

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2011

'ART AND DESIGN IN SCHOOLS: CONSIDERATIONS AND CHALLENGES'

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Introduction

1. I should probably start by saying that my title – really a variation on 'The Future of Art and Design in Schools' – is probably the most frequently used at art and design education conferences whether in the United Kingdom or internationally. When you think about it the reason is obvious: the subject always seems to be under threat for one reason or another. Of course you may say that art and design teachers generally may be more paranoid than most, but just because you are paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you... Art and design teachers – and teachers of the other art forms - in England at the present time have good reason to be concerned.
2. For the past thirty years I have been the General Secretary of the National Society for Education in Art & Design (NSEAD). I'm also the current Chair of the Council for Subject Associations and this gives me a wider perspective on some of the issues I want to discuss. Can I make a plug here? I may not have this opportunity again. If your school paid for every department to take out a subscription to the relevant subject association of their choice it would cost roughly £1500 pounds a year – small cost for keeping your teachers up to date with issues, information and innovations in their subject as well as cut price access to high quality professional development. Please think about it.
3. First, let me give you some background about the NSEAD. The Society has a membership drawn from every sector of education from the primary school to universities. Its aims are to promote and defend art and design education and to look after the professional interests of teachers in this area of education. Since 1888 the Society has combined the functions of a subject association, learned society and independent, specialist trade union. Members receive up-to-date information and accurate news, views and information on current developments in art and design education and access to professional advice. Other key benefits include the sense of being a member of a professional community, opportunities to participate in debate and make contact with like-minded individuals in the United Kingdom and abroad. Communication with members is maintained through occasional publications, *A&D Magazine* and the *International Journal of Art & Design Education* (iJADE), which is available in over 3,300 libraries globally.

Current Issues

4. Why are art and design teachers concerned at the present time? The short answer is the coalition government's education policies and, in particular Michael Gove's so-called English Baccalaureate and the review of the national curriculum. A further concern is the DCMS review of 'Cultural Education' by which I think they mean arts education. Then there is the decision of David Willets at the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) to stop all money for teaching the arts and humanities in universities. Certainly it is innovative but there is little evidence of any joined up government.

The English Baccalaureate

5. You will all know that the White Paper '*The Importance of Teaching*', published in November 2010 announced the introduction of the English Baccalaureate and that it was to be reported in the School Performance Tables in January 2011. The stated intention was to encourage the take-up of 'individual science subjects, humanities such as history and, especially, foreign languages'.

So let's think about the purpose and benefits of the English Baccalaureate and its value as a measure of student and school performance. (When questioned by the Select Committee a couple of weeks ago, Nick Gibb said the E-Bacc is an 'accountability' measure not a 'performance' measure – or was it vice versa? I hope you feel at least that's clear?)

6. I suggest that the term English Baccalaureate is a misnomer. As currently adopted it is not a qualification, and the intention expressed in the White Paper that achieving the stated combination of GCSEs 'will entitle the student to a certificate recording their achievement' has not yet materialised. No one is responsible for issuing certificates to individual students. The websites of the awarding bodies make it clear they have no plans to do so. Therefore, as it stands the English Baccalaureate is a government initiative to encourage secondary schools in England to promote specific 'academic' subjects to age 16 and to set new, arbitrary, standards for measuring (rigging?) the 'success' of the English education system.
7. The widespread concern expressed by schools immediately on the introduction of the English Baccalaureate was not only because it was applied retrospectively, but because the range of subjects included was felt to be too narrow and not in any way inclusive of all students in the school.
8. Undoubtedly, many schools will now guide their students towards the named courses at the expense of a broad and balanced curriculum – and as OFSTED have noted this will often start in Year 7. Inevitably, more students will be successful in achieving the English Baccalaureate targets in the next two years, purely because more of them will have been entered for the qualifying examinations. The significant improvements in school performance that thus will appear on paper will not directly reflect better teaching or higher student achievements. It will not be a true, comparative measure of school performance although, without any shadow of doubt, ministers will claim it as such.
9. It is accepted that there has been a concern that some schools have encouraged students to follow 'easier' courses – those that might have a too highly rated tariff for

GCSE equivalence – in order to improve their position in the league tables. This issue needed to be addressed although not all vocational courses should be tarred with the same brush. BTEC diplomas in art and design are rigorous and widely accepted for entrance to university art and design courses. Mr Gibb seems obsessed by opening up opportunities for admission to Russell Group universities to all to the exclusion of other reputable institutions. What happens to the ‘rejects’?

10. ‘Russell Group’ seems to be the minister’s shorthand for excellent as opposed, I suppose, to all the others that not so long ago he labelled as, I quote, ‘crap’. He seems to overlook the fact that there are many other excellent institutions – Durham for example – that are not part of the self-appointed group and what about specialist institutions like the Royal College of Art or the University of the Arts, entry to which is just as highly competitive? Why doesn’t he recognise that for those students that wish to pursue a career in the arts, especially art and design, the Russell Group have relatively little to offer.
11. The lack of any clear rationale for the academic subjects that have been included or omitted in the English Baccalaureate does not assist its position as a valid indicator. For example, many perceive the definition of humanities and languages GCSEs to be arbitrary – why include Ancient Hebrew for example? Why exclude the arts, design and technology, citizenship, RE?
12. An English Baccalaureate could have a role as a ‘leaving’ certificate for students if it recognised what they have achieved in core skills, a range of ‘academic’ and ‘practical’ subjects – I actually think this is an invalid and worthless distinction. I reject the implication that when well taught the arts are cognitive activities and just as intellectually challenging as any other subjects. Wider educational achievements should be included. It would need to be carefully designed, piloted and reviewed by teachers, academics and employers. If this were done successfully the English Baccalaureate might become a worthwhile qualification that was valued by employers and used for access to further education and training.
13. This approach has, for example, been adopted in the Welsh Baccalaureate, a qualification for 14-19 year olds that combines personal development skills with existing qualifications to make a wider award. It aims to help students to develop the knowledge and skills that higher education and employers want school leavers to demonstrate. The well-respected International Baccalaureate also provides an excellent model from which to start. It has none of the limitations of the E-Bacc that, as it stands, will damage the education of far too many young people and alienate them from school. I speak from some experience.
14. I went to a ‘good’ school, an independent school, one reason being that I failed the 11 plus but my parents believed enough in education to pay for it even though it was a struggle. (It was one of the schools Nick Gibb attended; I can’t be more precise than that). In a far from glittering academic school career I would today have been declared an E-Bacc failure. I didn’t take art because only the very dimmest were allowed to do that. The opportunity to leave early, at sixteen, and go to art school was a turning point and I certainly don’t feel a failure having been gainfully employed and paid my taxes for nearly fifty years. I even have a PhD from a Russell Group university. I know I’m far from alone in taking such a route – just take a look at the

many, many stories on the web site 'A Better Baccalaureate'. There is ample evidence there that the government's preferred choice of subjects is far from being the only route to success in so many fields. We all know that children learn in different ways, at a different pace and with different interests. We hear Matthew Arnold's well known dictum on education a lot from the likes of Chris Woodhead and Michael Gove – note Arnold actually said 'culture' rather than 'education'. Arnold actually referred to: '*Culture* [my emphasis], the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world, and thus with the history of the human spirit'. Maybe it is just as valuable to remember what Rabindranath Tagore once said: 'Don't limit a child to your own learning, for she was born in another time'. You can take your pick of aphorisms from these poet/polymaths, but maybe Messrs Gove and Gibb should think hard about the latter. The second point is worth pondering on too:

'... adults, because they are tyrants, ignore natural gifts and say that children must learn through the same process that they learned by. We insist upon forced mental feeding and our lessons become a form of torture. This is one of man's most cruel and wasteful mistakes.'

The choice of subjects included in the English Baccalaureate

'[Gove's] new English Baccalaureate is virtually a carbon copy of the 1868 Taunton report's curriculum for most "middle class schools", as they were then called. The new award will be given to all 16-year-olds who have good exam grades in "English, mathematics, the sciences, a modern or ancient foreign language and a humanity such as history or geography" Taunton's list is identical, except that it makes both history and geography compulsory. How is it that a curriculum designed for clerks and shopkeepers in Dickens' England is at the cutting edge in 2010?'

John White (2011)

15. There are aspects of the government's intention as set out in the White Paper that I do strongly support, for example that students should pursue a broad and rounded range of subjects until the age of 16. However I am in strong disagreement that the E-Bacc represents a properly rounded education for all students or that it will give schools the '...freedom and incentives to provide a rigorous and broad academic education'.
16. It is hard to disagree that everyone should have a good basic education in core skills and knowledge. But curriculum breadth is also very important, and all should have an education up to 16 that includes the humanities and languages, creative arts, physical education, mathematics, science and technological study alongside the development of other essential skills and values.
17. The notion of an English Baccalaureate could be applauded if it encouraged students to keep their options open rather than specialise too early. In reality preparation will

start in Year 7. A bacculaureate system should be devised that identifies the knowledge that students need to have and the skills they need to acquire if they are to succeed as effective and capable learners, citizens and employees. Qualifications need to be designed for this curriculum and courses provided that engage and challenge young people and measure their achievements. We must avoid the idea that there is a divide between academic and vocational pathways and focus on what young people need to equip themselves for a future in the 21st century — not the 19th century.

The implications of the English Bacculaureate for students, schools and employers

18. The use of the term English Bacculaureate simply for the achievement of particular GCSE grades is confusing for students, parents and employers. It offers nothing new or different. Since there is no official “qualification” in terms of a certificate for a school leaver, it has no real currency for employers or higher education in its current form.
19. In many schools, the way in which this English Bacculaureate indicator has been introduced has already skewed the option choices that students are being given for 2011/12. It is reported by several of our member associations that up to 60 percent of schools have radically changed their options at 14 in a knee-jerk reaction to this government initiative. Surveys undertaken by NAME and the NSEAD asked teachers whether the fact that art and design will not form part of the E-Bacc would have any impact on their school's choice of options at KS4. 61 percent said ‘yes’ and another 20 percent were not sure at this early stage. Options to study subjects like art and design, music, religious education, drama, technology, business and ICT, as well as vocational subjects, are being much reduced or even removed. When I questioned Messrs Gove and Gibb about this they seemed both unaware and uninterested. These subjects will be perceived as less valuable by students and parents as a result of Michael Gove’s rhetoric – clearly he does think that they are inferior. There is a danger that the English Bacculaureate will be a disincentive to learning for more students than it will help, if it steers them to study courses which are inappropriate for them. Stuart Graham, Conservative chair of the Education Select Committee, apparently agrees. (Incidentally he admits to being an E-Bacc failure himself.)
20. Finally on this subject, although academies, although I am aware that free schools and independent schools are not required to follow the national curriculum, I have little doubt that the E-Bacc will be a very real factor in determining the curriculum in many such schools. Nick Gibb told the Select Committee that art and music would be fine because there would be thirty percent of curriculum time available for such options (or twenty percent for those who opt for triple science). This all seems highly unlikely. My back of an envelope calculations suggest that there will be room for only one option choice for most pupils beyond the E-Bacc subjects, plus statutory RE and PE.

Recommendation

21. The Council for Subject Associations has recommended that the government should cease to use the current English Baccalaureate as a performance indicator for schools. In due course it should introduce a carefully planned English Baccalaureate qualification to assure a broad and rounded education for students up to 16; and provide a leaving certificate that recognizes a range of achievements and has currency with employers and for access to future education.

The Curriculum Review

22. Responses to the curriculum review have now been submitted. I do have a few questions about this. It is welcome that the primary and secondary curriculum are to be considered together but there are key issues that are specific to each phase. I understand that the Tories did not support the Rose review – a hurried effort designed, as Mick Waters has admitted, to defuse and undermine the radical overhaul required by Robin Alexander's Cambridge Primary Review. I was a member of the so-called expert writing group for Jim Rose's report, although I hardly like to admit it. I was far from happy with the outcome. On the other hand the Cambridge Primary Review is another matter and deserves to be taken very seriously.
23. I was also subject leader for art and design for the introduction of the New Secondary Curriculum. Ten subject associations worked with CfBT over a period of two and a half years to provide professional development for heads of department in their subjects. The overwhelming response of thousands of such people to the NSC was strong support. They did not see the curriculum as prescriptive but liberating. They accepted that they were free to provide a local curriculum tailored to their pupils needs. Many excellent case studies point to the worthwhile changes taking place. Ofsted, before it seems to have been silenced, recognized it was having a significant impact. So who, apart from Michael Gove and Tim Oates, decided it was a 'disaster'? Where's the evidence? The first cohort of pupils has yet to take their GCSEs. Won't it be a bit embarrassing if it's seen to be working? Or will better exam results next year be dismissed by ministers as evidence of dumbing down and the need for change? Or maybe it will be claimed as evidence of the success of the E-Bacc? I think it is a disgrace that there has been no proper evaluation before launching into yet another major 'review' because I know the NSC was motivating pupils and teachers alike.

The Role of the Arts

24. It is already apparent that many schools will no longer offer the full range of options at key stage 4. Arts teachers are being made redundant and departments reduced in size. The curriculum review asks whether arts subjects should be part of the curriculum at all. This is Philistinism on an unprecedented scale. My subject, art and design, was introduced to schools in the mid-nineteenth century to fulfil two aims: to provide 'an education of the eye, and of the hand, such as may indeed be the first step in the career of a great artist', but also to meet the economic needs of the country. Both aims remain relevant.

25. To these primary objectives I would add providing the basis for a lifetime's enjoyment of the arts. But if that doesn't convince you then look at today's economic facts. The most up to date statistics for the creative industries (December 2010) from the DCMS state;
- The Creative Industries, excluding Crafts, accounted for 5.6% of Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2008.
 - In the summer quarter of 2010 (July – September), creative employment totalled just under 2.3 million jobs.
 - The Music and Visual & Performing Arts sector had the highest numbers of self-employed people, with over 200,000.
 - In 2010, there were an estimated 182,100 enterprises in the Creative Industries on the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), meaning they make up 8.7% of all enterprises. The true number of enterprises in the Creative Industries is likely to be even higher, as certain sectors such as Crafts contain predominantly small businesses.
 - Exports of services from the Creative Industries totalled £17.3 billion in 2008, equating to 4.1% of all goods and services exported.
26. One in four new jobs in this country is in the creative sector and it's growing at twice the rate of the economy as a whole. And yet Michael Gove is on record advocating perspective drawing as the core of the subject, while Nick Gibb told me nobody taught him to shade a circle to look like a sphere properly. (I offered to show him how but he didn't have time.). They don't get it and neither it seems does Tim Oates. They're more than happy to see the arts – and design and technology – wither in the curriculum by burying their heads in the sand about the economic realities. The DCMS understands and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills gets it on the business side (Vince Cable) but then it cuts funding for arts and humanities in universities (David Willetts). This is a shambles – some joined up interdepartmental communication on government policies would be helpful.
27. The coalition apparently much admires the education systems in the Far East and Finland which they assume have a total insistence on 'academic' subjects. This may have been true a few years ago but it is rapidly changing. China has invested in over 600 art and design schools in recent years, Singapore is complaining that they have to import 'creatives' because their education system is inadequate. The same is true of Hong Kong. In Japan recently I heard representatives of the education ministries in Taiwan, China, South Korea and Japan all saying that there had to be a new emphasis on creativity in schools – not least to meet the needs of the economy.
28. It may be that hitherto education systems in these countries have shown up well in PISA but it's easy to spot one significant difference. Unlike multicultural, multiethnic, multi faith UK they are largely mono-cultural homogenous societies. There is huge parental support (undue pressure? high suicide rates?) for education and very high percentage of parents pay for extra lessons – cramming. Compare this with our country where for years successive governments, aided and abetted by the media, have done their best to convince parents that most schools are 'crap' – to coin Nick Gibbs phrase. There appears to be a highly selective use of 'evidence' to support the

government's arguments. The unfavourable comparison with the 'top countries' is biased, out of date and unfair.

29. There was an interesting debate in the House of Lords on 5th May. Peers questioned Lord Hill, the government education spokesman, about the E-Bacc and made the following points:

- Wouldn't the E-Bacc put pressure on pupils to follow the designated subjects regardless of aptitude?
- The government has no control over time tables in schools which are already 'staffing up' for the E-Bacc at the expense of other subjects.
- Lord Knight (Jim Knight the former schools minister) asked about pupils who are engaged by creative and vocational learning and shouldn't there be an emphasis on 'engaging the unengaged'?

In response Lord Hill agreed that pupils shouldn't be 'shoe-horned' into subjects and reiterated that all subjects should be available. The government just seems to think it will be alright on the night – it's not their problem.

30. What happens to young people who want to pursue creative subjects? Or have more physical or practical leanings... or are less academically inclined? Neuro-scientists tell us that not all people learn in the same way and it has long been recognised that some have exceptional ability in certain subjects – maths, music, art for example – that is not matched by all round academic ability. Will these individuals once again be branded failures – as I was – by the narrow measures of a limited education system? The emphasis on the E-Bacc will have a negative impact on BTEC and other vocational routes, and will affect especially the arts and more practical subjects as students will be drawn into forced study of E-Bacc subjects for GCSE and away from other subjects where their true interests and abilities lie. This clearly is not in their best interests but will be driven by a fear in schools of not meeting the arbitrary targets that have been set. I also think it is unlikely to do much to help the government's ambitions to improve behaviour in schools.

31. The economic arguments apart there is also ample evidence about how the arts contribute to the well-being of the individual and society. The UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education¹ (2009) is based on deliberations during and after the 2006 UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education. It explores the role of arts education in meeting the need for creativity and cultural awareness in the 21st Century, and places emphasis on the strategies required to introduce or promote arts education in the learning environment.

32. The UNESCO Road Map is designed to promote a common understanding among all stakeholder governments of the importance of arts education and its essential role in improving the quality of education. It is an evolving reference document which outlines concrete changes and steps required to introduce or promote arts education in educational settings (formal and non-formal) and to establish a solid framework for future decisions and actions in this field. It aims to communicate a vision and develop

¹ http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=33538&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

a consensus on the importance of arts education for building a creative and culturally aware society; encourage collaborative reflection and action; and garner the necessary financial and human resources to ensure the more complete integration of arts education into education systems and schools. It seems evident that the government is either unaware of – or set on ignoring – the wide international consensus on these issues.

33. More recently a major outcome of the Second UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education (25-28 May 2010) was a plan of action that called on UNESCO Member States to realize the full potential of high quality arts education to positively renew educational systems, to achieve crucial social and cultural objectives, and ultimately to benefit children, youth and life-long learners of all ages.
34. Is this emphasis on academic subjects what employers and industry want? They have long argued that they need people with a range of flexible skills. A survey² of 300 employers and 50 university lecturers across the UK showed that two thirds (66%) feel schools should be doing more to encourage creative approaches to work in their students. The most highly rated creative skills include: a creative approach to problem solving; creative thinking; ability to innovate; digital and online creative skills; and the skill to create visually appealing work. Just where do these skills feature in the E-Bacc? The limitations of the E-Bacc that, as it stands, will damage the education of far too many young people and only serve to further alienate them from school.
35. If you want a more general rationale for why the arts are important in schools you can, of course, still refer to the 1999 report of the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 'All Our Futures' and more recent writing and lectures by Sir Ken Robinson. Particularly relevant to this discussion is this extract from a longer paper (Robinson 2001) sub-titled 'The Academic Illusion':

Some of the most successful people I know in all walks of life failed in education. No matter how successful they have become, they carry within them a secret worry that they're not really as clever as they are making out. I know teachers, university professors, vice chancellors, business people, musicians, writers, artists, architects and many others who failed at school. Many only succeeded once they'd recovered from their education.

What about all of those who didn't? A major reason for this vast waste of ability in education is academicism: the preoccupation with developing certain sorts of academic ability to the exclusion of others and its confusion with general intelligence. This preoccupation has led to an incalculable waste of human talent and resources. One of the essential tasks of education is to develop academic ability to the best standards possible for everyone. But there's much more to intelligence than academic ability and much more to education than developing it.

² http://www.elearningage.co.uk/newsDetail/10-10-26/employers_and_universities_look_for_creativity_in_school_leavers.aspx

Academic ability is specific. It is a capacity for logico-deductive reason and for propositional knowledge: for the kinds of ideas that can be put into words and mathematical formulae. These are immensely important abilities. But they are not the whole of intelligence. If there were no more to intelligence than this, most of human culture with its complex fabric of scientific, technological, artistic, economic and social enterprises would never have happened. For particular historical reasons, our education systems have become utterly preoccupied with these abilities to the point where all other forms of intellectual activity are seen as second order, overlooked or marginalised.

36. If you want an even more succinct rationale for the arts in schools then I recommend the work of Professor Elliot Eisner of Stanford University. Eisner argues there are ten good reasons why the arts are essential in the curriculum:
- a. The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships. This is unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail.
 - b. The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer.
 - c. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world.
 - d. 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.
 - e. 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.
 - f. The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects. The arts traffic in subtleties.
 - g. The arts teach students to think through and within a material. All art forms employ some means through which images become real.
 - h. 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 capacities to find the words that will do the job.
 - i. 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.
 - j. The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important.
37. Finally, there is nothing that makes the British inherently more creative than people in other countries: the reason for the UK's strong creative and design industries and hitherto vibrant arts sector and creative industries is the education system that drives it. Government policies at both school and university level seem intent on destroying 150 years of steady development to the ultimate detriment of the British economy and society. It's time for a u-turn on this issue and to afford the arts and creativity their rightful place in the curriculum and to ensure that every child does matter.

Dr John Steers, General Secretary NSEAD

Further references and sources of information

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The Arts Based Education Research knowledge base has a great deal of useful evidence in this area: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/arts-based-educational-research/>

Bamford, A (2006) *The WOW Factor - Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education.* Waxmann. Professor Anne Bamford's (University of the Arts London) research on creativity and international comparisons of arts education commissioned by UNESCO also provides many insights. See: <http://www.engineeroomcogs.org/staff/3-anne-bamford.html>

'A Better Baccalaureate', accessed 28 April 2011 at <http://abetterbaccalaureate.org/are-you-an-ebac-failure/>

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Random House.

Eisner, E (2002) *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, Yale University Press.

Elliot W. Eisner, Lee Jacks Professor of Education and professor of art at Stanford University, argues that the distinctive forms of thinking needed to create artistically crafted work are relevant not only to what students do, they are relevant to virtually all aspects of what we do, from the design of curricula, to the practice of teaching, to the features of the environment in which students and teachers live. See: http://www.infed.org/biblio/eisner_arts_and_the_practice_of_education.htm

Eisner also sets out extremely cogently and with profound insight 'What do the Arts Teach'. This lecture can be downloaded at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h12MGuhQH9E> It is essential viewing for anybody who doubts the importance of the arts in education.

In a 2005 Harris Poll 93% of Americans reported that they consider the arts a vital part of a well-rounded education. If such a poll took place here would it be any different? www.americansforthearts.org/news/press/2005/2005_06_13b.asp

The extensive longitudinal research work 'Project Zero' by [Howard Gardner](#) and [Nelson Goodman](#) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education designed to study and improve education in and through the arts. Goodman believed that arts learning should be studied as a serious cognitive activity, but that 'zero' had been firmly established about the field; hence, the project was given its name. Internet access at: www.pz.harvard.edu/research/Research.htm

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