

**International Monitoring and Comparative Research in Arts Education**  
**Wilbad Kreuth on 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> May.**

**Submission from John Steers**

Preliminary thoughts

This is a daunting and ambitious project. My experience of comparative research in art and design education has led me to become very wary of hard and fast conclusions: there always seem to be hidden circumstances that can alter the picture considerably when - and if – they are revealed.

It seems to me that any international comparison of the quality of arts education from country to country would need to be both qualitative and quantitative. Its validity and reliability would be reduced if it is dependent on self-reporting. The possibility of an international ‘inspectorate’ seems remote and may not be desirable. An additional issue is that the quality of arts education often varies from school to school, from subject to subject, from department to department, and from teacher to teacher. How can this be generalised? A sizable sample would be required to provide valid results and self-reporting by governments is as likely to be as unreliable as self-reporting by schools.

Notwithstanding these reservations such a project would have benefits – especially in a world where education policy seems increasingly to be driven by standings in world league tables such as PISA.

In England the principal responsibility for monitoring education rest with the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OFSTED) and with Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Schools (HMI). Their work includes surveys of individual subjects at irregular intervals. An example of such a report is [\*Drawing Together: Art, Craft and Design in Schools\*](#). This detailed 2009 report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of art, craft and design in a sample of primary and secondary schools. The report can be accessed at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Drawing-together-art-craft-and-design-in-schools>

Ofsted’s methodology is dependent on school visits, lesson observations, scrutiny of documentation, examination success etc. However an [\*Art and Design Department Self Evaluation review\*](#) template revised to take account of the draft Ofsted subject review criteria published July 2010 can be accessed at: [http://www.nsead.org/downloads/ART\\_DEPARTMENT\\_Self\\_Evaluation\\_Revised\\_2010.doc](http://www.nsead.org/downloads/ART_DEPARTMENT_Self_Evaluation_Revised_2010.doc)

This might provide a suitable model for development.

Ofsted’s guidance for subject survey visits to schools, including for art and design and music, can be accessed at: <http://ofsted.biz/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/General-grade-descriptors-and-supplementary-subject-specific->

[guidance-for-inspectors-on-making-judgements-during-- during-subject-survey-visits-to-schools/](http://www.artsmark.org.uk/?location_id=31)

Arts Council England (ACE) runs a scheme called ‘Artsmark’: [http://www.artsmark.org.uk/?location\\_id=31](http://www.artsmark.org.uk/?location_id=31) . ACE claims:

Artsmark is Arts Council England’s flagship schools programme, celebrating commitment and passion for arts education in schools.

Over the last 10 years over 7,000 schools have been a part of the scheme and currently almost 19.5% of schools in England hold an Artsmark award. To date it has served as an excellent measure of arts provision in and out of curriculum time as well as recognising partnerships with professional artists and organisations. It has also enabled schools to embed arts development as an integral part of their wider improvement, as referenced in the Self Evaluation Form and recognised by Ofsted.

Artsmark relies on a self-assessment form from which the assessment criteria can easily be deduced. The scheme is currently under review but earlier versions of the application form reveal the methodology. These can be downloaded at [http://www.artsmark.org.uk/?location\\_id=158](http://www.artsmark.org.uk/?location_id=158) Following submission of the self-evaluation form a sample of schools receive a visit from an Artsmark validator.

The National Foundation for Education Research has also published valuable research based on surveys. Publications include ‘*Saving a Place for the Arts? A survey of the arts in primary schools in England*’, (NFER, 2003) Downing, Dick; Johnson, Fiona; Kaur, Satpal. ISBN 1 903880 45 9

Also worth noting is: ‘*School Art: what’s in it? Exploring visual arts in secondary schools*’, (NFER, 2004) Downing, Dick; Watson, Ruth. ISBN 1 903880 87 4

I trust this information is helpful.

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