Why do we teach art, craft and design?

A vital question, and one that as teachers and lecturers of art, craft and design we all instinctively ‘know’ the answer to. But has there ever been a more critical time to make that often tacit knowledge explicit and to rigorously promote, advocate for and defend our subject?

We need to make the case for support for teaching art, craft and design, and to be able to make it to increasingly diverse, and frequently hostile stakeholders. To the parents and carers of children and young people making choices at 14. To support primary teachers moving towards subject leadership in art and design. To support primary initial teacher trainers make the case for subject specialism. To young people making career choices in further and higher education. To heads of department, senior management teams and head teachers. To politicians and civil servants, editors, budget holders and potential funders.

More and more artists, makers and designers; arts organisations and museum and gallery directors; opinion formers, and teachers and lecturers of art craft and design are coming forward and adding their voice to the cause, to include e-petitions, editorials, poster campaigns, letter writing and more, much of which the Society has been involved with, and showcased to members.

Not intended as a definitive round up, here are some useful links and arguments for, and answers to the question.

**Why do we teach art, craft and design?** A compelling argument is to point to the potential career paths that young people can move towards by engaging in the subject. Yes, we are preparing children and young people to be successful creative practitioners and to engage practically in the subject, but there are many related careers that they can move into that have art, craft and design as a significant, if not essential starting point.

Career advice can be fickle and become quickly dated. The Society has a very helpful section on the website offering case studies about various careers within art, craft and design, to include animator, curator and illustrator to name but a few. This section of the website includes activities to integrate careers information, advice and guidance into day-to-day teaching, thus supporting young people themselves to be the best advocates for the subject they wish to pursue. An audit tool allows you to consider how you might improve your careers related provision for your learners.

[www.nsead.org/resources/careers.aspx](http://www.nsead.org/resources/careers.aspx)

Art, craft and design can lead to a career in the creative industries. Looking at this area in particular makes an economic argument for the subject and here are the most recent statistics for the creative industries published in December 2011 by the Department of Culture Media and Sport.

- Creative industries contributed 2.9% of the UK’s Gross Value Added in 2009, this is an increase from 2.8% in 2008
- Exports of services by the creative industries accounted for 10.6% of the UK’s exports of services
- There were an estimated 106,700 businesses in the creative industries on the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) in 2011, this represents 5.1% of all companies on the IDBR

Creative employment provides around two million jobs, in the creative sector itself and in creative roles in other sectors. Employment in the sector has grown at double the rate of the economy as a whole. The creative
industries include craft, cultural heritage, publishing, software, TV and radio, designer fashion, design, computer games, advertising, architecture, interactive media, animation and photo imaging. Why are the creative and cultural industries so successful? Because of effective teachers of art, craft and design supporting and inspiring a future workforce!

For further information about the creative industries, to include data and research, the websites of the Sector Skills Councils are very helpful.

The Sector Skills Councils and the UK Commission are committed to working in partnership across the four nations to create the conditions for increased employer investment in skills which will drive enterprise and create jobs and sustainable economic growth. They share a belief that the sectoral approach is the most effective way to do this. They take an interest in education.

The network of licensed Sector Skills Councils provides the employer leadership to address skills needed within and across sectors. The Sector Skills Council licence is the unique identifier which signals to employers and government that they are a focal point for raising skills in sectors to drive enterprise, jobs and growth.

Through their sectoral reach, Sector Skills Councils are ideally placed to articulate the voice of employers on skills; to develop innovative skills solutions and to galvanise employer ambition and investment in skills and job creation. In doing so, they are key strategic partners in creating the conditions for increased investment in skills.

Creative and Cultural Skills is the Sector Skills Council for the creative and cultural industries and provides on its website research and analysis into the skills needs of the industry, and through its Creative Choices section, information and advice about creative careers.

http://ccskills.org.uk/

www.creative-choices.co.uk/

Creative Skill Set is the Sector Skills Council for the creative industries to include computer games and interactive media, again, another mine of information about careers and industry needs.

www.creativeskillset.org/

Why do we teach art, craft and design? To prepare children and young people to engage in the historical and contemporary visual arts and become confident audiences. The Arts Councils of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are telling us that visitor figures in museums and galleries are growing. Why is that? Because teachers of art, craft and design in partnership with museum and gallery educators have worked together to increase engagement, confidence and learning about the contemporary visual arts.

Why do we teach art, craft and design? To support our children and young people to become critical consumers of products, services and systems. Design and craft teach us about the value of sustainability, and ethical and ecologically sound lifestyles. Craft and design are affecting change. Make do and mend becomes up-cycle, recycle and repurpose.

‘Design links creativity and innovation, shaping ideas to become practical and attractive propositions for users and customers. Design may be defined as creativity deployed to a specific end.’ Sir George Fox, Chair of the Design Council

‘Design is making things better. For people.’ Richard Seymour. Seymour Powell

Why do we teach art, craft and design? Because art, craft and design contributes to our well being and to our social, emotional and cultural development. Because craft fairs are reporting a 22 per cent year on year increase. Because for many people an engagement in the arts and crafts provides a sustaining lifelong leisure pursuit.

Why do we teach art, craft and design? Because regeneration is so important. Regeneration in our cities is social, economic, physical and cultural, directed at problems that need creative solutions from architects and artists working with communities and in public spaces.
And finally, written to embrace all the arts, Elliot Eisner’s ‘10 Lessons the Arts Teach’ provides a compelling list that can be adapted for art, craft and design.

1. The arts teach children to make good judgements about qualitative relationships. Unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts it is judgement rather than rules which prevail.

2. The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer.

3. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives. One of their large lessons is that there are many different ways to see the world.

4. The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity. Learning in the arts requires the ability and a willingness to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds.

5. The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know. The limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition.

6. The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects.

7. The arts teach students to think through and within a material. All art forms employ some means through which images become real.

8. The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said. When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capabilities to find the words that will do the job.

9. The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source, and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling.

10. The arts’ position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important.


A diverse and certainly not a definitive round up that hopefully sits alongside the many advocacy statements and articles that are flooding into the press and media.

Add your voice. Tell us how you are defending art, craft and design in your school or university and we will share with our members and beyond.

And, if you do one more thing for art craft and design education this weekend, complete the consultation document Reforming key stage 4 qualifications that you will find on the NSEAD website and in this e bulletin.

Lesley Butterworth  
General Secretary  
NSEAD  
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