De-Schooling Art and Design: Illich Redux

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Abstract

Using Ivan Illich's seminal works, *Deschooling Society* and *Tools for Conviviality* as touch-stones, this paper returns to further pursue the thrust of my article in iJADE 25.3 (2006), 'Domain poisoning: the redundancy of current models of assessment through art', and might be considered as a more radical addendum. The central strand of Illich's work on 'deschooling' is an indictment of the trend to dehumanisation and the counterproductivity which results from institutionalisation. This paper argues that it is time to revisit Illich's call for deschooling with particular reference to the teaching of art and design, and, in turn, to look at the construct of the art teacher for the twenty-first century as connoisseur/critic/animateur, aloof from the world of domain-based assessment. As has been suggested many times before within these pages and beyond, accountability makes teachers risk averse. In short, this article suggests that it is time that we took a structural risk and removed this glass ceiling to aspiration while calling for complete deregulation of art and design education and the reinstatement of the art teacher as an autonomous 'agent of change'.

Keywords

assessment, control, accountability, Illich, deschooling, free schools, commodification

Introduction

Ivan Illich wrote his groundbreaking book, *Deschooling Society,* in 1971 and, as I embarked on postgraduate study a decade later, it seemed that the thoughts therein still formed part of an epistemological avant-garde. My tutors talked of the value of experience rather than end-product and the danger of an education that merely chased credentials. It was heady utopian stuff which, unfortunately, lost credence as the first UK Conservative administration of 1979 sought to undermine trust of teachers and subsequently, along with governments of both persuasions, to make 'credentials' the be-all and end-all at each level of education.

I do not suggest that Illich's models are practical across society, or even the curriculum, but there seems much in his writing that resonates with new thinking in art and design education. Art is not a life or death issue: it is a quality of life issue. It is a measure of civilisation but not of survival. I can understand the need to benchmark quality of convergent thought or expertise when it comes to aspiring brain surgeons or climatologists. I despair, however, at the layer-upon-layer of contradictory, counterproductive and inappropriate bureaucratic models for assessment (the latest in England being the proposed introduction of Assessment for Pupil Progress for art or APP, a template for formative target-setting to criteria that do not match those of the national curriculum model) that art teachers are continually asked to assimilate at the behest of Illich's 'technocrats': 'Neither learning nor justice is promoted by schooling because educators insist on packaging instruction with certification …Yet to learn means to acquire a new skill or insight, while promotion depends on an opinion which others have formed' (Illich 1971, 19).

As if reliving the Wizard of Oz, we, in England, hand out diplomas as proxies for knowledge rather than a celebration of the journey itself. With each imposition by a Philistine self-designated elite, this journey is curtailed, homogenised and dehumanised: procedural knowledge is sidelined in favour of declarative knowledge:

(Schools) confuse process and substance. Once these become blurred, a new logic is assumed: the more treatment there is, the better are the results; or, escalation leads to success. The pupil is thereby 'schooled' to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new. His imagination is 'schooled' to accept service in place of value. (Illich 1971, 9)

But creativity needs to be nurtured not 'notched'. In 'Creativity: delusions, realities, opportunities and challenges', Steers points out that the nurturing of creativity in schools 'remains problematic because the risky thinking involved will be difficult in the many schools that have become risk averse in the face of increasing accountability' (Steers 2009, 126). He paraphrases Cropley, who suggests that teachers who 'foster creativity are those who emphasise "flexibility", who accept "alternative suggestions" and who encourage "expression of ideas"' (Steers 2009, 126). He tells of a meeting on assessment where it became clear what we were up against when a representative from an examinations board, which shall be nameless, fulminated that 'creativity needs to be controlled'. Illich would be rolling, smugly, in his grave. '(I)nstitutions create the needs and control their satisfaction, and, by so doing, turn the human being and her or his creativity into objects' (Finger & Asún 2001, 10). Plus ça change.

Accountability vs creativity

It is indeed a perennial theme that the dead hand of accountability within art and design education has been counterproductive to the nurturing of creativity. Commenting on the Australian experience, Emery concludes that 'accountability and empowerment … are two different sides of the coin and it is hard to have both' (Emery 1998, 272). She goes on to say that it 'is unfortunate that structural arrangements which are usually intended to empower teachers, usually end up dominating and alienating them' (Emery 1998, 267). This indictment of counterproductiv-

ity is a central plank of Illich's work: 'Both skill-learning and education for inventive and creative behaviour can be aided by institutional arrangement, but they are of a different, frequently opposed nature' (Illich 1971, 24).

This finds resonance with my recent experience as a member of a quasi-autonomous national government organisation, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency. Between 2007 and 2009, I acted as consultant representative for art and design on the QCDA's Key Stage Three (ages 11–13) Exemplification project, initially a noble and exciting exercise in finding inspiring examples of new thinking in art teaching from schools around the country with which to illustrate the introduction of the New Secondary Curriculum (NSC) in England and to evangelise about the need to recognise qualities and thinking skills which are not measurable in any conventional sense. Halfway through the timeline however, our job description changed and we were charged with rewriting assessment objectives to fit an imposed, one-size-fits-all-subjects, Assessment for Pupil Progress (APP) template, an unnecessary simplification of assessment strands already refined for the New Secondary Curriculum. In short, we moved from the 'inspirational' to the 'institutional' as though these were interchangeable goals.

The deschooling of society implies recognition of the two-faced nature of learning. An insistence on skill drill alone could be a disaster; equal emphasis must be placed on other kinds of learning. But if schools are the wrong places for learning a skill, they are even worse places for getting an education. School does both tasks badly, partly because it does not distinguish between them. (Illich 1971, 24)

Like Sisyphus, condemned by the gods to push a boulder up a mountain only to see it roll back down over and over again for eternity, we wrote and rewrote assessment documentation, only to find ourselves back at square one with a template little different from that of the original National Curriculum established by the Conservative government of 1988.

Although involving the contributions of many experts in the field, the feeling that there were too many chefs trying to square a circle led to a dog's dinner of a compromise between the New Secondary Curriculum and APP assessment models which will seem like an argument over angels dancing on a pin to many teachers.

The purpose of these models remains to allow for topping-up weaker domains and correct perceived deficiencies in a student's practice, but, as many of us will recognise, often these 'deficiencies' or 'failures' are the gate-posts to originality: 'Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently' (Henry Ford).

Who is to say that a teacher, who takes an existentialist stance and decides that the best target for a particular student to become 'more himself than another' (Witkin 1974, 81), who pursues perceived strengths rather than addresses weaknesses, is not making the right choice on the ground? To take the point to an extreme, would the genius of the illiterate Picasso have flowered had his teachers told him to focus on his literacy? Certainly, as a teacher, I have sat through many training days where those present were categorised as lions, dolphins or monkeys, had graphs drawn up showing where on the right/left brain continuum each of us lay and then urged to be true to ourselves and work to our strengths.

It is surely time to break free from nineteenth-century Positivist insistence that 'the objective is synonymous with the measurable' (Flynn 2006, 6). Kierkegaard might advise that appropriating one's own truth, rather than 'approximating' to some supposedly objective markers, is the key to the highest truth attainable.

And, if it is the development of students' idiosyncratic strengths towards which we strive, I would contend that this is only possible with trust devolved completely to the classroom teacher to judge each individual student's needs and potential. To this end, the right to 'fail' is important, but so too is confidence. A student's 'failures' cannot be public record if confidence is to be nurtured. 'The only sure way to avoid making mistakes is to have no new ideas' (Albert

Einstein). Or, as Grayson Perry concludes: 'Creativity is optimising your mistakes' (Perry 2010).

Kathryn Schulz writes of the need to embrace the scientific model where errors 'yield the greatest advances' (Schulz 2010) in all intellectual, aesthetic and practical fields. She advises that it 'would mean creating classrooms, workplaces and cultures that promote exploration and discovery rather than rewarding correct answers and punishing mistakes' (Schulz 2010). In an attempt to address the 'intellectual timorousness' (Davies 2010) engendered by an age-old didactic methodology in French schools, academics in Paris held a 'Festival of Errors' at the Ecole Normale Superieure, a series of events in July 2010 where participants were encouraged to make as many mistakes as possible. Taking Einstein's dictum as their spur, the purpose was to show how much in the way of invention was the result of the kind of happy accident that the French system had eschewed. Although viewed through a scientific prism, the concerns, as expressed by Maelle Lenoir of Association Paris Montagne, are familiar: 'A large part of the French school system is based on the *idée reçue* that errors are negative, when in fact it is by this very process of learning … that you make progress' (Davies 2010).

Anomalies and contradictions: a vignette

Encouragingly, in addressing this need to create safe environments for creative risk taking, a primary tenet of the New Secondary Curriculum in England is the return of local autonomy to teachers, but at the same time the government has defaulted to time-honoured dogmatic decree when it comes to attributes worthy of certification at Key Stage Four (ages 14–16) and beyond. There can be no more vivid an illustration of this counterproductive mindset, and the stark disconnect between the consensus of what constitutes good practice and the organs of state control, than the recent fiasco of Controlled Assessment to evidence the inadequacy of blanket diktat for a subject which is not measurable in an academic sense. Reacting to tabloid newspaper scaremongering that coursework allowed students to 'cheat' by solic-

iting help from parents, and embarrassed by the press spin given to incidents such as the furore over Prince Harry's Advanced level art exam, where a disgruntled former art teacher claimed that he had received unfair assistance, the Labour government of the time unleashed its nut-cracking sledgehammer and drew up new procedures to ensure that marks were only awarded to work done under the direct scrutiny of teachers and, by implication, devalue work conducted outside the classroom. Even the time-honoured process of making studies from the works of other artists in a gallery setting was lumped in with copying essays from the internet as evidence of rampant plagiarism.

People who have been schooled down to size let unmeasured experience slip out of their hands. To them, what cannot be measured becomes secondary, threatening. They do not have to be robbed of their creativity. Under instruction, they have unlearned to 'do' their thing or 'be' themselves, and value only what has been made or could be made. (Illich 1971, 45)

The contradictions inherent in the model were glaring and sent alarm bells ringing throughout the profession that decades of refined good practice and the year-on-year nurturing of independent study skills, now recognised as Personal Learning and Thinking Skills at Key Stage 3, were about to be undermined. The experience was Kafka-esque. Although the inappropriateness of the model for art and design was pointed out vehemently by those of us involved in pilots and consultancy, the rollout continued unabated.

Although following on the heels of a new Key Stage Three curriculum, redesigned to give emphasis to study skills seen to be the prerequisite for higher order learning in the twenty-first century and to highlight the importance of 'working independently and collaboratively' (National Curriculum 2007, 22), the introduction of Controlled Assessment seemed to be turning the clock back to my senior years at secondary school, spent hermetically sealed in a context-free zone drawing pot plants, trainers and what

ever else happened to be at hand in the art rooms. Much of this retrogressive paradigm shift stemmed from Ian Colwill's contributory paper, 'Improving GCSE: internal and controlled assessment (recommendations on the nature of controls needed for internal and controlled assessment in future GCSE specifications)', commissioned by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, which spoke portentously of the dangers of plagiarism, the consequent need for 'direct supervision' (Colwill 2007, 11) and, while teachers strive to integrate practical and theoretical study, of a structure where elements were to be removed from context to satisfy control requirements.

Furthermore, while the New Secondary Curriculum talked of the positive benefits of collaboration, Colwill warned of the danger of 'collusion' (Colwill 2007, 11). This is alarmist spin. I would suggest that art teaching that is entirely free of collaboration, both between students, and students and teachers, is not fit for purpose. I daresay 'the Prince formerly known as Artist' would agree.

From a social perspective it is understandable why tight controls, accountability in terms of high stakes testing, and the pre-specification of intended outcomes – standards they are called – should have such attractiveness. When the public is concerned about the educational productivity of its schools the tendency, and it is a strong one, is to tighten up, to mandate, to measure, and to manage. The teacher's ability to exercise professional discretion is likely to be constrained when the public has lost confidence in its schools. (Eisner 2004, 3)

In spite of the reductionist stance of previous recommendations within his paper, Colwill goes on to state that coursework should 'test skills and attributes that cannot be tested by terminal examination' (Colwill 2007, 3). This would suggest that it is *exactly* those behaviours, such as independent pursuit beyond classroom scrutiny, that should be credited.

Further on he uses the phrase 'an unhelpful distinction between subjects' (Colwill 2007, 14),

suggesting that if subjects were left out of the equation, they would suffer a loss of credibility. My feeling is that, as a subject offering the balance of a divergent experience for students, a distinction is not only entirely helpful but absolutely crucial. Lewis Carroll would have appreciated the moment during a meeting at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (later to become the Qualifications and Curriculum development Agency) when 'Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations' were pronounced immutable in their directive that students should not have access to cameras or computers, even in photography or graphics endorsements!

When filtered through the prism of the awarding bodies' specifications, although overlaid with more emollient phraseology, the contradictions became all the more convoluted.

The sample scheme in the specification published by Edexcel (the UK's largest secondary phase academic and vocational qualifications awarding body) naturally suggested that the Controlled Assessment exercise should occur at the end of the course to allow students the opportunity to evidence 'full potential' (Edexcel 2008b, 7). However, it goes on to recommend, by way of a 'clear and simple structure (for) better results for all' (Edexcel 2008b, 3), a return to a previous theme in order to reiterate skills and outcomes which could not in their original context, be presented for assessment. Although a pragmatic belt-and-braces strategy to optimise results in the light of new strictures, this would inevitably lead to a narrowing of breadth of study, run counter to the Range and Content aspirations of the Key Stage Three curriculum and undermine the specification itself, which states an aspiration to nurture 'effective and independent students' (Edexcel 2008a, 7) who have the opportunity to engage with a 'broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study' (Edexcel 2008a, 7).

The sample theme presented is *Surfaces*, and the suggested resources for observation lists a number of 'objects collected from the environment' (Edexcel 2008b, 23) which implies classroom-based still life as the acceptable form. The instructions suggest that students

should 'look at artists and designers' work connected to the theme' (Edexcel 2008b, 23). This would, presumably, be entirely from secondary sources if students are to get credit for studies and annotations.

Indeed, under 'exploratory aspects', the guide suggests that 'students might continue to explore objects *brought into the studio'* (my emphasis) (Edexcel 2008b, 25). The word 'might' is, of course, a weasel word which will absolve the board of accusations that they are setting up a methodological template but this will, nevertheless, be the result. More extraordinary is the suggestion of Architectural Forms (Edexcel 2008c, 13) as a sample scheme. Presumably, to gain marks for research, we are in for a plethora of investigations of the internal architectural features of art rooms across the country.

Key subject aims include the development of 'self confidence, resilience, perseverance, self discipline and commitment' (Edexcel 2008a, 1). I would argue that none of these attributes are nurtured through the constraints, and implied lack of trust, of Controlled Assessment.

Given that Controlled Assessment will demonstrate to the most cynical that a student's abilities are undoubtedly their own without fear of plagiarism or external help, one might have hoped that the final externally set assignment would have let students off the leash and tested aspects of independence and scholarship not allowed for in the coursework portfolio.

Unfortunately, it is clear that this component merely duplicates, without any coherent rationale, the restrictions of the coursework. The examination specifications state that work produced for the externally set assignment will be assessed 'under controlled conditions (and) will consist of approximately 30 hours supervised activity' (Edexcel 2008a, 14).

Is it any wonder that teachers despaired at the meetings held by the boards to introduce the new specifications. What rankled teachers beyond the thrust of the changes was the tone taken (by all boards): Controlled Assessment presented as an exciting new opportunity. This is Orwellian Newspeak distilled.

The constant reference to the desired increasing independence of students is completely at odds with the instruction to teachers to lead and to supervise. Independence cannot be nurtured without trust, and love of subject and scholarship cannot be fed without validating and celebrating work conducted beyond the classroom. Although the specification trumpets the importance of students studying 'art, craft and design in an integrated critical, practical and theoretical way, that encourages direct engagement with original work and practice' (Edexcel 2008a, 8), what was plainly stated at launch meetings for Edexcel was that visits to galleries without direct supervision would yield work of less reliability and should be discouraged.

The default for a timid teacher will be an entirely classroom-based practice: a return to still life and 'cut peppers'. Devoid of the inspiration of independent gallery studies, we will also see a return of 'school art' taught in a context-free zone. Teachers committed to an authentic experience will once again be put in the position of having to finesse the specifications by putting into place spurious safeguards such as mobile phone evidence of work conducted out of eyeshot.

In a nutshell, the whole sorry process evidences the craven authority worship at the heart of the English examining bodies, the lack of understanding of the subject by government, the unwillingness to listen and the unwillingness to rock the boat. I make no apology for pulling at the threads of this episode: it encapsulates succinctly the counter-productivity of overbearing institutionalisation forewarned by Illich. As John Steers wrote on the subject in a letter to Mick Waters at QCA:

If controlled coursework becomes a series of tasks set by the awarding bodies it will lead to even more teacher prescription, increased orthodoxy, and end any chance of encouraging genuine creativity. This would be massively retrogressive step and would effectively ensure that the entire art and design curriculum is led by assessment. This would not only be absurd, denies all sensible thinking about the relationship between

assessment and curriculum, but also would make English art and design education an international laughing stock. (Steers 2007b)

In the end it is just downright inequitable that subjects, for whom plagiarism was a problem, merely jettison the requirement for scrutinised coursework, while art and design, for which plagiarism has never been an issue, is required to add a layer of scrutiny. Since the exam boards have explicitly stated that they will not be policing this policy, what will actually happen is that teachers will continue to value and validate the work of students committed to the subject beyond the classroom but will just do so with an unjustified sense of guilt. All parties can congratulate themselves on a compromise having been met; but in the end, a compromise between good practice and bad practice is still a step in the wrong direction. Illich describes the tipping point 'when an enterprise grows beyond a certain point on this scale, it first frustrates the end for which it was originally designed, and then rapidly becomes a threat to society itself' (Illich 1973, x).

It seemed in its muddled and contradictory communication that the government was trying to remove human interaction from the teaching of a subject the prima facie purpose of which is communication and interaction. This need for interaction or 'conviviality' is another touchstone of Illich's thinking and bears revisiting. In his model, conviviality involves 'autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment' (Illich 1973, 24).

Convivial alternatives

I believe that a desirable future depends on our deliberately choosing a life of action over a life of consumption, on our engendering a lifestyle which will enable us to be spontaneous, independent, yet related to each other, rather than maintaining a lifestyle which only allows to make and unmake, produce and consume – a style of life which is merely a way station on the road to the depletion and pollution of the environment. The future depends more upon our choice of

institutions which support a life of action than on our developing new ideologies and technologies. (Illich 1973, 24)

This very much signposts a twenty-first-century work ethic which can be seen in the matrix structure and inclusivity of key twenty-first-century companies such as Apple and Google: companies which have broken 'the monopoly of the industrial mode' (Goodwin 2010). This work ethic has been described by Barry Barnes (Professor of Leadership at the Wayne Huizenga School of Business and Entrepreneurship) in his book *Business Wisdom from the Grateful Dead*. He posits that this deconstructed laid-back west coast approach to creativity has been a key influence on many companies at the forefront of the digital revolution. He suggests that it is their willingness 'to improvise, to embrace errors as a source of learning and to listen' (Goodwin 2010) which has been key to the success of companies who have welcomed this rhizomatic business model. One of the features of such success is the importance placed on sharing knowledge across company tiers, which is, of course, mirrored in the interactivity of Web 2.0 (one of the 'convivial tools' inspired directly by Illich) and finds resonance in the co-constructivist teaching and fellow-travelling described by Carnell and Lodge, where 'individuals learn together, generating knowledge and understandings they would not achieve alone' (Pringle 2009, 178).

Societal changes are exponential. This change of paradigm; from a hierarchical to a matrix model; from an industrial/passive populace to collaborative/active contributors to a twenty-first-century economy, can be seen at all levels in English society: from coalition government to the installation of self-service tills at supermarkets and the abandoning of speed cameras in favour of 'honour' systems to which people seem to be rising. Cynics might say that such changes are financially driven rather than idealistic, but the effect is the same. Trust is returned in kind. Since my school abolished sanctions for bad behaviour, such behaviour became a rarity, and, with the decision to abandon the archaic use of bells to signal lesson

changes, came a significant improvement in timekeeping on the part of students. Art departments who have opted for the holistically assessed, politically neutral, linear IB Visual Arts course have continued to nurture successful artists. It was reported (BBC 2009) that teachers who had opted out of the Standard Assessment Tests (used to assess the attainment of children attending maintained schools in England at key stages) had come to much the same conclusions as those who conducted them under duress. Logic would suggest that it is time to ditch the duress and return unqualified trust to teachers who, unimpeded by league table scrutiny, might develop a broader, more scholarly methodology. For:

Society can be destroyed … when it extinguishes the free use of the natural abilities of society's members, when it isolates people from each other and locks them into a manmade shell, when it undermines the texture of community by promoting extreme social polarisation. (Illich 1973, xi)

The new Key Stage Three curriculum recognises the importance of working to patterns that differ from the traditional timetable periods: of tapping into creative biorhythms. The words 'curriculum' and 'timetable' are no longer interchangeable, and there is much in the document which reflects and addresses Illich's concerns over commodification. Indeed, the increasing recognition of the 'extracurricular' in schools indicates a desire to compensate for the commodified core.

Teaching, it is true, may contribute to certain kinds of learning under certain circumstances. But most people acquire most of their knowledge outside school, and in school only so far as school, in a few rich countries, has become their place of confinement during an increasing part of their lives. (Illich 1971, 20)

Art and design teachers for the twenty-first century

So how might we rethink the role of the art teacher in Illich's ideal world?

Here it might be worth reminding ourselves why we value the contribution of visiting artists and creative partnerships, a recurring theme in research and the reason for the success of English initiatives such as the Artist Teacher Scheme which organises such collaborations. They bring unencumbered process to the classroom and a safe haven for 'playfulness'. Students become active rather than passive learners. Enquiry is in an atmosphere conducive to open-ended experimentation without guarantee of a safe outcome, and students work alongside visitors in a true co-constructivist atmosphere where:

the emphasis is on teachers and learners working together, sharing and re-ordering their own knowledge collaboratively, rather than confronting or 'winning over' each other, as would be suggested within a debate. Dialogue is here characterised by sharing, openness, honesty, risk-taking and a readiness to reassess existing knowledge. (Pringle 2004)

In 2006, The National Federation for Educational Research (NFER) concluded that children involved with Creative Partnerships outperform their peers by an average of 2.5 grades. If this experience is so valuable why is it not the norm? Why the tension described by gallery educators?

When describing their pedagogic practice, these artists tended to define themselves in opposition to teachers. Although respecting the teaching profession, they resisted describing their practice as 'teaching,' associating it exclusively with transmissive pedagogy. Instead, artists sought to engage participants primarily through discussion and exchanging ideas and experiences. There is evidence of 'co-constructive' learning taking place, whereby shared knowledge is generated between all participants including the teacher. (Pringle 2004)

This view of the visiting facilitator in opposition to the teacher is surely antiquated. If, as the NSC would promote, the methodology should be

child-centred, teachers should readily take on the mantle of facilitator/animateur, rather than didact, and revel in creative parity with their students.

Pedagogues, in an unschooled world, would also come into their own, and be able to do what frustrated teachers pretend to pursue today. (Illich 1971, 100)

Thus the teacher, envisaged by Illich, would 'apprentice' his or her pupil as might the master of a Renaissance school, acting as '*primus inter pares* in undertaking difficult intellectual exploratory journeys' (Illich 1971, 99). Open Socratic questioning would replace time-honoured 'result-safe' methodology and, as Illich contends, 'matching the right teacher with the right student when he is highly motivated in an intelligent programme, without the constraint of curriculum' (Illich 1971, 23) would vastly multiply skill learning opportunities. Illich refers to this dialogical relationship in Aristotelian terms as 'a moral type of friendship' (Illich 1971, 102).

Such a teacher would need new strings to their bow. Eisner talks of the teacher as connoisseur/critic, suggesting that:

If connoisseurship is the art of appreciation, criticism is the art of disclosure. Criticism, as Dewey pointed out in Art as Experience*, has at its end the re-education of perception… The task of the critic is to help us to see. Thus … connoisseurship provides criticism with its subject matter. Connoisseurship is private, but criticism is public. Connoisseurs simply need to appreciate what they encounter. Critics, however, must render these qualities vivid by the artful use of critical disclosure.* (Eisner 1985, 92–3)

Since these attributes are the fruits of experience, there would, of course, be a danger of a drop in consistency of provision where such experience cannot immediately be drawn upon, but, overwhelmingly, the removal of a ceiling of fear would raise the bar of aspiration in all but a minority of art and design departments.

Those teachers deemed not up to the task

need to have the opportunity to refresh their vision and benefit from the apprenticeship with more experienced staff. Eisner suggests that 'they have to engage in a continuing exploration of themselves, others and their arena of practice. They have to be able to reflect-in- and -on-action, engage with feelings, and be able to make informed and committed judgements' (Smith 2005). As Emery concludes: 'The mental maps of all teachers need to be updated on a continuous basis' (Emery 1998, 273).

In England, we provide a wealth of opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers to renew their own practice, to tap into and replicate the experience gleaned by students from interaction with visiting artists. But curriculum and assessment planners, at Key Stage Four (ages 14–16) and beyond, continue not to recognise or validate the immeasurable experience of the student involved in such interaction. In essence, what makes such interaction valuable is its unaccountable, blue-sky thinking, seat-of-the-pants experience. Should we not wish this to be the core of our methodology? 'Most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered … participation in a meaningful setting' (Illich 1971, 44).

I hosted a visit recently by an Israeli artist who had the students drawing on the studio floor with spices and condiments (you had to be there). The results were ephemeral, the experience kinaesthetic rather than aesthetic, but the experience was every bit as valuable (if not more so) as more easily quantifiable exercises. As Steers points out in the NSEAD's response to The 2007 House of Commons Education and skills Committee Inquiry into Creative Partnerships and the Curriculum:

It can be useful to think of creativity as a raft of multi-faceted abilities and predispositions – qualities that need to be fostered throughout the curriculum. Creative individuals may display a range of characteristics that extend beyond some assumed general capacity for divergent thinking. Capacities and abilities such as a tolerance for ambiguity; playfulness with ideas, materials or processes; an ability to concentrate

and persist, to keep on teasing and worrying away at a problem rather than seeking premature closure. Creative individuals are likely to recognise, or have a willingness to explore, unlikely connections and apparently disassociated ideas. They may be particularly self-aware and have the courage to pursue their ideas in the face of considerable opposition. Most of all, creative individuals must have the confidence, the self-belief to take intellectual and intuitive risks in the cause of innovation, breaking or pushing back the boundaries of what is known or thought possible, or in achieving new aesthetic conjunctions. (Steers 2007a, 1)

Why then are these very qualities, particularly playfulness, and the time given over in curriculum planning to nurture them, universally ignored in exam assessment schemes? The New Secondary Curriculum has placed value on accreditation of Personal Learning and Thinking Skills by teacher observation alone but this recognition has not extended to the sharp end of teaching at Key Stage Four and post 16.

Roles are assigned by setting a curriculum of conditions which the candidate must meet if he is to make the grade. School links instruction – but not learning – to these roles. This is neither reasonable nor liberating. It is not reasonable because it does not link relevant qualities or competences to roles, but rather the process by which such qualities are supposed to be acquired. It is not liberating or educational because school reserves instruction to those whose every step in learning fits previously approved measures of social control. (Illich 1971, 19)

A shamanistic counterpoint is advanced in the Gulbenkian Report:

(T)he arts deal in forms of knowledge which are greatly informed by feeling and intuition. We do not see these as their weaknesses but as their strength. The arts enable us to assert ideas and judgements which we may recognise collectively to be true but which cannot be proven in *other ways, through empirical experiment for example. Intuitive judgement must be recognised as a legitimate element in evaluating this work in schools.* (Robinson 1982, 86)

If such a shamanistic approach is to be desired, i.e. the belief that balance (in this case between the academic and the intuitive) needs to be restored for physical, spiritual and community wellbeing, curriculum planners need to recognise the arts as exercising different ways of understanding and contributing, and, in doing so, acknowledge the inappropriateness of traditional measurements. Illich uses the word 'healer' to describe a teacher with this kind of methodology and indeed the medical analogy is amplified by Eisner who describes effective criticism as 'the midwife to perception' (Eisner 1998, 6).

Of course, the mechanism for intuitive judgement is difficult to put into words but Wittgenstein would be amused at our obsession with definition rather than trust that we, as professionals in the same field, will recognise the *familienähnlichkeit* of the vast breadth of approaches and methodologies (see www.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/philo/geldsetzer/famaenl.htm). Maybe it is time to accept that, as specialists, we all have an innate *Spielzeug*, an understanding of what is 'right' for our subject, and the courage to stand up for it.

The arts teach students to act and to judge in the absence of rule, to rely on feel, to pay attention to nuance, to act and appraise the consequences of one's choices and to revise and then to make other choices. Getting these relationships right requires what Nelson Goodman calls 'rightness of fit' … Artists and all who work with the composition of qualities try to achieve a 'rightness of fit'. (Eisner 2004, 5)

Conclusion

None of this is new, of course. These points have been reiterated by many more eminent than I. Hickman, for one, suggests that schools are structurally and temperamentally 'antipa-

thetic to creativity' (Hickman 2005, 9).

But maybe in the climate of a new political broom in Britain, where years of disjointed fiscal policies are to be torn down and rebuilt under the banner of 'smaller government', we might hope for the same with education. With the current administration's emphasis on 'Big Society' (the coalition government's drive to devolve power from state to citizen) coming on the heels of a positive move to a localised curriculum, is it not time to grasp the nettle and invest total and unqualified trust in the teacher? The rhizomatic model is the paradigm for contemporary art practice; why not trust to the grass roots the education of tomorrow's artists? 'As the school master vanishes, conditions will arise which should bring forth the vocation of the independent educator' (Illich 1971, 99).

If 'free schools', in current UK political parlance, are now being encouraged to opt out of the national curriculum, with a nod to the Swedish model (Westhead 2007) and US charter schools, it is not a huge leap to imagine 'free departments' within schools setting their own ethoi, agenda and criteria. This is something of a surprising turn of events from a party that imposed the enormous shackles of the National Curriculum in an atmosphere of mistrust of the profession under Education Secretary Ken Baker in 1988, but let us not be churlish and assume an epiphany of sorts on the part of the current administration. To opt out of a centralised curriculum completely would be a natural destination of the localised curricular path set by the New Secondary Curriculum, so let us take them at their word and build on competition in its most enervating form. As Renaissance 'schools', the original co-constructivist models, might carve their own niches, creating a style and ethos from the sum of their parts as idiosyncratic as we would wish from our students, so would art departments, in a spirit of collaboration, work towards the construction of their own creative hinterlands; and so would teachers teach without looking over their shoulders, unhindered by anything but concern for their students' creative life.

Illich calls for an eradication of the control which institutions exercise over educational values:

The institutionalised values school instils are quantified ones. School initiates young people into a world where everything can be measured, including their imaginations … But personal growth is not a measurable entity. It is growth in disciplined dissidence, which cannot be measured against any rod, or any curriculum, nor compared to someone else's achievement. In such learning one can emulate others only in imaginative endeavour and follow in their footsteps rather than mimic their gait. The learning I prize is immeasurable re-creation. (Illich 1971, 45)

He reminds us that *schole*, the Greek derivation of the word 'school', means leisure, 'a state of being free from the necessity to labor'. Aristotle concluded that 'leisure is necessary for the development of excellence' (Raychaudhuri & Samdahl 2005). Would it not be wonderful to feel that our teaching was conducted in such a state of grace?

We have lived through an Apollonian age. It is time to celebrate the Dionysian.

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