Syntegration or Disintegration?
Models of Integrating the Arts Across the Primary Curriculum

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Abstract

In a time when schools are focussing on increasing their numeracy and literacy scores, teachers are often required to spend the majority of their time teaching Mathematics and English and have little time left for the arts and other subjects. This has led to some teachers developing integrated programs in order to cover all the required learning experiences. However, practitioners and researchers have found that in many cases, integration results in superficial learning with few subject-specific outcomes being achieved. This paper presents three models or levels of integration (service connections, symmetric correlations and syntegration) where curriculum subjects can work together to achieve subject-specific as well as generic outcomes, then gives examples of how these models can be used within the primary school curriculum. It concludes with a real-life example of a syntegrated learning project.

Introduction

In a time when schools are focussing on increasing their numeracy and literacy scores, teachers are facing challenges to their creativity and control of what is taught in the classroom. Many teachers are often required to teach to a standardised curriculum and a set pedagogy with the majority of their time spent on teaching mathematics and literacy (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Gipps, 1999; Oerek, 2006). As the pressure for higher test scores increases, teachers are encouraged more and more to use teaching approaches that include drill and repetition, and have no time or autonomy to use creative and student-centred pedagogies or to include the arts in their curriculum (Oerek, 2006).

This method of teaching often ignores the individualised learning styles of children and the need to teach and integrate themes across the eight multiple intelligences in order for all the children in their class to experience deeper learning by using their preferred intelligences (Gardner, 1993). It also ignores the growing body of research which indicates that learning through the arts can be an effective method of increasing language and mathematics score (Elster & Bell, 1999; Fiske, 1999; Upitis, Smithrim, Patteson & Meban, 2001; Wilkinson, 1998) and that authentically integrating subjects across the curriculum can ensure children's learning experiences are meaningful and effective (Anderson & Lawrence, 2001). This paper presents a synthesised approach to integration that can assist teachers in achieving outcomes in each of the art forms as well as achieving and enhancing outcomes in other subjects across the curriculum.

Integration: Superficial Activities or In-Depth Learning?

"So much to teach – so little time!" is the cry from many classrooms. The crowded curriculum has led to teachers finding different ways of teaching all they need to teach within the given time period, and this has sometimes led to their integrating the learning experiences. For many years, academics and practitioners have advocated the use of integration in the educational classroom to provide children with holistic and meaningful learning experiences from which they can generalise understandings and then apply these to other situations (Barrett, 2001; Birch, 2000; Brewer, 2002; Burton, 2001; Ellis and Fouts, 2002; Roucher & Lovano-Kerr, 1995).

In the area of literacy, the whole language movement emphasised holistic rather than fragmented learning and often used a theme as a focus, suggesting that teachers integrate learning across the curriculum to enhance children's ability to read, write, talk and listen. The increasing diversity within classrooms and schools has given rise to integrated programs which aim to develop harmonious living within and without the school community, taking

advantage of the differences and using cross-curriculum approaches to explore diversity and harmony issues within real life situations (Krug & Cohen-Evron, 2000).

As the knowledge base expands through the use of mass media and technology, the emphasis of education is changing from learning and remembering facts, which will soon be out of date, to understanding the underlying concepts, applying them to new situations, and being able to develop generic skills such as research, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, problem solving, team work, leadership, and critical thinking to live and work in tomorrow's world (Mayer, 1992). For many teachers, this has lead to their exploring different ways of engaging children in learning experiences with integration being a key aspect of this process (Krug & Cohen-Evron, 2000; Snyder, 2001).

To Integrate or Not to Integrate?

However, in investigating how to integrate the curriculum effectively, practitioners and researchers have found that, in many cases, integration has become a meaningless and overworked word. Everyone seems to have a different understanding and explanation of the word. Some are ardent proponents for their interpretation of integration (Donmoyer, 1995; Jensen, 2001; Wilkinson, 2000), and others are just as whole heartedly against it, seeing integration as possibly leading to the dilution of important outcomes within discrete subjects (Best, 1995; Eisner, 2002; Smith, 1995) and that the arts and other subjects will not be valued for their significant and individual contributions to a child's education (Winner & Hetland, 2000).

For some teachers, integration means developing learning experiences based on a theme; for others, it is using the same song or artwork in two different subjects. One set of teachers may use the word "integration" when they have children colour in a stencil about a science experiment, and another set of teachers ask their children to complete an integrated project exploring a theme then having them present their work using some type of technology (Bresler, 1995; Wiggins, 2001).

Adding to the confusion of definitions, educators refer to integration by a variety of terms, including cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, infused, thematic, trans-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, holistic and blended (Bresler, 1995; Russell & Zembylas, 2007). There are also distinct connotations for the word 'integration' within the context of special education where children with disabilities are schooled alongside 'regular' children in the classroom. Although integration of special needs children is an important aspect of schooling, this paper refers to integration within the context of curriculum and not special education.

Defining 'Integration'

To develop a definition for integration, we can begin by examining its opposite. In a non-integrated environment, children move from one subject to another, making no links or connections among them and learning the skills, knowledge, and understandings of each subject within the closed doors of that particular subject. Then they pack up their books, take out new ones, move to another room and become involved in learning experiences within another subject that are totally unrelated to what they were engaged in several minutes before. This can lead to the curriculum being moulded into boxes of learning with little external context, links or explanations as to how what was learned in one subject can relate to what they are learning in another subject. Despite this, teachers who teach individual subjects without integrating across the curriculum, indicate that this is more effective as the individual subjects' specific and general outcomes are achieved. There is a deeper disciplinary understanding and experience of the subject and curriculum requirements are seen to be met (Russell & Zembylas, 2007; Veblen & Elliott, 2000).

On the other hand, realising that this type of learning environment may not be meaningful to many children, some teachers respond by moving to the other end of the continuum and planning 'integrated' programs that lose all integrity within the individual subjects. These programs end up being superficial activities loosely based on a theme, but with little depth or meaningful outcomes in any subject. In this view of integration, each of the subjects across the curriculum may lose their integrity and significant outcomes may be sacrificed to integration for the sake of integration and little is to be gained by this approach (Brewer, 2002).

Either approach rarely gives children holistic and authentic learning experiences that use their preferred intelligences or provide them the opportunity for in-depth understanding, development of generic skills and the ability to generalise and apply what they have learned to other situations. Therefore, a balance between the two extremes is needed so that children are achieving discrete indicators and outcomes in each of the subjects and/or art forms but are also engaging in authentic learning within a meaningful, holistic context and being given the opportunity to develop generic skills as well. This type of authentically integrated program can provide students with multi-faceted, in-depth learning experiences that challenge them both emotionally and intellectually (Mansilla, 2005; Patteson, 2002; Veblen & Elliott, 2000).

Three Models of Integration

This paper presents three models or levels of integration where subjects can work together to achieve authentic outcomes. Each is valid in itself when used by a creative and resourceful

teacher to promote the children's understanding and application of their learning, and each can also be used alongside the other models within the context of a program of work.

Because the word integration had both positive and negative connotations and understandings in education, this paper uses it in a broad sense and includes the following models of integration. They are *service connections* (one subject servicing learning in another subject), *symmetric correlations* (two subjects using the same material to achieve their own outcomes) and what we will call *syntegration*, a created word which indicates that subjects are working together synergistically to explore a theme, concept or focus question while achieving their own subject-specific outcomes as well as generic outcomes. These three models will be discussed and clarified by using specific classroom examples.

Service Connections

Service connections within subjects occur when concepts and outcomes are learned and reinforced in one subject by using material or resources from another subject with no specific outcomes from the servicing subject. In this model, the outcomes of one subject are promoted at the expense of the second subject (Brophy & Alleman, 1991).
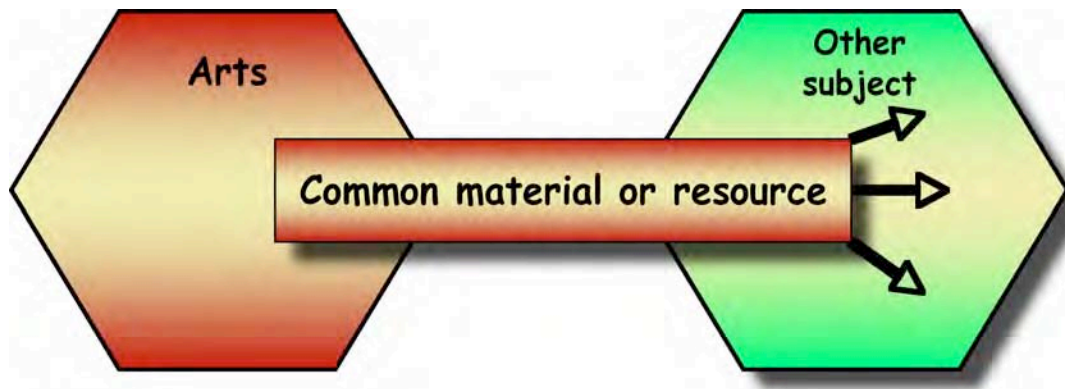

Figure 1. *Service connections.*

One example of the arts being used to achieve outcomes in other subjects is the use of counting songs to assist in learning Mathematics although this will often achieve no music outcomes. Creating a rap to help children remember the steps for the genre of procedural text writing uses the children's musical and kinaesthetic intelligences to achieve literacy but few musical outcomes. Learning to sing *The Alphabet Song* assists in memorising the letters of the alphabet. Singing the *Little Red Caboose*, colouring in a stencil of red balloons, dramatising the story *Little Red Riding Hood* and dancing with red scarves to music will help reinforce the concept of the colour red but may achieve little in the way of creative arts outcomes. Although these and other instances of *service connections* can be important teaching and learning tools,

they should not be viewed as valid arts lessons. Instead, they should be seen as using arts resources or materials to achieve outcomes relevant to the subject that is serviced by the arts. Using the arts to connect with other subjects may certainly enhance the learning experiences of children who learn kinaesthetically, visually or musically (Gardner, 1993). It may help them achieve outcomes in subjects where previously they have failed, and may also provide all children with engagement, enjoyment and motivation. Using *service connections* within the curriculum is a valid way of achieving certain outcomes in one subject, but should not be confused with *symmetric correlations* or *syntegration*. However, with a little extra thought and preparation, *service connections* can become *symmetric correlations* so that outcomes in both subjects can be achieved.

Symmetric correlations

Symmetric correlations centre around common or shared resources, materials or ideas being used within two or more subjects to achieve authentic outcomes in both subjects. This is a more symmetrical approach than the previous model of *service correlations* as both subjects benefit mutually from the learning experiences.
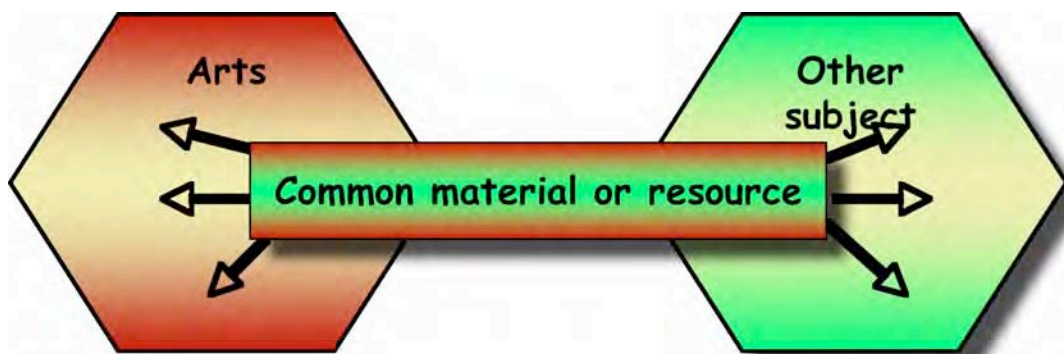

Figure 2. *Symmetric correlations.*

Unlike *service connections*, *symmetric correlations* view achieving outcomes in both subjects as equally important. One does not service the other. For example, if exploring the concept of the colour red by singing the song *Little Red Caboose*, dancing with red scarves, creating artworks using the colour red and dramatising the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* is seen as achieving valid outcomes for literacy, the teacher could then develop specifically arts-related learning experiences and outcomes which involve the colour red with these resources and activities. If these activities are appropriate to each art form, they could then include them in their developmental program as they introduce and reinforce relevant skills, knowledge and understandings in each of the art forms. Thus, authentic outcomes and indicators can be achieved in each subject so they can retain their own integrity.

Through *symmetric correlations*, teachers can begin to break down the barriers between the subjects and recognise that deeper learning can occur effectively and discrete outcomes can be achieved within two or more subjects using common resources or material. Added to this, children are also being given the opportunity to learn using a variety of intelligences and so enhance their learning (Gardner, 1993).

Syntegration

Synergy occurs when the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts. When used in this context, synergy occurs when the outcomes achieved through *syntegration* are greater than those achieved if each subject or art form was taught by itself or connected / correlated with other subjects.
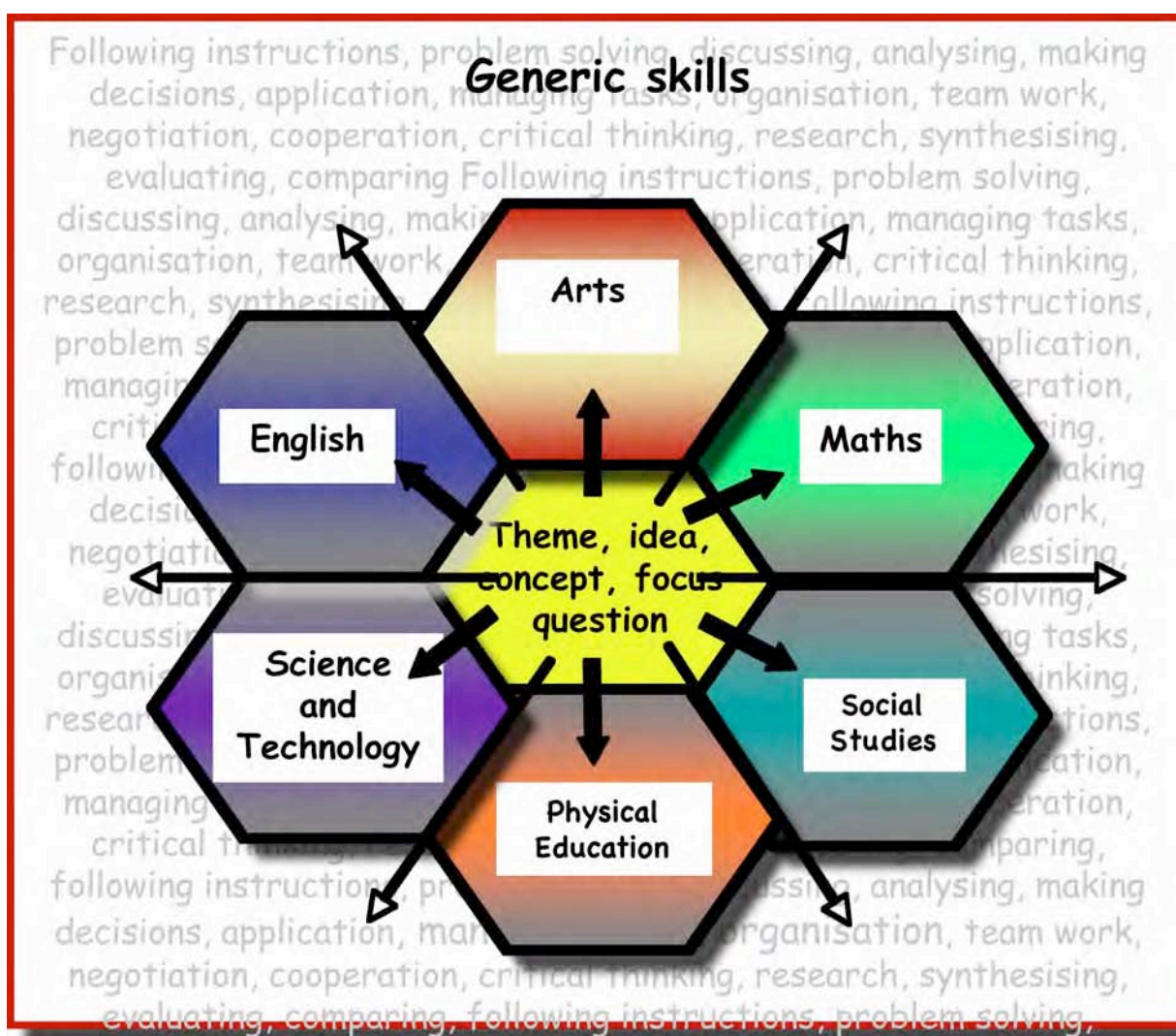

Figure 3. *Syntegration.*

Syntegration occurs when teachers plan purposefully to use broad themes or concepts that move across subjects so that the theme or concept is explored in a meaningful way by and within different subjects. Each subject's indicators and outcomes remain discrete and authentic, and the integrity of each subject is maintained. *Syntegration* also achieves outcomes that transcend those in each subject such as the development of generic skills, for example, observation, research, problem solving, and teamwork. Through *syntegration*, a higher level of learning and critical thinking is developed as children are encouraged to apply, compare, analyse, synthesise and evaluate ideas and concepts across the subjects.

As children explore learning experiences across the subjects, they can see their learning as authentic and meaningful. Within this broader context, learning is relevant to their lives, interests, intelligences, learning styles, needs and abilities and draws from multifaceted sources (Gardner, 1993). *Syntegration* can break down the barriers between different subjects and encourage children to extend their thinking. It can provide them with real-life experiences that are authentic and holistic and not segregated into separate boxes.

When planning a *syntegrated* theme, teachers should ensure that the outcomes are authentic and have integrity within each relevant subject They should ensure that artificial relationships are not created between the subjects or art forms, and that the discrete knowledge, skills and understandings of each subject are not blurred for the sake of the theme. Rather, a theme or concept should be explored using the many facets of different subjects in order to achieve a deeper, more holistic understanding of the theme or concept. It is important to ensure that learning experiences are selected on the basis of promoting and enhancing children's deeper learning and not just because the activities include other subjects.

Syntegrated Arts Programs

A *syntegrated* program can be based on a theme or concept and use the arts to develop multi-literacies or utilise the Multiple Intelligences across the curriculum to enhance and deepen understandings and learning experiences (Gardner, 1993). When considering a theme, concept or focus question to explore using *service connections*, *symmetric correlations* and/or *syntegration*, it is important that it is broad enough to cover several selected subjects or art forms with integrity. At times it will be difficult to cover all subjects or art forms, so *symmetric correlations* or *syntegration* is not forced, as it is better to have a cohesive, well-thought out unit which only covers four subjects than one which includes all subjects superficially.

Themes should be meaningful to the children, be based on their interests and be age-appropriate and flexible enough to allow the children to explore their interests, as well as covering key learning experiences, processes, understandings and skills. It may be possible to

combine a theme with an underlying concept or focus question to bring further depth to the learning experiences. For example, if the theme is 'Rainforests', the underlying focus question may be, 'Why are rainforests important and how should we protect them?' Themes may arise from the syllabus, a special event such as the Olympic Games, a current news item, a book that children have enjoyed reading, generic skills such as cooperation, teamwork or problem-solving, or research-specific skills common to several subjects, key concepts or processes, or a school issue that needs to be addressed such as bullying or community harmony.

All programs and subjects do not have to be totally *syntegrated* or, indeed, totally separate from any other subject; rather, there should be a balance across the year of discrete, focused programs in subjects, as well as *service-connected, symmetric-correlated* and *syntegrated* programs of work. At times, a particular piece of content, understanding or skill needs to be taught as such within one subject; another time, a resource or material from one subject can be used to teach some skills, knowledge or understanding within another subject using *service connections.* At other times, two subjects may use the same resource or material to achieve outcomes for their own particular skills, knowledge and understandings, using *symmetric correlations*. And, finally, a theme may be explored using a focus question or concept that can use each of the subjects to bring a multifaceted depth of understanding about the theme, can achieve authentic indicators and outcomes from each of the discrete subjects which maintain their own integrity, and are stage-appropriate and can develop generic skills and attitudes within the children, using *syntegration*. This model of *syntegration* can assist children to develop in the following areas:

Academic Achievement;
Respect for self and others;
Training in life – generic skills; and
Self-Expression (Russell-Bowie, 2009).

An example of *syntegration* within the arts could be a unit based on Impressionism. Learning experiences could include learning about the cultural context of this period through appreciating art, music, dance and drama artworks created in this style, and then making their own artworks within the impressionistic style in each of the art forms. A researched and analysed exploration of the historical events surrounding and producing the Impressionistic Period could be undertaken in Social Studies and children could write an impressionistic poem or create a narrative text that explains their understanding of the concept of Impressionism from a variety of viewpoints. In developing the theme, students could illustrate the poem or text with relevant scanned and photographed images to achieve English and Media outcomes.

Another arts-centred theme could focus on patterns, with children focussing on patterns in each of the art forms as they create and appreciate music, media, visual arts, dance and drama artworks. Through this *syntegration* approach, children could develop team working, leadership, cooperative, listening and problem solving skills. The program could then be expanded across subjects as they explore patterns in maths, poetry, natural science and physical education games.

Community Harmony Project: Real-Life *Syntegrated* Creative Arts Project

Another example of *syntegration* can be seen in the authentic learning experiences that arose as a result of a Community Harmony Project. Children from Greentree Primary School (alias) were given the unique opportunity to explore their role in the community through the creative arts and learn how they could use the arts to promote harmony within that community. The research study based on this project investigated to what extent staff and children in the Community Harmony Project perceived that the children had developed in relation to academic achievement, respect to self and others, generic skills and self-expression through the course of the syntegrated arts project.

Background

There is no doubt that arts education is a source of fun and pleasure for many children facing the challenges of school life. With a growing emphasis in schools on academic achievement, strictly limited to the core subjects of English, Math and Science, the arts offer a useful and creative system of learning, implicit with their own diverse range of skills that quite readily apply to everyday life. According to Fiske (1999) and Winner & Hetland (2000), the effects of arts on generic academic success and achievement are numerous: many studies support the conclusions that the arts have a significant positive effect on basic language development. Arts activities foster positive attitudes towards school and the general curriculum, and increase productivity that can be generalized to all areas.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (2007) also set out to evaluate the impact of arts programs on students' academic progress, engagement with learning and attendance at school. The research found that the investigated arts programs enhanced students' potential to engage in learning by helping them feel more confident about themselves through increased self esteem. Importantly, the contribution of the arts to students' self esteem was seen to be of particular significance for students from dysfunctional backgrounds and those who suffered from particular disabilities such as ADD and autism. The study noted the generic skills that developed as students worked together as a team, learning that each person is an integral member of the team, and learning the various social and communication skills needed to contribute to the team, as well as artistic self-expression skills.

However, specific causal relationships between arts involvement and academic achievement has always been a methodological problem with few, if any studies, finding that general arts study has a direct and specific result in raising academic achievement. There is also a concern that measuring academic achievement is a continuing challenge, if one wishes to side step the standardised tests and use more child-centred approaches, investigating different ways of what learning looks like and what learning takes place (Russell and Zembylas, 2007; Winner and Cooper, 2000). However, as noted above, many studies indicate that arts study can lead to an enhancement in children's self-concept, which in turn, can be a basis for enhanced academic achievement.

Methodology

Participants

Greentree Public School in New South Wales, Australia, is located in a low socio-economic area with 87% of children coming from a non-English speaking (mainly Arabic) background. The state of New South Wales does not have a policy for using specialist music and visual arts teachers in the primary school so the creative arts subjects (music, dance, drama and visual arts) are the responsibility of the generalist classroom teacher. Both national and international research confirms that generally, where the classroom teacher is responsible for the children's arts education, the arts are not taught consistently or effectively in primary schools (Jeanneret, 1997; Kim, 2001; Lepherd, n.d.; Mills, 1989; Sanders and Browne, 1998). The recent Australian National Review of School Music Education (Pascoe, et al., 2005) confirms these findings in relation to music education, across many primary schools in Australia.

This also appeared to be the situation at Greentree Public School. There were several teachers who had an interest in one of the arts areas and developed learning experiences in this art form with their children, but generally, there was little evidence of a consistent quality developmental arts education program throughout the school. When interviewing interested teachers and children in the school, it was confirmed that visual arts was the main art form taught, music lessons, if included, generally consisted of singing, drama lessons focussed on short skits and assembly items and dance was part of the Physical Education program, with little emphasis on creative dance. Therefore, the children involved in this project had little significant or developmental background experiences in any of the art forms.

Procedure

This project employed a case study approach selected for its ability to provide a "unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles" (Cohen, Manion &

Morrison, 2000, p. 181). Eighteen children from Years 4 – 6 were chosen to work in this project, and were selected mainly on the basis of their artistic ability and some of the children were also seen as having leadership potential. Many of them were in their last two years of primary school and could be deemed to be 'at risk' in terms of their low literacy levels and lack of self-confidence and low self-concept. It was anticipated that through the project, the children would develop their confidence and self esteem, through developing leadership skills through the arts so that they would be better equipped to make the transition from primary school to secondary school.

A classroom teacher in the school was the impetus for the project and worked in conjunction with a university lecturer to plan and implement the project. The university lecturer acted as mentor and 'critical friend' to the teacher, taught the music and visual arts lunchtime workshops and was a participant-observer within the framework of the case study. As part of the case study, the teacher, principal, other teachers and children were interviewed by the participant-observer about their perceptions of the outcomes arising from the project, both during and at the end of the project. The teachers and principal were asked specific questions relating to their perceptions of the impact of the project on the children's academic achievement, personal interactions with each other, development of generic skills and development in artistic self-expression.

Description of Project

Over a period of five months, during lunchtimes and after school, the 18 children were involved with their teacher and a university creative arts lecturer in music, dance, drama and visual arts learning experiences. These aimed to provide children with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop and curate an art exhibition of their works on the theme of *My Community: The Power of Story*. To prepare for this, the children participated in a series of syntegrated arts activities which focused on the theme of Community Harmony and children were encouraged to talk, learn, research and think about what community harmony meant to them, how they could bring about harmony within their own community, whether in the classroom, at school, at home or in the wider local community and how they could express their understanding of this theme using a variety of media and art forms.

Visual Arts and Music Learning Experiences

As part of this Community Harmony project, the children visited art galleries to learn about conceptual art, practised sketching in the city, took black and white photographs of their community, visited an artist's studio, learned to draw with pastels as taught by a visiting artist, developed and presented a musical rap dance and a shadow puppet play about Community

Harmony, learned about curating an exhibition on Community Harmony and created a series of artworks that were then exhibited for six weeks at the local university's Art Gallery.

In the lead up to the exhibition, the children were also involved in a series of music and visual arts learning experiences during their lunchtimes. The visual arts activities included glass painting, silk painting, marbling and clay work, and focussed on the elements of line, colour, shape and pattern. Most of the children had received very little musical input in primary school apart from singing, although some of them were involved in the choir and dance groups for the local performing arts festival. Therefore, the music activities were simple and focussed on the elements of pitch, tone colour, structure, dynamics and duration. As well as a variety of tuned and untuned instruments, concrete materials such as flashcards of instruments, note value, scores, etc., were used to assist with learning.

Music activities included learning how to play xylophones and untuned percussion instruments, how to read and play simple rhythms and how to make up a pentatonic melody to a poem. Students also explored the tonal qualities of body percussion, vocal sounds, percussion instruments and created graphic scores for these sound makers.

Simple work cards explaining the procedures for each activity were created so the children could practise these in their own time. The children worked together as a large group to learn the basic concept of each activity, then practised the activities in pairs or small groups to gain confidence and skills in each learning experience. In preparation for teaching these activities to other children in the school, various teaching strategies were modelled, discussed, practised and refined as children began to understand the complexities of teaching the activities.

Other Creative Arts Experiences

For the launch of the exhibition, the children developed a rap, a Readers' Theatre presentation, a multi-media presentation and a shadow puppet play, all of which focused on Community Harmony. Each student was responsible for different aspects of the preparation of the exhibition and before the launch, the children spent a full day hanging and labelling all the artworks. At the launch, the children presented their music, dance, drama and visual artworks with confidence and professionalism that clearly showed their skill development in each of these art forms over the past months.

Peer Teaching Experiences

Following the launch of their art exhibition, the young artists/tutors practised teaching a selection of music and visual arts learning experiences to their immediate peers in the group. They discussed and practised appropriate teaching strategies and behaviour management

strategies. The activities they were preparing to teach were the ones they had experienced themselves in the lunch-time workshops, and which they would then teach the rest of their school in groups of 5 – 6, giving them each the opportunity to create music and visual arts artworks. During the two days after the exhibition launch, three classes at a time were bussed onto the university campus where every class of children walked through the exhibition in the University art gallery, were encouraged by two of the 18 children to talk about it and then write or draw their responses to the displayed artworks. Each class then rotated around the music and visual arts activities as pairs of the 18 leaders taught small groups of children how to read simple rhythms and make up pieces of music on tuned and untuned percussion instruments and how to create visual artworks using silk painting, marbling, clay and glass painting.

Over 300 children aged 5 to 13 were involved in this project that brought the whole school community onto a university campus and exposed all the children to peer-taught music and art activities. For most of the 300 children, this was their first experience working with tuned and untuned percussion instruments, participating in clay, silk, marbling and glass painting activities, and visiting an art gallery. In general, music and art lessons had not been a significant part of their primary schooling to date, so these learning experiences were exciting and new to most of the children. Although teachers have reported that there are a significant number of children who exhibit challenging behaviours in the general classroom, it was interesting to observe that there were virtually no behaviour problems throughout the two days as every child was engaged and interested and learned to respect and work cooperatively with their new 'peer teachers'. For legal reasons, a classroom teacher supervised each class and was available as back-up support for behaviour management problems. However, this was not utilised as generally the 18 peer tutors had each of their small groups in control and on task.

In observing the peer tutors in action, teaching the groups of children, it was clear that they knew their subject matter well and had planned how they would proceed. When a new group came to their part of the room, they would greet them, sit them down, explain briefly what they would be doing, then step by step introduce the instruments, demonstrate them, set out the rules and consequences, allow the children to explore playing the instruments (remembering that most of the children had never used musical instruments before) and then proceed with the activity.

When a class signal was given, each group tidied up their instruments and resources, shared briefly an example of their music making, and then moved onto the next learning experience, taught by another pair of tutors. This series of music and visual arts peer teaching activities was repeated for all 12 classes from the school over two days with peer tutors rotating around the groups so that each of the 18 children experienced teaching all of the activities.

Case Study Results and Discussion

In order to evaluate the outcomes of the case study, the teacher leading the project was interviewed along with the principal, other teachers and the child peer tutors. Data from the case study was analysed in relation to academic achievement, respect for self and others development of generic skills and self-expression. The results indicated clearly that, over the few months that these 18 children had worked together on this project, they had achieved discrete outcomes in each of the artforms of music, dance, drama and visual arts as well as showing a significant development in the areas of leadership as well as enhancing their:

> **A**cademic Achievement in each of the arts areas;
> **R**espect for self and others;
> **T**raining in life and generic skills; and
> **S**elf-Expression (Russell-Bowie, 2009).

Academic Achievement

Apart from learning in each of the art forms, specific academic achievement in other subject areas was not observed clearly within the case study. However, children's attitudes to school and engagement in learning were seen to have significantly increased when they were in the classroom and during the creative arts experiences. This should have a positive relationship on their actual academic achievement in school. The children's teachers, the university lecturer and the pre-service student teachers who observed the children in their peer tutoring lessons were surprised at the children's teaching ability as they showed initiative, confidence, leadership and organisational skills in this environment. Some teachers, who knew the children well in the school situation, found it hard to believe the difference in the change in attitudes to learning, as well as confidence and ability of the tutors in this teaching role. One teacher commented:

> *This project has been a platform for developing the children's leadership skills and ability in music, art, drama and dance. It allowed them to prove to themselves, their teachers and their families what they were capable of doing. It has been a really amazing project! (PL)*

Respect for Self and Others

Involvement in this project made the children aware of their own behaviour as students and, as a result, some of them have made positive changes in their own behaviour. They were given responsibility and, knowing that people were depending on them and that the success of the exhibition and the workshops depended on their carrying out their jobs responsibly, they became accountable and responded accordingly. Being part of this selected group, they

developed a sense of being special, they felt they had to live up to the important role for which they had been chosen and this led to them developing their self-respect and increasing their respect for others. Teachers noticed the development of this respect and commented:

> *I have seen the children blossom and become so much more confident and respectful about their abilities and about their potential and I have seen them broaden their views of themselves and their future. (PL)*
> *The children saw the benefit of being responsible and learned how to develop trust, respect and admiration in others as well as developing significant leadership and organisational skills. (SD)*

Training for Life

The children were unused to these kinds of social situations where a lot of self-control is required, and usually acted impulsively, being easily distracted with short attention spans. However despite this, teachers were surprised to see them modify their behaviour to suit each situation because they were representing the school. They were the teachers and leaders and this was their event for which they were responsible. They took ownership of the event and through this, developed organisational, communication and team skills. Taking them outside their normal school environment was very important because it brought them out of their comfort zone and their normal behaviour patterns. It exposed them to experiences that they may never have had otherwise and it broadened their horizons, opening up to them previously unknown possibilities in the area of future study, leisure and careers as well as artistic experiences. When asked what they had learned throughout the project, some children commented:

> *In the team teaching we learned to be patient and not to talk too much as the children would only get confused! (FD)*
> *We learned to communicate clearly with the children and to keep our words and instructions short and simple. (CS)*
> *I learned in this project that if I set my heart to anything, I can do it! (EL)*

The teachers agreed that the children had developed generic life skills through this experience, and one teacher commented:

> *Now that these children have had these opportunities and have had their eyes opened to artistic and broader life possibilities; they have more choices in life and in their future. They have learned that there can be other futures for them that they had not previously considered, their horizons are so much broader, they have developed personal tools to*

> *help them meet the challenges of life and they know that they can do anything they want*
> *in life. (PL)*

Self-Expression

The children flourished in an environment that allowed them to create and express themselves freely. They learned that the arts were 'free from rules', that they couldn't fail in the arts and that they could express themselves in a way that they were unable to in any other learning area. The project also gave children a reason for learning; it gave meaning, depth and understanding to their learning and put it in an authentic, real-life context. They could see why they were doing activities, as they were not just time fillers but there was a purpose to their learning and it was up to them to ensure the success of the project, the peer teaching workshops and the exhibition. The children also learned to appreciate different art forms and use these to express themselves in a variety of ways. Two children commented:

> *Using the arts was a great way to express our feelings. (SK)*
> *Every art work and piece of music was different and unique although we all used the*
> *same materials. (RT)*

The teachers also confirmed that the children had development in the area of self-expression and one teacher commented:

> *The project allowed the children to explore and develop their creative potential. (SC)*

Arts for Arts Sake

Apart from achieving outcomes in a variety of artforms and Key Learning Areas, one of the major successes achieved by the project was giving these particular children an opportunity to experience the arts in a way that they would never have had otherwise. The majority of children had never been to an art gallery, had never played a xylophone or a guiro, had never formally taught another child and had little experience in arts education within their schooling, so this was a significant learning experience that teachers felt would influence them for many years to come.

Over the few months that these 18 children worked together on this project, the findings from the interviews indicated that they had achieved discrete outcomes in each of the art forms of music, media, dance, drama and visual arts and showed a significant development in the area of self-confidence, self-esteem, interaction with others and leadership. When they took on the role of teacher in the workshops, they showed that they understood the need to be prepared, the need to keep their students engaged as well as the need to build the relationship with the

students by welcoming them into the room, explaining the rules and consequences, demonstrating skills and praising the children who did well. Their teachers, the university lecturers and the pre-service student teachers who observed these lessons were amazed at the children's teaching ability as they showed outstanding initiative, leadership and organisational skills in this environment.

Involvement in this project made the children aware of their own behaviour as students and as a result some of them have made very positive changes in their own behaviour. They were given responsibility and, knowing that people were depending on them and that the success of the exhibition depended on their carrying out their jobs, they became accountable and rose to the occasion. Being part of this select group, they developed a sense of being special and they felt they had to live up to the important role for which they had been chosen. Although the children were unused to these sorts of social situation where a lot of self-control is required, and in class were often impulsive and easily distracted with short attention spans, it was amazing to see them modify their behaviour to suit each situation because they were the leaders of an important project. This was their event for which they were responsible and they took ownership of the event. Removing them from their normal school environment was very important because it brought them out of their comfort zone, it exposed them to experiences that they may never have had otherwise and it broadened their horizons, opening up to them previously unknown possibilities in the area of future study and careers as well as artistic experiences.

For such children as Ahmed, the project has been a platform for developing and extending his confidence, maturity and leadership skills and has allowed him to express himself through art and dance. It gave him the opportunity to prove to himself, his teachers and his family what he was capable of doing.

Iman grew up in a family of six girls and often struggled in academic areas. She felt her identity was in her appearance and focused on this as being the most important aspect of her life. This project has given her a new identity: that of teacher and artist. She even surprised herself as well as others with her artistic ability, initiative, leadership and teaching skills. It has been a wonderful opportunity to inform her parents and teachers about what she is capable of achieving. She initially had no idea what she wanted out of life, and had no affirmation about her artistic and leadership skills; after this experience she is determined to go to university and become an art teacher!

Mary is a dominant twin and involvement in the project has increased her maturity and understanding of what a responsibility it is to be so capable. It has helped her deal with jealousy and learn to be dependable. She has also seen the benefit of being responsible and

has learned how to develop trust, respect and admiration in others, and through the project she has developed significant leadership and organisational skills.

These vignettes of changes in children's lives show only the tip of the iceberg — future research could determine how much this project has influenced the lives of each of these 18 children. Now that they have had these *syntegrated* opportunities and have been engaged in these artistic learning experiences, they have learned that there can be other futures for them that they had not previously considered. They have developed personal tools to help them meet the challenges of life and they say that they know they 'can do anything'.

Conclusion

Although there is still much debate about integration in the arts, the suggested model of *syntegration* goes some way towards developing a model that will assist teachers in providing their children with a multi-faceted pedagogy that achieves individual subject-specific as well as generic outcomes. When implementing *syntegrated* programs, teachers should ensure that each subject's indicators and outcomes remain discrete and the integrity of each subject is maintained. Through *syntegration*, a higher level of learning and critical thinking is encouraged as children are encouraged to apply, compare, analyse, synthesise, and evaluate ideas and concepts across the subjects or art forms. Syntegration across the curriculum, using the arts can enhance children's academic achievement, respect for themselves and others, life skills and their self-expression (Russell-Bowie, 2009). Through authentically integrating subjects across the curriculum through *syntegration*, children's learning experiences were meaningful and effective (Anderson & Lawrence, 2001) and their learning was enhanced across the subjects. This authentically *syntegrated* program provided students with multi-faceted, in-depth learning experiences that challenged and developed them both emotionally and intellectually (Mansilla, 2005; Patteson, 2002; Veblen & Elliott, 2000), providing learning outcomes in each of the subjects covered, as well developing in them significant generic skills.

For further examples of online syntegrated programs based on children's books and themes, go to www.artsmmadd.com, then into the RESOURCES folder and open up INTEGRATION

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