it appeared to intensify feelings of loss at the suppression of Travelling, which conveyed feelings of social oppression and gave voice to the need to express this alienation.

*“Your mind is opening up when you are drawing. It is your picture and your memories. And particularly if you are drawing anything to do with wagons or anything to do with Travellers, you can and you will pick a picture with Travelling because it was the best time of your life. It was the best time of my life anyways. you can go back to something that happened- a wagon or whatever”* Women’s Focus Group, April 2006).

This in turn fueled a desire for political change and the use of Art as a weapon for social change. (It is interesting to note that it is only in the later interviews that these quotes started to emerge thus further supporting the transformative effect of art practice). *“I think myself all we have now is the Art.....And the memories”* (Women’s Focus Group, April 2006).

The women’s group called for a seat in the Séanad to be allocated to a representative of the Travelling Community, similar to the way representatives of the Gaeltacht community were elected by the Cultural and Educational panel of the Séanad. They felt that this would give

recognition to the contribution that Traveller ethnicity gives and has given to the fabric of Irish life. (They later lobbied a local politician). They felt, that it was an affront to democracy, not to have such recognition given. *“They are plugging away but unless one of them gets into the Séanad. If someone gets in there they might be heard. Other than that it is just a waste of time”* (Focus Group, April 2006).

#### **5.4.7 An Intensification of Memories**

An intensification of memories of events that had happened years before in childhood and early adolescence was described.

*“Yeah- like when we were drawing those little slides for you and I was drawing our wagon and I could remember back to the time we were camped and what part of the country it was in. What we were doing that morning and even what my mother and father was doing”* (Women’s Focus Group, April 2006).

Art was seen as a means to record memories,

*“You’d remember things that happened years ago. Say if you asked us to write something of our past history – you’d start to remember there and then things that you didn’t think of in years”*

(Women’s Focus Group, January 2006).

These memories emphasised an increasing alienation and marginalisation of Travellers within Irish society, as the women looked back into Irish society from what they saw as an outsider’s stance.

*“You see also how times have changed. Years ago you could pull on to any site. And there be no problem. You’d be able to light the fire and get on with what you were doing. It is sad because you can’t do that anymore. Our culture is dying. It is sad because they want us like the settled people”*

(Women’s Focus Group, April 2006).

Some experienced a sense of the ephemeral reality of life while painting, describing the realisation that time, their creativity and themselves were ever changing, and that Art acts as a record of one’s mental and creative state on any given day in an ever unfolding reality. They noted a separation between the self as non-changing and the ever changing external world.

#### **5.4.8 Summary of Focus Groups’ Findings**

The women and the girls’ groups both stated that they were aware of entering into what may be described as a ‘flow’ state during Art classes though they did not mention it by name, rather they

described the criteria associated with 'flow'. They found that Art practice had a transformatory effect upon the individual; that it was therapeutic and led to an increase in academic assimilation as it settled the mind which enabled engagement to take place. *"It helps your skills like reading and writing and it helps your imagination to run wild."* (Girls' Focus Group, January 2006). The girls' focus group also noted that they became interested in different times and places while studying Art and this could act as an entry point into the study of history and geography, in particular.

The women assessed that educational accreditation led to social recognition. They also felt, that by working on an Art project one became immersed in the work, personalising the subject and ultimately broadening their internal landscape. This led to a heightening of cultural awareness of the distinctiveness of Traveller traditions in the women's group with an intensification of memories and a desire to create positive change within their community leading to an increased political awareness. The need for greater Traveller involvement in the Arts and politics was recognised. This would enhance the visibility of the group and ultimately lead to greater respect and understanding of their traditions.

The girls' group perceived that project based learning which was used for much of art and music classes were less boring. They liked the continuum of education that the FETAC certification gave stating that the flexibility that the portfolio based system engendered was ideal for groups like them as accreditation could be built up over time. They also noted an opening to and appreciation of other cultures (particularly African culture) from involvement in art and music.

Music was also discussed at length and its ability to alter mood was noted. They felt that they had a much wider knowledge of different types of music than settled youth and they speculated that Travellers love of Reggae music was due to the parallels that one could draw between the two marginalised cultures of Roma/Traveller and Afro-Caribbean

## **5.5 Overall Summary**

Between April and June 2004 a postal survey was drawn up, sampled and sent to all the Traveller Education Centres in the country through the office of the national co-ordinator of Senior Traveller Education Centres. Out of the 29 centres (the number of education centres has since risen to 33) 20 replied initially, although follow – up calls and e - mails were sent, subsequently only one other centre replied thus giving a figure of 21 centres on which to identify key features of the centres i.e. the age and gender of their directors, the physical environment in which they operated, the background of students attending and the overall level of art involvement that took place within centres.

One of the most marked features to emerge from the teachers' interviews was the description of 'flow' or optimal experience (as described by the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) that was described in seven of the ten teachers' interviews. Questions were asked about the 'flow' experience as some teachers were not familiar with the concept.

*“So you would say that they go into a “flow” state?”*

*“Yes exactly and that in turn enhances creativity. It also helps them think outside their box”*

(February 2005).

From the focus groups came very interesting statements on how the artistic process affects group bonding and relieves stress in general. The criteria associated with a ‘flow’ state of consciousness were described in the discussions. It was likened to a dipping in and out of a more relaxed focused consciousness that had often been experienced during childhood but had been all but obliterated by the stresses and strains of adult life.

*“You’d come in now with all sorts of thoughts in your head of what happened at home and you’d put your head down to draw something and they are just completely gone and there is nothing there but that drawing. Whatever problems or stress is there is just gone at least for that few minutes or hours”* (Women’s Focus Group, April 2006).

Interestingly, while one group comprised of teenagers and the other of adults it was the adult group who gave the richest descriptions of appreciation for the process that returned them to a more relaxed state.

A secondary finding of the adult focus groups was the awakening of the group to social awareness and the political process. They became aware as a group of the need to foster change in their living conditions (many were living in fourth world conditions) and to gain a just solution for their community to the on-going exclusion of their nomadic culture from Irish society. This would follow patterns of social inclusion of people living in third world conditions



in South America, who, when presented with cultural education, as opposed to merely adult literacy classes, made great strides both in literacy and political awareness. Freire (1972) pioneered these concepts which became known as educational liberation.

## **6. Analyses and Discussion of Results**

### **6.1 Introduction**

One of the most difficult features for educational researchers, explaining the effect of the Arts on academic attainment, is the difficulty of comparing schools that are Arts orientated and those that are not (Winner and Hetland, 2000). It has been argued that schools with a strong Arts programme are more likely to be situated in an advantaged prosperous area (Kelleghan, 2002).

One of the features is the difficulty in determining the extent to which the Arts act as a key component of educational outcome, as better nutrition, social conditions and cultural capital may also be factors that lead to higher academic attainment.

*“ There is also a greater appreciation of the complexity and consequence of disadvantage, and a limited improvement in understanding, how social and cultural contexts affect school learning*

*in terms, for example, of the availability of cultural and social capital and of discontinuities between the home and school experience of children” (Kelleghan, 2002, p. 24).*

By refining this study from the overall view of the survey, to the more specific opinions of the teachers, to the intimate feelings of the students, a true insight into the impact was hopefully gained. As the author was also employed as a teacher of three disparate subjects in an educational centre, certain insights were gained that led to the original query, of what is the impact of the Arts on Traveller education within centres, being explored further. However, this could also be seen as a limitation if precise and rigorous examination of the query was not adhered to. Conversely, it could also be viewed as an advantage in that it gave a certain initial insight. It became apparent to the author that the teaching of Art and Drama had a different effect upon students than the teaching of childcare or intercultural studies and as a result the framing of certain questions in the teachers’ interviews led directly from the personal experience of teaching similar classes. Extra care, during analysis, was taken to reduce any possibility of preconception though that still must be acknowledged as a limitation.

A disappointing aspect of the study was that while the focus of the survey was, originally, on Traveller youth, a large number of directors who responded to the survey were not able to distinguish between students who were eighteen years of age or under. Also, because the centres were only allowed to keep students for two year periods, a revolving door system appeared to be created which broke the continuity of their education, and made quantification of outcomes more difficult to cite. It was, also, constrained by governmental policy which failed to

adequately support Traveller education at this level (Lodge and Lynch, 2004, Kenny 2004 and Task Force of Travelling Community, 1995).

*“The absence of basic research and official statistics on the subject of Traveller participation and attainment is itself an indication of the lack of importance accorded to the education of Travellers”* (Lodge and Lynch, 2004, p.94).

Lodge and Lynch (2004) and the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) both complain of the lack of fundamental research into Traveller education due in part to a lack of ethnic identifier questions on school data. Still, the prospect of examining and analysing this study has hopefully led, by inference, to a conclusion as to what degree the Arts impacted upon Traveller education within centres.

## **6.2 The Education Centres**

Article 4 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination (1960) insists that governments:

*“Promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in the matter of education”.*

### **6.2.1 Physical Environment of Centres**

According to the findings of the survey of directors in this study, only a quarter of all educational centres are custom built with just under half reporting that their setting was poor and unkempt and one-eighth reporting décor to be very poor. Substandard buildings impact

negatively upon general learning by 5% -17% (Lyons, 2001). Therefore before a book is opened students within 42 % of centres were at a disadvantage due to the physical environment that their learning was taking place in as 42% (10 centres) stated that they were situated in either industrial complexes or prefabricated buildings which were substandard buildings for the pursuit of educational attainment. To compound this 20% (5 centres) reported rooms with poor lighting or windowless rooms being used as classrooms which impacted upon reading proficiency by as much as 26% (Heschong, 1999).

When these figures are considered the potential positive impact made by Art to the quality of education is all the more acute. Three of the teachers felt that the teaching of Art made an impact on the actual physical environment of the centres. *“(It) brightens up the place - a lot of them do enjoy coming into the classroom as well”* (Teachers’ Interviews, December 2005).

This concurs with Fiske (1999) who stated that the Arts transform the school building as it becomes infused with the ‘fruits’ of Art participation, and may visually translate the inter-group spirit being generated by the use of collective pieces, wall murals and themed exhibitions. This connects students to themselves and others and in turn generates empathy thus creating and nourishing inter-group and inter-community relationships.

### **6.2.2 Opinions on the Arts**

On the assumption that the leadership of any organisation influences the atmosphere of that organisation another variable considered in the survey was the attitude appreciation and

involvement in the Arts of the director. Suzuki claims that the quality of environment alone determines the level of musical (artistic) skills likely to develop and using the example of how nightingales learn from “*master teachers*” states:

*“Whether the wild bird will develop good or bad singing quality is indeed decided in the first months by the voice and tone of its teacher. If it has a good teacher the infant bird will through physiological transformation learn from experience to produce tones as beautiful as those of its teacher”* (Suzuki, 1969, p.19).

As 15 of the centres surveyed had public displays of Art, this would indicate a strong commitment on behalf of many of the directors to an appreciation of the Arts as any involvement with a public display of an artistic nature be it a concert, play or exhibition signifies a substantial obligation of time and effort often outside of normal school hours. It was interesting to note that the three centres that offered the Leaving Certificate also studied Art and Design to Leaving Certificate level. Three of the teachers and the women’s focus group thought that the public display of Art acted as a mode of expression and vehicle for Traveller Civil Rights.

### **6.2.3 Education versus Training in Traveller Education Centres**

It is interesting to speculate on the effects that the Arts could have on Traveller Educational Centres if integrated into the curriculum. Virtually all the literature reviewed would indicate that if intensive Art programmes were implemented (Fiske, 1999) or an Arts centred education espoused, profound changes in the outcome of academic tuition could occur. Findings from this

study indicate an increase in creativity, empathy and the time that is spent in the ‘flow’ state with a resulting increase in concentration and interest in academic subjects.

The courses on offer within Traveller Educational Centres have a distinct vocational leaning with woodwork and metalwork for example, being offered in fourteen and thirteen centres respectively. The option of taking academic subjects is in some cases non-existent, with no centres in the country teaching any science subject or history to any level, though French is taught in two centres with Spanish and geography being taught in one centre. Irish is taught in three centres to Leaving Certificate level (Irish being a compulsory subject for a standard Leaving Certificate). Art was popular with ten centres displaying or taking part in an exhibition or drama.

The most common vocational subjects taught were computer studies and home economics. Art, craft and design was taught while the only ‘classical’ or standard academic subjects were English, mathematics, religion, Irish, French, Spanish and community, social and political studies. The chart in Appendix 8.4 shows that a wide range of subjects were taught in centres and that there was a very strong leaning towards a vocational style education.

Only three centres surveyed offered students the opportunity to study for a full Leaving Certificate. Results showed that nine centres stated that they had students enrolled who already had full Junior Certificates. Three stated that they had students enrolled who already had either

a Leaving Certificate or Leaving Certificate Applied. It is interesting, therefore, that access to state examinations were not more widely available within centres. This may have led to a situation where higher achieving students were not being facilitated to attain their full potential.

One of the teachers interviewed also stated that she taught one girl who already had a Leaving Certificate and three or four had Junior Certificates but mainly Foundation FETAC courses were taught in the centre with only childcare and computer studies taught at higher levels. Six of the teachers thought that their students had left school before 15 years of age. On a national level there was a problem with Traveller children leaving school as early as twelve years of age and not re-entering the system until eligible at age fifteen for entry to a Traveller educational centre. According to Pavee Point (2003) 1,608 Traveller children (40% of those leaving primary school) enrolled in secondary school but by year Three, 49% had left with only 62 matriculating and of these only 16 advancing to third level. This may also be a factor in the wide discrepancies between curricula in centres as older school-leaving age would be indicative of an ability to pursue subjects at a higher certification level.

This would support some of the findings of the women's focus group who felt that their children were often neglected in secondary school. This appears to indicate, the lack of opportunities that Traveller youth encounter within the labour market and a lack of career guidance, in that they are forced to re-enter, what is in effect a secondary school even though they already hold a state recognised certificate stating that they have completed secondary education! It also implies a lack of expectation on behalf of teachers and a lack of a structured progression policy on behalf

of some educational centres. It is also indicative of the level of prejudice experienced by Travellers when they attempt to work in mainstream employment.

*“There are also problems within the settled community when Travellers obtain employment, and with customers in the retail or service outlets who do not wish to be served by a Traveller”*

(Report of the Traveller Education Strategy Group, 2005, p.65).

Such difficulties make the option of leaving the educational centres (and by extension their own community) less appealing and compromises further progression and opportunities for life-long learning. As the option for more than two years education is limited by administrative constraints the opportunity for life-long learning and progression is further curtailed often at the very time (after two years of fulltime education) when educational transformation and attainment is opening up to the individual.

The presence of a tracking and mentoring system within some centres also presents a significant variable. Tracking, in this context, is the maintenance of some social contact with former students which allows students who may have dropped –out of programmes to re-enter should they re-settle within the catchments area of the centres. It also acts as a helpline to former students if one was required. Mentoring was available in a fifth of centers; no formal method of either tracking or mentoring (and therefore pay for these services) was in place and yet in centres that have few full time staff (an issue that is explored in the teacher’s interviews) 20.8% have a mentoring service in place and 37.5% try to keep track of former students.



#### **6.2.4 Art as an Instrument of Leverage**

Traveller parents and students (including members of the focus groups in this study) consistently report systematic bullying by both pupils and teaching staff in conventional secondary schools. This reflects academic findings (Task Force of the Travelling Community, 1995; Flynn, 2002) which must contribute to early school leaving and to the very low numbers accessing third level education with only 28 Travellers taking part in 2008 (ITM, 2008). The need to find new ways of integrating intercultural values into our schools, while at the same time seeking instruments of leverage into educational equality, by the use of culturally appropriate methodologies and possibly the Arts appears to be long overdue.

The women's group expressed worry that their children were not receiving an adequate education in standard secondary schools (lack of art and music classes were noted, as were subjects that would be deemed as culturally appropriate for Travellers such as equine studies and metal work). They considered the education that they were receiving in the educational centre to be superior, to the schools in which their children were enrolled in and had very deep fears that school was not a safe, secure environment for their children. They told harrowing tales of incidents concerning their children being bullied by both staff and pupils.

The teachers' interviews qualified these sentiments: "*12 – 15 (years) max for most of them. They usually leave in the first year of secondary school. I don't know of any who sat the Junior*

*Cert. They say that they felt neglected and left at the back of the class.*” (Teacher’s Interviews, December 2004)

The means by which the members of the focus group dealt with these conflicts was to withdraw (which is the traditional Traveller way of dealing with conflict – one moves on) despite attempts by the Traveller school liaison officers to reach solutions. It was as a result (they felt) of the growth that had been experienced by their own educational revival and the time that they had to reflect during Art classes that allowed for a deep state of reflection and relaxation (perhaps ‘flow’), that gave clarity to the educational experience and allowed for comparison between what they considered to be a more ideal educational experience in comparison to their children’s.

It is interesting to note that a report in the Irish Independent (2005, p.27) states that all the Travellers that entered third level education in 2002, were affected by bullying and discrimination right through primary and secondary school and it abruptly ended on entrance to third level. Kellaghan (2002) and Zappone (2002) have both highlighted the inequities facing children in the Irish educational system, 600 of whom do not even make the transfer from primary to secondary level (Educational Research Centre, 2000).

Art is fundamental in creation of attitudinal change within societies. According to the teachers interviewed in this study Art created relationships within centres that lessened racism, in that it allowed teachers to see students in a different light while showcasing talents that they might not necessarily have been aware of. It was felt that the Arts led to an increase in empathy amongst

both students and teachers and that this in turn had a humanising effect that reverberated in other areas. It was also used to communicate to the wider public through exhibitions and shows the oppression felt by many Travellers and the inequality experienced in their lives. A therapeutic effect upon individuals and groups within centres was noted which went some way in counteracting the marginalisation experienced by the group.

### **6.3 Creativity and the Progression of Learning**

The Arts impact on learning styles and create the capacity for more self directed learning (Orack et al, 1999; Baum et al, 1997 and Baum et al, 1995). It motivates students who may have become disengaged with the learning process (Brice Heath and Roach, 1999). It may create physical changes in the students' immediate environment and community (Brice Heath and Roach, 1999). It forms a vehicle, through which students may interact with their communities and may be used as an instrument of social inclusion, engaging the dominant stratosphere of a community with the marginalised elements of that community (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras and Brooks, 2004). In turn, resources to support artistic (and thus social and educational) forces within a community may be generated. It also, has a profound effect on learning styles, as all Art is a personal experience, which in turn may act as an empathic conduit to others and the wider community (Fiske, 1999).

Four teachers described an increased interest in creativity among students that led to a naturally evolving progression of learning within the centres, as a result of Art work. When asked to

explain, how creativity manifested in an academic setting and how the status of the Art subjects compared to more conventional subjects, one teacher noted: *“There is enough innate aspects with being human – that creative part, that is irrefutable. You can’t turn your back on it. It always comes up”* (Teacher’s Interview, November 2005). One of education’s purposes is to facilitate an individual’s desire to reach their full potential - intellectually, physically and emotionally (Read, 1943). The Arts being innately creative in function harness both the intellectual and practical, thus they ideally fulfill the holistic paradigm. He goes on to state that it is the creative element of education that is so important for the advancement of civilization and culture and sees this creativity as the prime function of the educational process.

The focus groups noted that the stimulation that creativity gave to the mind, led to a deeper mode of thinking which affects learning style and enhances the learning process. This appears to concur with a deep or holistic learning style as described by Marton and Saljo (1976), Ramsden, (1979), Marton, (1986) and Marton and Booth (1997). The women’s group observed that their creative impulses led to an intensification of feelings that transmuted into an increase in political awareness and desire to become more involved in the political process to create societal change. This again would correspond with the findings of Freire (1972) and Boal (1979, 1993, 1998, and 2006) that suppression of culture can only exist in a vacuum and when creativity is supported and allowed to flourish - politicalisation of the marginalised group is the next step that occurs.

## **6.4 ‘Flow’ and Art Classes**

*“If one assumes that we are prepared by evolution to follow a path of unending development and if the key to such a development is intrinsically motivated concentration, then how can adults prepare an environment for children that facilitates deep concentration and ‘flow’, and is thereby consistent with our normal, inborn capacities?”*(Rathunde, 1997, p.28)

An over-crowded, jarringly decorated, dirty or cramped classroom would by implication inhibit the ‘flow’ process (Rathunde, 1997). Therefore a room that is comfortable well laid out and exuding negative ionization either through freshly growing plants or open windows, is more conducive to a state of relaxed alertness that optimises the learning process and contributes to the process of ‘flow’. The poor physical condition that exist in many of the centres surveyed may act to limit opportunities for creating a caring environment and support the emergence of the ‘flow’ state in students.

Seven out of the ten teachers agreed that some of their students entered a ‘flow’ state similar to that described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), in which a person becomes fully concentrated on the task at hand, they lose track of the passage of time, feel clear about what needs to be done from one moment to the next and their intrinsic motivation is not that of reward but rather the enjoyment of the task at hand. This was more likely to occur in Art or Art related classes. *“Yes, exactly, and that in turn enhances creativity. It also helps them think outside their box”* (Teacher’s Interview, February 2005).

The teachers also agreed that when the students had entered this state changes appeared to take place which impacted on the educational process by an increase in concentration and a broadened awareness of the world. This was further defined by students in the focus groups who described the 'flow' state and felt that it gave rise, subsequently, to positive educational outcomes by focusing their attention and widening their cultural experience. It also appears that the criterion by which Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines the 'flow' state (that is that subjects lose track of the passage of time, they concentrate solely on the task at hand, their motivation for performing a task is enjoyment and that they feel clear as to what must be done from one moment to the next) is present for considerable lengths of time during Art classes. Amongst the focus groups there was also evidence of an altered state of consciousness, as there was an awareness of the loss of the normal tracking of time, "*I'll tell you, right, that your mind gets distracted and you are so busy doing it that you don't feel time flying by*" (Focus Group, September 2005).

All the women and the majority of the girls (seven out of eight) enjoyed and expressed love for the subject of Art. An awareness of the 'flow' process was described by all who enjoyed the classes. The criteria associated with the 'flow' state were described by the groups and this led to an increased feeling of integration of the self with the rest of humanity.

The later focus group interviews, also, confirmed that feelings of both distinction and uniqueness were present during Art classes as well as feelings of empathy and integration with humanity and/or a higher spiritual being (perhaps God) which are the criteria that

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) pinpoints as leading to cognitive changes. 'Flow' is a very interesting psychological phenomenon and has been described and recognised by teachers and described by students in this study. Its attainment has a subtle and ephemeral quality and needs physical and emotional support to occur. One will not enter 'flow' in a cold classroom as may occur in a sub-standard building (41% of centres surveyed) or after an emotional altercation as the girls' focus group pointed out. Both groups noted that it acted as a stabiliser of mood once entered; the girls' group were aware of the same effect if they listened to certain types of music. 'Flow' calls for physical action and emotional reflexivity, in its execution (thus Art classes being conducive to the state). It, also, marshals the dual forces of integration and distinction within the individual's psyche, resulting in a harmonious flow of consciousnesses with the ensuing benefits to the individual, not just as an instrument of educational certitude but as purveyor of peace of mind and cognitive transformation.

## **6.5 Unlocking the Political**

One of the teachers observed that the Arts stimulated early political activism: "*It gave them the push to start writing and they wanted to send letters to editors of newspapers and stuff like that. Just to kind of.....counterbalance that...*" (Teacher's Interview, December 2005). This supports the findings of the women's focus group that found that involvement in the Arts led to a rise in political consciousness while another teacher noted that it was a very useful tool for public relations to promote a more positive image of the Traveller Community.

The women's focus group also felt that 1% of museum and Art space should be dedicated to Traveller Art and artefacts as this would roughly reflect their population ratio to that of the settled community. As was research and promotion of the Traveller language. Concern was also expressed that the language was rapidly dying with very young children barely using it; therefore it was felt that children's books and cartoons in the language were necessary. The women's focus group also noted that while the Irish Senate - the Séanad purports to represent various strands of Irish life its failure not to have any Traveller representation is discriminatory.

These findings would concur with the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1972), who describing the changes that can occur when cognitive transformation takes place, states:

*“A deepened consciousness of their situation leads men to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation. Resignation gives way to the drive for transformation and inquiry, over which men feel themselves in control”* (Freire, 1972, p. 88).

Fellow Brazilian and associate of Freire's, Augusto Boal, (1979, 1993, 1998, and 2006) took this theme further by developing group theatre along these lines, to emulate insurrection from within his theatre group. He believed that by the use of emotion; ideas, issues and political questions arise that have been oppressed in the consciousness of the marginalised. It was felt by the participants that the political attunes of this discussion would not have occurred if it were not for the gradual build up of awareness and self-reflection within the art class.

*“Your mind is opening up when you are drawing”* (Girls' Focus Group, April 2006).



A similar situation appears to have arisen within the Art class, where the release of emotion that the Art work allowed, gave rise to clarity of thought that was reflective upon the social situation in which the participants found themselves and focused their minds on a collective resolution to the problems facing themselves and their community. This in turn led to an interest and awareness of the power of political action to promote social transformation. Out of the abyss of apathy, the Art work appeared to spark a creative solution from the ephemeral boundaries of consciousness and into reflective action.

### **6.5.1 Heightened Awareness of Marginalisation**

*“In the authoritarian industrial state, the caravan is as great an offence as the ghetto”* (Acton, 1997, p. 11).

Seven of the teachers described an increase in empathy being generated from Art work, which manifested between the students and staff and towards the outer world in general. *“It is hard to pinpoint it but I would say it makes people happier, and when the centre is represented at a National Competition it gives a sense of pride and empathy”* (Interview 7, 2005 p.35).

Dewey (1938), Heathcote (1991) and Fiske (1999) all claim that Art (or drama in Heathcote’s case), allows for emotional and social bonds to be strengthened, by exploring and celebrating the uniqueness of the individual. Initially this occurs within the immediate group and ultimately,

spreads to include the rest of humanity. During the focus groups, both groups claimed to have increased feelings of empathy, initially with one another but felt that these feelings led them to be more open and connected to other people, including those of other races.

### **6.5.2 Art and Racism**

The girls' group responded to the Art classes in a different way to the women. While the women felt that it increased their interest in their own history and culture and from this self-realisation an interest in world issues started to pertain; the girls felt that it opened a window to other cultures. The girls also agreed that it was from the warm safe place of a relaxed consciousness that this interest sprang forth – perhaps from the place of integration and distinction. They felt that it loosened up their boundaries and made them feel “*like artists*” (Girl’s Group, September 2005) and that this enhanced their perspective of the world and other races. From an academic point of view, it also helped in geographical and historical referencing, and was an entry point to general knowledge, in a similar way to the entry points described by Gardner (1983) in his work on multiple intelligences.

The Arts were seen as a force of liberation – a means to transcend boundaries of race and to create connections to lives of people who otherwise would have remained obscured and inconsequential. It concurs, with work of Catterall (1999) in which he quantifies a 40% decrease in attitudinal racism amongst drama students, as opposed to non-drama students in the United States and also empirical studies in Great Britain by Heathcote (1984), Bolton (1984) and

Jackson (1993) that show a decrease in racist attitudes amongst drama students. The conversations also echoed the work of Campbell et al (1999) on the influence of Art therapy on race relations and the role of the participants as cultural activists.

### **6.5.3 Desolation and Confinement**

The women's group drew strong associations with the relevance of desolation and the confinement that life on virtually compulsory halting sites entails and expressed this continually in their work. International studies concur with these sentiments. Researchers amongst Aborigines in Australia and the Inuit community in Canada have found that a forced sedentary life in nomads gives rise to depression and a myriad of physical and social problems (Kuntz, 1990; Swiderski, 1992; Ní Shuinear, 1993; UNICEF, 2003). Swiderski has documented that native Canadians living in a traditional way in Northern Canada have a much higher death rate from violent causes (35%) than the general Canadian population (5%). He surmised that the erosion of the area of land that is available for a nomad to live in has shrunk dramatically over the last few decades, and that this confinement of a nomadic people has led to this implosion. Kuntz identifies that within a nomadic community conflict resolution occurs through spatial dispersion rather than institutionalised or internalised controls. Ní Shuinear has found that enforced sedentarism on Roma in Europe has led to: "*an explosive rise in disputes without the safety valve that dispersal and travelling can provide*" (Ni Shuinear, 1993, p.33).

According to UNICEF (2003) the physical displacement of peoples, leading traditional lifestyles, leads to depression of the adult population which in turn gives rise to problems with alcoholism, an increase in domestic violence and higher rates of poverty with the subsequent loss of physical health. Children of people thus affected lack self-esteem, may suffer from depression and have problems integrating into the dominant population, due in part to racism, with a resulting decrease in opportunity that may lead to lives marred by high rates of poverty, substance abuse and suicide rates. Twenty –five years ago, the Canadian government settled some 900 natives on a remote island in the Davis Inlet, off New Foundland. Today, despite being re-settled on the mainland, 95% of the adult population are alcoholic and 25% have attempted suicide (Gullage, 2005). In the Sioux Lookout Zone, Ontario, the young male suicide rate is up to fifty times that of the general population (Shephard and Rhode, 1996).

When one sees the effect of enforced sedentarism on nomadic people within an international framework, the effect on Irish nomads should not be underestimated. According to research carried out by Tallaght Traveller Youth Service (2006), 18 young Travellers committed suicide within a 19 month period in 2006. This figure would concur with international reports of high suicide rates amongst nomadic peoples and with reports of the depressing effect of, virtually enforced settlement, from the focus groups in this study. In 1995 the Task Force report on the Travelling People stated that, 3,100 units of accommodation should be built by the year 2000, of which 2,000 should be Traveller specific and 900 conventional. However, to date only 251 Traveller specific units have been built, while the number of conventional houses that have been built is 757. This forces many Travellers, who wish to remain nomadic, into settled

accommodation thus enforcing sedentarism and obliterating a culture that has existed on this island for millennia.

The most recent figures from the Irish Traveller Movement (2006) gives a figure of 1,000 Traveller families living on the side of the road at the present day. Amongst 1,000 families, 88 evictions took place in 2003, under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002. At present the punishment for camping on private or public land is one month in jail, a €3,000 fine and the confiscation of property. A review of the (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 is being sought through the courts and may eventually reach the European Courts. The pressure of state bodies, on the Travelling Community to settle and abandon their traditional lifestyle, is overwhelming for individuals in the community. The only alternative, for an individual, appears to be internal resolution, artistic expressionism (as occurred with the women's focus group when they created an exhibition for IMMA reflecting their loss) or political activism and for the community a judicial decree.

. During the course of this study, all the teachers interviewed expressed the opinion that Art restored psychological equilibrium and had a relaxing effect, which in turn supports the focus groups' transcripts. It appears that Art practice does provide a therapeutic vehicle for the individual, to dissolve the invisible walls of oppression that confine the psyche and facilitates growth of the intellect, to move towards peace of mind.

## **6.6 Cultural Capital**

The term cultural capital was coined by the French sociologist Bourdieu (1977). He claimed that western society rewards attainment of 'high' European culture by recognition through educational meritocracy whilst ignoring the culture of marginalised groups and non-Europeans. Willis (1977) qualified this claim in his seminal work '*Learning how to Labour; how Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs*'.

The majority of teachers felt that the study of Art broadened horizons and genuinely increased cultural capital for the individuals concerned, in so far, as it opened them to the Art and culture of the wider world. This manifested with successful field trips to places of cultural interest, with six reporting trips to local art galleries and two going a little further a field. "*We visited London and Paris and we are planning a trip to Barcelona this year - the land of Dali!*" (Interview 8, April, 2005)

While field trips and travel are known to affect cognitive development and motivation for further learning (Kern and Carpenter, 1984), in the cases stated it appears to be the integration of the trips into the Art curriculum that affect the most change. This would concur with findings by Orion (1993) that it is not only the day out (pleasant and life-enhancing though that may be) that affects cognitive change, but the context in which the trip is placed by preparatory work, and the follow-up on the theme of the visit, that is necessary for the greatest impact.

By using Art as an entry point, the abstraction and stimulation that Art practice generates becomes infused with the concrete reality of the visit and the subsequent effect upon learning and change in consciousness. It appears, from the analysis of the transcripts of the focus groups,

that when given the space and time to create visual Art, that adult Traveller women then move into the realm of political thought. The feeling of purpose and creativity generated by working on a piece of art leads to 'flow' and that this in turn engenders a sense of powerfulness, self-realisation and a widened cultural awareness that transmutes into political action.

## **6.7 Art as a form of Therapy**

All the teachers felt that their classes had a therapeutic effect. *"I think with some of them it is quite therapeutic- they get very relaxed after a while, when they settle down and they enjoy it"* (Teacher's Interview, December 2005). Art therapy has been popular in America and Great Britain since 1914. It has the advantage of being an expressive medium in which to release and purge emotion in a structured and controlled format, which is at once as acceptable to the individual, as it is to society. Art therapists believe that the imagination is a powerful tool to aid psychological well being and thus, acts as a precursor to learning, as it affects cognitive and emotional development (Knill, 1999).

*"It is evident that the Arts are the bridging existential phenomena that unite ritual characteristics imagination and dream-world in a way that no other activity can do. They engage the conscious and the cognitive similarly to free association but give it a disciplined, ritualistic thingy, temporal and spatial substance"* (Knill, 1999, p.44).

While Art therapy has a potential clinical role the idea of a therapeutic dimension to Art emerged in the teachers' interviews and was echoed in the focus groups were the women's group in particular reflected that: "*Yes it gives you space your own bit of time to yourself and your own interest*" (Women's Focus Group , September, 2005).

One of the teachers felt that Art subjects may help compensate the individual for lack of play in childhood. This would concur with a study by Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000, p.235) who found in a longitudinal study, that was undertaken from 1991, that youth from working – class backgrounds, who had less play opportunities were less likely to matriculate. They felt that the spontaneity and creativity, inherent in play, left working class youth at a disadvantage when faced with the advanced abstraction of higher academic classes. Consequently, in a classroom setting the Arts are both restoratives to psychological equilibrium and due to the relaxing affect of the process, a component in the cognitive aspect of learning, which echoes the findings in this study.

## **6.8 Internalisation and Personalisation of Learning**

For a holistic mode of learning to take place one must come to identify with the subject. The Arts allow such an entry point as through the Arts we re-construct reality. Internalisation takes place and identification with a given subjects allows for an intellectual expansion of that subject,



as it is now within the cultural bounds in which each individual marks out their conscious dimensions.

Marton and Saljo (1976), Ramsden (1979), Marton (1986) and Marton and Booth (1997), concur with this concept when they describe a holistic form of learning in which the individual begins to identify with subjects that are studied. The philosopher Nelson Goodman (1978a, 1978b) believed that all Art was inherently symbolic. To access this symbolism, active engagement is required from the student that requires use of perception, cognition and emotion - a process that calls on all these faculties to be facilitated. The study of the Arts, therefore, procures that facilitation. In turn, Gardner (1983) was heavily influenced by Goodman's views, while formulating his theory of multiple intelligences (they were colleagues on the Project Zero Project in Harvard University).

The girls' focus group noted that during Art class they felt that a loosening of boundaries occurred that at first just made them feel giddy (on observation similar to corpsing which tends to occur during the initial stages of a drama class or production). They recognised different phases that they went through before they settled into a contented phase that was conducive to a relaxed state of awareness. First, they felt inhibited and self-conscious and over exposed emotionally. Following this, they were inclined to 'act out' and became giddy, messed and became disruptive, but they felt that given the opportunity to work through this phase they then settled into a final phase of productivity and enjoyment of Art work. They stated that having moved on through this stage they then developed an emotional desire to practise visual Art.

While the women relished the freedom and creativity that an unstructured class allowed, the girls initially, felt that it inhibited their participation. They felt emotionally exposed and tried to hide an emotional attachment to their work. For example, when they drew relatives they disliked them being recognised as such. *“She probably feels that people are laughing at her pictures or something”* (Girls’ Focus Group, April 2006).

## **6.9 Summary**

The Arts have an effect on academic and social achievement (Burton, Horowitz and Abeles, 1999; Winner and Hetland 2000; Welch 1995; Fiske, 1999; Weitz, 1996; Eisner, 2000; Deasy 2002) that can be quantified by both an individual and society. Both the teachers’ interviews and the focus groups concurred that on an individual level they promote the conditions that may lead to a ‘flow’ state which are known to stabilise an individual’s mood, increase concentration and broaden awareness (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). They noted that this may lead to a deeper mode of learning and a more personalised - holistic learning style (Marton and Saljo, 1976; Ramsden, 1979; Marton, 1986 and Marton and Booth 1997). One of the teachers observed that it may compensate for lack of play in childhood, which may go some way in compensating the individual who has lacked the opportunity to play. Thus, the individual may never have acquired the abstraction of thought, brought about by early play experiences which are a useful

component in the competency of advanced academic attainment (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider 2000).

On a societal level, it appears that when adults engage with an Art form this leads to an intensification of memories which then leads to an awakening of political consciousness (Freire, 1972 and Boal, 1979, 1993, 1998 and 2006). The majority of teachers in this study stated that it led to a broadening of horizons and an increase in cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). This in turn appears to generate a greater empathy with other races which would concur with work by Heathcote (1984), Bolton (1984) and Jackson (1993) Campbell et al (1999) and Catterall et al (1999) that involvement in the Arts leads to a decrease in racial attitudes and xenophobia. Seven of the ten teachers interviewed noted an increase in empathy in their students, which would further concur with this factor. Overall, it was felt by both the focus groups and the teachers that the Arts helped to transcend boundaries and could be used as a vehicle in which the marginalised could interact with the wider community, thereby increasing a sense of social inclusion. The increased interest that occurred in other races and ethnic groups appeared to act as an entry point into a wider interest into these countries and peoples and may be conducive to further academic study (Gardner, 1983).

On a more material level, it was noted that the Arts did impact on the physical appearance of centres, with ten centres holding exhibitions and would concur with work by Fiske (1999) that indicates that the immediate physical environment is improved due to Art practice. Again this led to further interactions with the wider community and a more positive portrayal of the Travelling Community. Combined these factors may contribute to an advance in educational

equality in society as the Arts appear to compensate for deprivation, increase tolerance, raise awareness and develop empathy. In so doing, this may lead to greater equilibrium in educational attainment and a greater voice for the marginalised within our society.

## **7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This study explores the impact of the Arts on a sample of students attending a Traveller Educational Centre from their perspective, while taking note of the views and opinions of teachers involved in delivering an Arts programme in eight centres and encapsulating an overview of Traveller Educational Centres via the survey of the 21 directors who answered the survey. The survey revealed an overall view of three-quarters of the then 29 educational centres and as such formed the basis for descriptive and exploratory statistics of centres. It found that a vocational style curriculum was the norm within centres with only three offering the Leaving Certificate.

### **7.2 The Positive Impact of the Arts on Traveller Education**

The Arts do stimulate cognition and affect academic outcomes on a number of fronts (Arnheim, 1954; Fiske, 1999; Deasy, 2000; Efland, 2002; Deasy and Stevenson, 2005). Overall, the

teachers who were interviewed and the focus groups concurred with these findings and felt that an undeniably positive impact was made upon the centres by the inclusion of Art subjects in the curriculum.

### **7.2.1 Impact upon Creativity**

It was, also felt that an impact was made on creative levels and this led to self-directed learning in other areas (Orack et al, 1999; Baum et al, 1997 and Baum et al, 1995). It stimulated and motivated the students which concur with findings by Brice Heath and Roach, (1999). The practice of the Arts created physical changes in the education centres through displays of Art and occasionally, in the community through exhibitions, again concurring with Brice Heath and Roach, (1999). Four teachers described an increase in creativity and the focus groups noted that involvement in the Arts led to a deeper holistic learning style (Marton and Saljo 1976; Ramsden, 1979; Marton, 1986 and Marton and Booth, 1997) by the stimulation of creativity inherent within the subject.

### **7.2.2 Impact upon Relationships**

The relationships between students and staff were enhanced by the inclusion of the Arts in the curriculum, according to the teachers' interviews and would concur with the view of McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras and Brooks (2004) that the Arts are a conduit for social inclusion. Ten of the educational centres held either art exhibitions or plays; hence there was an outreach effect to the wider community that would concur with a finding by Fiske, (1999) that Arts affect the students' community as well as the school in which the practice is undertaken. The students in the focus group noted an increased awareness and empathy for other communities and races

which would concur with Dewey (1938), Heathcote (1984, 1991), Bolton (1984), Jackson (1993), Fiske (1999) and Catterall (1999).

### **7.2.3 The Impact of ‘Flow’**

One of the most marked features to emerge from the teachers’ interviews was the description of ‘flow’ or optimal experience as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), that was described in seven of the ten teachers’ interviews. Following on this the focus groups described the experience of ‘flow’ during Art classes though no overt question about ‘flow’ was asked. An attempt was made to explore the effect that it has initially, on the class, on the work at hand and how this affects students when they resume academic work in their subsequent classes. From these groups came very interesting statements on how the artistic process affects group bonding and relieves stress in general. Interestingly, while one group comprised of youths and the other of adults it was the more mature group who gave the richest descriptions of appreciation for the process that returned them to a more relaxed state.

### **7.2.4 Political Awakening**

Possibly, the most exciting aspect of this study was the findings that signified the effect the Arts have of engendering political consciousness on the minds of students. As Freire (1972) and Boal (1979, 1993, 1998 and 2006) have demonstrated education and the Arts are fundamental instruments in producing lasting social change and in liberating people from the bondage of physical and intellectual poverty. They appear to induce a ‘flow’ state, as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has described, and from this relaxed state and the self awareness it generates the desire to induce social and political change becomes manifest in the consciousness. Again the findings

of this study support this assumption and while there appears to be an emerging political awareness within the girls' group, it becomes particularly apparent when adult women become involved with Arts practice.

### **7.3 The Impact of the Arts on Prejudice and Deprivation**

Travellers are the most deprived sector of our society (Ireland 1995; McGreil, 1996; O'Connell, 1998; Pavee Point, 2006) and the level of prejudice against them is so worrying that our educational institutions and media must come under scrutiny (McGreil, 1996; Pavee Point, 2006). According to McGreil (1996) our collective attitudes go beyond that of classism and contain the pre-requisites of a caste system that we collectively impose and that may be compared to that of the untouchable status of India's lowest caste, thus the need for reciprocal positive re-enforcement of Traveller's cultural heritage. This study's findings supports the assertion that individual and institutionalised racism and discrimination does exist and negatively impacts upon the lives of Travellers which in turn affects health and wellbeing on an individual and societal level. However, the Arts have a positive effect upon the individual which appears to increase the capacity whereby one can objectively examine situations, thereby working as a mechanism that counteracts the effects of prejudice.

## **7.4 Recommendations**

### **7.4.1 Recognition of Travellers' Ethnicity and Political Representation**

As noted the women's focus group became more politically aware during the course of the academic year which they felt was due to the influence that studying visual Art had on their lives. They felt a keen desire to partake in the political process and as such lobbied for Traveller representation in the Séanad. They felt that representation at that level would give some recognition of Travellers contribution to the fabric of Irish life and would create a direct political forum in which their minority views could be expressed. They also felt strongly that 1% of Art and museum space should be set aside for Art and artifacts from the Travelling Community. They called for more academic research into Traveller history and language. In schools, recognition of Traveller ethnicity should be forthcoming and this should be reflected in textbooks.

They also expressed concern that there are no short cartoons nor little story books to encourage the pre-school child to read in Shelta. Therefore, an active campaign to research and promote the use of Shelta, among Traveller children, by publishing children's literature in Shelta would be welcome. Likewise the dubbing or making of children's cartoons should be considered. When one considers that there are native speakers of Shelta all over the British Isles (as Scottish Travellers have a similar dialect) the target audience would be larger than, maybe, first anticipated.



The amount of prejudice evident in our secondary school system, from the transcripts of the focus groups and supported by the teachers' interviews is very worrying and corroborates findings by McGreil (1996), Flynn (2002) and Zappone (2002). Prejudice is a learned behaviour and therefore the status of the Travelling Community needs to be altered within our collective consciousness and political and societal structures put in place, such as Séanad representation and a chair of Traveller Studies to ensure parity of opportunity.

#### **7.4.2 Expansion of Traveller Educational Centres**

The women in the focus groups called for an expansion of the educational centres, as full secondary schools that would take children at twelve years of age and offer six years of secondary school. They felt that many Traveller children had such negative experiences of education in secondary school that it was only through a personalised curriculum with an emphasis on the Arts and Traveller specific subjects (e.g., equine studies and metalwork) that engagement with the educational process would take place. They felt that such affirmative action was called for given the dismal outcomes of Traveller children within secondary schools with 1,858 commencing secondary education and with only 85 completing it (Irish Traveller Movement, 2006) and the reality of widespread individual and institutionalised prejudice within schools (McGreil, 1996; Flynn, 2002; Zappone, 2002; Irish Independent, 2005).

It is interesting to note that over 50 years after the Brown versus the Educational Board of Topeka (1954) state ruling by the Supreme Court in the United States that deregulated

segregation in American school , Afro-American educators including Ladson-Billings (Ladson-Billings,1994, 2000) are calling for all-African single sex schools. This is in an effort to promote African-American education using a culturally appropriate pedagogy as African -American educational achievement has fallen so far behind that of European -Americans.

*“Yet now forty years later, African-American educators and parents are asking themselves whether separate schools that put special emphases on the needs of their children might be the most expedient way to ensure that they receive a quality education”* (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p.2)

It appears that positive affirmation within the educational system, culminating with exclusive secondary schools for a community may be more powerful than integration when the underlying mechanisms of discrimination and marginalisation are not fully addressed within society.

### **7.4.3 Intercultural Education**

To combat discrimination the women’s focus group recommended that intercultural education for teachers and students become a feature of our schools. The reintroduction of the Citizen of Ireland campaign by the Irish Traveller Movement <sup>6</sup> was also called for. Given the level of prejudice found within the transcripts of the focus groups these appear to be basic measures to combat what is a learned behaviour and one that appears to be rampant within our educational system.

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<sup>6</sup> Funding for this project was withdrawn by the Department of Justice and Equality after the Irish Traveller Movement refused to withdraw objections to the Miscellaneous [Housing] Act of 2002.

#### **7.4.4 Art as an Entry Point in Marginalised Education**

The concept that the Arts may be a transformative power and ignite either through motivation or cognitive stimulation, a heightened awareness that leads to emotional and social expansion resulting in a readiness to attain academic knowledge, is a view that the teachers and focus group participants in these interviews agree upon. A view that concurs with many studies emanating from Project Zero (Goodman, 1972, 1978; Gardner and Grunbann, 1986; Seidel., 1999; Winner and Hetland, 2000) and world wide over the last thirty years and calls into question not whether the Arts affect academic outcome, but to what degree, and how this phenomenon may be maximised to serve educational parity. The prospect of their programmes for the educationally disadvantaged being implemented in full would be very exciting to witness. However, even on a small scale, with an average class of just one and a half hours a week a positive effect appears to occur that in turn leads to intellectual stimulation and allows for a more complete experience for an individual and their input into society. Therefore, the recognition of the Arts as a powerful tool to educate an individual in a holistic manner and to elicit the full potential of an individual should be maximised.

#### **7.5 Summary**

The focus groups gave voice to the concerns' Travellers have about their own education and that of their children. They examined the problems that they face and have presented some solutions from their personal experiences which concluded that visual Art practice leads to an increase in clarity of thought for an individual. The more mature group felt that Art practice, also leads to a heightened awareness of political issues and a desire to create social change. With younger

participants the results were more diffuse but an increased level of concentration or 'flow', was perceived to take place during Art practice, which appears to continue into other areas of school work. A widening of horizons and a decrease in xenophobia were also noted, particularly during music and film studies.

The interviews with the teachers have reiterated many of the experiences of the focus group participants while the survey has mapped out a generalised overview of three-quarters of the country's Traveller Education Centres.

The findings of the study reflect many of the findings of Project Zero (Goodman, 1972, 1978; Gardner and Grunbann, 1986; Seidel, 1999; Winner. and Hetland. 2000), Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Freire (1972) and Boal (1979, 1993, 1998, and 2006)) and suggest that the Arts do indeed impact on education and marginalised education in particular. This calls into question the very purpose of education and whether we as a society aim to educate our most deprived sector in a classical sense or do we intend to train individuals so they may slot them into the workforce in a functionalistic manner without regard to their innate potential.

The hope would be that this study may contribute to the richness and enjoyment of the educational experience for Travellers. This may give rise to an increase in creativity within a classroom setting which would lead to an acceleration of growth in social and political consciousness and subsequently this academic awareness may progress to achievement.



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## 9. Appendices

### 9.1 Covering letter sent to Directors

St. Basil's Education Centre,  
Greenhills Road  
Dublin  
April 26<sup>th</sup> 2004.

A Chara,

I am the Art and Drama teacher here in St. Basils in Tallaght. A few years ago I attended a conference in Trinity College for Drama teachers given by an Australian woman Viv Sercombe, in which she outlined research that was just coming out of America at that time. During her lecture she outlined statistics that showed an 83% increase in academic performance in youth who became involved in the Arts, interestingly, the increase was even more pronounced in youth from lower socio-economic settings to the point where a clear correlation could be made between social class, art involvement and academic success. She had worked with Aborigine youth and had anecdotal evidence that supported the American Research especially in the field of the visual arts.

My appetite was so whetted by this encounter that I wrote a proposal to the Dublin Institute of Technology and obtained a post-graduate research scholarship to study this phenomenon in more detail. As part of the study I have designed the following Survey, in an effort to obtain a base line of the state of the Arts and Traveller Education in general throughout the country.

Your replies will be held in the strictest of confidence but I appeal to you to reply. Research of this nature may throw new light on the way we teach and the results and attitudes that we expect from our trainees. If you have any queries in regard to the Survey or the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at 4510607 or by e-mail: - pbfagan2002@yahoo.co.uk.

Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Mise le meas,

Bernadette Fagan.

## 9.2 Survey of Traveller Education Centres.

**Questionnaire to be filled in by the Director or Acting Director. All replies will be handled in the strictest confidence.**

### **Biography of respondent**

1. Are you Male or Female?

---

2. For how many years have you been director of your centre?

Under 5      5-10      10- 15       15-20      over 20

3. Please identify your age range below?

Under 30       30-40       40-50       50-60       over 60

### **Details of the Centre**

1. How many trainees are there in the centre?

Male

Female


2. How many teachers work in your centre (including the Director)?

---

3. Is your centre situated in-

- a) An isolated rural area
- b) A halting site
- c) An urban centre
- d) An educational complex
- e) An industrial estate
- f) Other

—

Please specify: - 

4. Is the building in which your Centre is situated:-

- a) Custom built
- b) An old school building
- c) Pre-fabricated
- d) Converted from an industrial and/or commercial property
- e) Other

If other please specify: - -----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

5. Are the grounds of your centre: -

- a) A showpiece of flora and fauna
- b) Well maintained
- c) Average
- d) Could do with a bit of upkeep
- e) Unkempt

6. What is the level of noise outside the centre?

- a) Excessive
- b) Moderate
- c) Average
- d) Slight
- e) Virtually non - existent

7. What is the level of natural light in the building?

- a) Excellent, we only need to use artificial light on very dark days
- b) Very good, artificial light only used in certain rooms
- c) Average, artificial light needed to supplement general lighting
- d) Poor, windows are too small, artificial light needed at all times
- e) Very poor, windowless rooms, artificial light constantly needed

8. Do you consider the use of colour in the décor and on the walls within the centre to be:-

- a) Excellent
- b) Very good
- c) Average
- d) Poor
- e) Very poor

9. Is there a mentoring system in place in your Centre?

Yes

No

If 'yes' please specify:-

10. Is there a tracking system in place in your Centre?

Yes

No

If yes please specify

11. Has your centre taken part in any local or national cultural event (e.g. International cultural Woman's Day, St. Patrick's Day parade or local feiseanna)?

Yes

No

If "yes" please specify.

**Details of the course**

1. Which of the following subjects are taught in your centre and to what level?

**Tick where appropriate**

Subjects / Modules	<i>FETAC Foundation</i>	<i>Level 4</i>	<i>Level 5</i>	<i>Junior Cert.</i>	<i>Leaving Cert</i>
<b>Art &amp; Design</b>					
<b>Building Studies</b>					
<b>Childcare</b>					
<b>Community, Social -and political Studies</b>					
<b>Computer Studies</b>					

<b>Crafts</b>					
<b>Dance</b>					
<b>Drama</b>					
<b>English</b>					
<b>Equine Studies</b>					
<b>French</b>					
<b>Geography</b>					
<b>German</b>					
<b>Hairdressing</b>					
<b>Health &amp; Fitness</b>					
<b>Home Economics</b>					
<b>Irish</b>					

<b>Literacy</b>					
<b>Maths</b>					
<b>Metal work</b>					
<b>Music</b>					
<b>Personnel Development</b>					
<b>Religion</b>					
<b>Science</b>					
<b>Shelta</b>					
<b>Sports</b>					
<b>Swimming</b>					
<b>Traveller Culture</b>					
<b>Video expression</b>					



<b>Wood Work</b>					
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If any other subjects are Studied please specify:-

### **Details of students**

1. How many trainees under the age of 21 years are in your centre?

Male

Female

2. What is the average age at which the majority of trainees left school?

Male

Female

3. What are the average reading ages amongst these trainees?

Male

Female

4. How many had the following certification before commencing at your centre?

FETAC Awards (Foundation)

Junior Cert.

Fetac Awards (level 1)

Leaving Cert. (applied)

Leaving Cert.

5. How many of your trainees live on the side of the road or on unofficial halting sites?

6. How many are in private or public housing schemes?

7. How many are in serviced sites?

8. How many are:-

Engaged

Married

Separated

9. How many have children?

10. Is there a crèche facility available in the Centre?

Yes

No

11. Roughly what percentage retain a Nomadic lifestyle and to what degree?

Not nomadic at all

Become nomadic in summer

Nomadic within Ireland and England

Highly nomadic – will travel and the

Continent for work

## Details of Art Involvement

1. How many hours per week are spent on any of the arts subjects?
2. What percentage of your annual budget is spent on the Arts?
3. Is there a public display of your Art programme (music recital, play, art exhibition, ect.).

Yes

No

If “yes” please specify.

4. Approx. How many times would your centre have visited the following over the past year?

Venue	Never	Once	3-4 Times	Monthly
-------	-------	------	-----------	---------

Art Gallery

Museum

Theatre

Cinema

Dance Recital

Concert

Thank-you for help and honesty in replying to this questionnaire. All replies will be held in the strictest of confidence.

### 9.3 Compendium Summary

*“ Compendium Summary: The Arts and Academic and Social Outcomes*

#### *Arts Learning: Cognitive Capacities and Motivations to Learn:*

##### *Visual Arts*

*Drawing*

*Content and organization of writing.*

*Visualization training*  
*text.*

*Sophisticated reading skills/interpretation of*

*Reasoning about art*

*Reasoning about scientific images.*

*Instruction in visual art*

*Reading readiness.*

##### *Music*

*Early childhood music training*

*Cognitive development*

*Music listening*

*Spatial reasoning.*

*Spatial temporal reasoning.*

*Quality of writing.*

	<i>Prolivity of writing.</i>
<i>Piano/keyboard learning</i>	<i>Mathematics proficiency.</i>
	<i>Spatial reasoning.</i>
<i>Piano and voice</i>	<i>Long-term spatial temporal reasoning.</i>
<i>Music performance</i>	<i>Self-efficacy.</i>
	<i>Self-concept.</i>
<i>Instrument training</i>	<i>Reading.</i>
	<i>SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) verbal reading scores</i>
<i>Music with language learning</i>	<i>English skills for ESL (English secondary Language) learners</i>
<b><u>Classroom Drama</u></b>	
<i>Dramatic enactment</i>	<i>Story comprehension (oral and written).</i>
	<i>Character identification.</i>
	<i>Character motivation.</i>
	<i>Increased peer interaction.</i>
	<i>Writing proficiency and prolixity.</i>
	<i>Conflict resolution skills.</i>

*Concentrated thought.*

*Understanding social relationships.*

*Ability to understand complex issues and  
emotions*

*Engagement.*

*Skill with subsequently read, unrelated  
texts*

*Problem-solving dispositions/strategies.*

*General self-concept.*

**Dance**

*Traditional dance*

*Self-confidence.*

*Persistence.*

*Reading skills.*

*Nonverbal reasoning.*

*Expressive skills.*

*Creativity in poetry.*

*Social tolerance.*

*Appreciation of individual/group social*

*development*

*Creative dance*

*General creative thinking – fluency*

*General creative thinking – originality,  
elaboration, flexibility*

**Multi-arts Programs**

*Integrated arts/academics*

*Reading, verbal and mathematics skills.*

*Creative thinking.*

*Achievement motivation.*

*Cognitive engagement.*

*Instructional practice in the school.*

*Professional culture of the school.*

*School climate.*

*Community engagement and identity.*

*Intensive arts experience*

*Self-confidence.*

*Risk-taking.*

*Paying attention.*

*Persevering.*

*Empathy for others.*

*Self-initiating.*

*Task persistence.*

*Ownership of learning.*

*Collaboration skills.*

*Leadership.*

*Reduced dropout rates.*

*Educational aspirations.*

*Higher-order thinking skills.*

*Arts-rich school environment*

*Creativity.*

*Engagement/attendance.*

*Range of personal and social*

*developments*

*Higher-order thinking skills.”*

(Catterall 2000 p.152).



### 9.4 Table of Subjects and Accreditation Levels

	<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<b>LEVEL 4</b>	<b>LEVEL 5</b>	<b>JUNIOR CERT</b>	<b>LEAVING CERT</b>	<b>NON ACCREDITED</b>
<b>Art Craft and Design</b>	<b>20</b>	12	4	3	<b>3</b>	1
<b>Business Studies</b>	3	2		1		
<b>Ceramics</b>						1
<b>Childcare</b>	2	1				
<b>Community social and political studies</b>	2	11	2	1	1	
<b>Computer Studies</b>	3			3	2	1
<b>Dance</b>						<b>20</b>
<b>English</b>	15	7	2	8	<b>5</b>	
<b>Equine</b>						<b>1</b>

<b>Studies</b>						
<b>French</b>	1				2	
<b>Geography</b>	1			2		
<b>Hairdressing</b>	10	3	1			
	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>	<b>Junior Cert</b>	<b>Leaving Cert</b>	<b>Non-accred</b>
<b>Health and Fitness</b>	12	6				
<b>Holistic Therapy</b>						1
<b>Home Economics</b>	11	2	1	4	2	2
<b>Horticulture</b>	1					1
<b>Irish</b>					3	
<b>Leatherwork</b>						1
<b>Literacy</b>	18	4				
<b>Living in a Diverse</b>	1					

<b>Society</b>						
<b>Machine Knitting</b>		1				
<b>Mathematics</b>	21	8	6	1	4	
<b>Metalwork</b>	13	3	1	2	1	
<b>Music</b>	1					1
<b>Personal Development</b>	19	6				10
<b>Photography, media and publicity</b>						1
<b>Religion</b>		4			1	
<b>Shelta</b>						1
<b>Spanish</b>					1	
<b>Sports</b>						11
<b>Stained Glass Technology</b>						2
<b>Swimming</b>						10

<b>Traveller Culture</b>	6	1	2			3
<b>Video Expression</b>						1
<b>Woodwork</b>	<b>14</b>	5		4	2	

## **9.5 Schedule and Examples of Teachers' Interviews**

### **9.5.1 The Schedule**

.The interviews were held from December 2004 to November 2005. They were arranged on a one to one basis over the telephone and times and venues were chosen that were of convenience to the interviewee. All but three were held in educational centres – the others being held in coffee shops so as to facilitate the interviewees.

The schedule was as follows:

Interviews 1 and 2 .....December 8<sup>th</sup> 2004  
Interview 3.....January 31<sup>st</sup> 2005  
Interview 4.....February 4<sup>th</sup> 2005  
Interview 5 and 6 .....March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005  
Interview 7.....April 9<sup>th</sup> 2005  
Interview 8.....May 5<sup>th</sup> 2005  
Interview 9.....November 16<sup>th</sup> 2005  
Interview 10.....December 10<sup>th</sup> 2005

The following are an example of questions asked:

**“How many years have you taught Art in the Centre”?**

**“The building, was originally used for what purpose”?**

**“Has your class taken part in any local or national cultural event”?**

**“Roughly, what percentage retains a nomadic or traditional way of life?**

**“What impact do the Arts make to your pupils”?**

**In what way does Art affect the Centre”?**

**“How would you envisage your pupils using the Arts in five years time”?**

### **9.5.2 Example One of Interview Transcripts**

#### **How does Art affect the Centre?**

I'm not singing my own praises but I replaced a glasswork teacher and before that there was no Art teacher, as such and I think it has had a very positive effect.

#### **How would you envisage your pupils using Art in five years time?**

Five years ago, I would have said that they would have embraced modern techniques and embraced fine Art in terms of a broader perspective but it hasn't happened. It is such a slow procedure. I'm trying to simplify Art but for some reason everybody goes and puts demands on themselves for more technically able and more detailed works. Why I don't know.

#### **So would you think that the effects are generational?**

It might be a bit early to say yet. What I have seen definitely. I deal with parents here and their children come in and they have been broken in as such when they have some contact or heard some conversation about it or seen some work.

#### **Have any progressed to third level or will they in the future?**

No. Will they in the future it is very difficult to say. Off the cuff reaction would be, yes, I hope so. In reality, I don't know.

#### **Is there a high degree of flexibility within the Centre that allows for exploration of the Arts?**

There would be. The director is a great man for encouraging any initiative. Limitations would be class hours- any of the practical issues – finances, limitations of transport, motivation to take part but any initiative is supported.

### **9.5.3 Example Two of Interview Transcripts**

#### **How many hours a week are spent on the Arts?**

Well, I teach twenty two hours a week and they also have glasswork and I see every student once a week. My contract is temporary permanent and we have six permanent staff.

#### **What % of the annual budget is spent on the Arts?**

That is a question I could not say. Not enough .As an Arts teacher I am... we are aware of the limitations and you work within those limitations but you also, shout every so often, for new materials and equipment.

**What impact do you think that the Arts make?**

On every individual I think they make a huge impact. I feel myself; more of a personal development class. I can't say or think of any other subject that has that effect.

**9.5.4 Example Three of Interview Transcripts**

**What percentage of the annual budget is spent on the Arts?**

You'd have to ask the Director. I wouldn't know.

**What impact do the Arts make on your trainees?**

I think it has a very positive impact. It improves their self confidence. They enjoy it. It's fun and it has lead to more body awareness. They have joined gyms and lost a bit of weight but the most thing is the confidence.

**In your opinion do they ever enter into a “flow” state in which they get lost in their subject?**

Very occasionally, it does happen but really it is a new subject and they can be self – conscious but it does happen.

**What impact do the Arts make to the Centre?**

Again it has a positive effect. Even the other members of staff would be aware of the “buzz” that it creates. It's positive.

**Is their a public display of you Art?**

Not yet, because we have just started but we are hoping to put something on probably for children and we'd have a ready made audience in our crèche.

**Is there a high degree of flexibility within the Centre that would allow for exploration of the Arts?**

The very nature of this type of education leads to a great degree of flexibility so I have, no doubt, that if it was required it would be accommodated





## **9.6 Schedule and Examples of Focus Group Sessions**

### **9.6.1 The Schedule**

The Focus Groups commenced on Thursday the 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2005. The group composed of a class of eight women, aged between 25 and 65yrs of age who were in full time education. The second was held on 26th September 2005 and consisted of younger women between the ages of 16 years and 24 years who were also in full time education. The focus groups were worked into the time schedule of the educational centre and the class were given a choice to participate or not. Information concerning the study was given to the students verbally. All chose to participate.

The schedule was as follows:

Mature Group.....	September 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2005
Youth Group.....	September 26 <sup>th</sup> 2005
Mature Group.....	January 6 <sup>th</sup> 2006
Youth Group.....	January 19 <sup>th</sup> 2006
Youth Group.....	April 11 <sup>th</sup> 2006
Mature Group.....	April 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2006
Mature Group.....	June 9 <sup>th</sup> 2006
Youth Group.....	June 12 <sup>th</sup> 2006

The following is an example of questions.

**“What do you want to get out of your Art class”?**

**“So do you gain confidence”?**

**“Would you say you get lost in it”?**

**“Does anyone think that doing Art makes memories ideas and concepts more intense?”**

**“So do you think that makes you feel more peaceful”?**

**“Would you feel that you are mentally clearer; that your thoughts are mentally clearer”?**

**“Do you feel more connected to other people when you are doing Art”?**

**“So you would find it therapeutic”?**

### **9.6.2 Example One of Focus Group Transcripts**

The group consisted of teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 18 years of age. Seven out of eight students from that group were present.

**“So do you feel that doing Art gives you confidence?”**

“It gives you confidence when you do a nice picture.”

All: “Yeh”.

“Yeh when you see what good work you can do you want to do more. You feel good about yourself then- pretty much.”

**“Do you?”**

All: “Yeh.”

**“Does time fly when you are doing it”?**

All: “Yeh.”

“I agree.”

“I do be more interested in Art than any other subject.”

**“What are you saying there about time flies?”**

“Yeh time flies when you are in Art class because when you are a bit down or real bored there all different kinds of paints and all and it is real bright and colourful.”

**“So you think that the Arts stimulate the mind?”**

“It does yeh, ‘cause if you are real bored going in, it cheers you up like. It keeps you interested.”

**“Does anyone else find that?”**

All: “Yeh.”

### 9.6.3 Example Two of Focus Group Transcripts

These were a group of mature women and were all present on that day.

**“So it gives you a chance to put your point of view across and would you normally feel that your point of view isn’t taken into account by the wider society.”**

“No, no way is it. We could talk till we are blue in the face and they’d pay no heed but with an exhibition like this you might get through to someone.”

**“So it is about communication as much as anything”.**

All: “Yeh”.

**“When you are doing the Art do you think that it makes old memories more intense – like would you remember things stronger?”**

“You’d remember things that happened years ago. Say if you asked us to write something of our past history – you’d start to remember there and then things that you didn’t think of in years.”

**“So it intensifies your memories.”**

“Like the job (drawings) we are doing here now with the camps and caravans and that. It brings back memories- you’d remember the camp with that wagon now, the horse and dog and whatever.”

“It would make you very sad too because there’s not has many people on the road today. You are not allowed travel with these new laws that are out. Travellers were always let travel. They could move on.”

“You wouldn’t see a wagon now. You’d see no one. Years ago you’d see hundreds of them. You could go up and down the country now and you wouldn’t see one.”

“It is kind of sad now like.”





