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Participation in Community Arts Informs Teaching and Learning

Ian Bowell

School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

New Zealand

ian.bowell@vuw.ac.nz

Abstract

Catering for a broad curriculum and the diverse needs of students and teachers can often challenge schools. A school's participation in community arts projects has the potential to address some of these challenges by supporting teaching and learning. Drawing upon analysed data from five New Zealand case studies, this paper examines the relationship between community arts projects and participating schools. Analysis of the presented data demonstrates a link between a school's participation in community arts projects and enhanced teaching and learning. Evidence highlights the important role played by situated learning and collaborative teaching methodologies in engaging students and supporting teachers. The five case studies presented in this article include a community's visual response to Matariki (Māori New Year), a masked parade, a beach mural, and the work of two public galleries in co-ordinating community visual arts-based projects with community artists and local schools.

Keywords

Situated learning, Community arts, Collaboration

Introduction

This paper, using analysed data from five New Zealand case studies, examines how a school's participation in a community arts project can inform teaching and learning. Within the New Zealand curriculum, The Arts (visual art, music-sound arts, dance, and drama) is one of the eight essential learning areas. Students participate in all four arts disciplines from years 1 to 8. The combination of teaching a wide-ranging curriculum and supporting the diverse needs of students and teachers is an on-going challenge to schools. Local communities often provide support for schools in the form of expertise to enhance teaching and learning (Andrews, 2011; Bowell, 2011, 2012; Matarasso, 1997; Van Kassteel, 2011). In the United Kingdom, Matarasso (1997) evaluated a random selection of participants from a community arts project in more than 30 schools in Portsmouth and found participation in the arts had a positive impact on the educational performance of three out of every four children. When discussing the impact of arts partnerships between schools and the arts community, Andrews (2011) makes the observation that the arts can raise student self-esteem, engage students in inspirational experiences, and increase arts learning and cultural appreciation. A report from the United Kingdom government's Social Exclusion Unit noted that supporting participation in the arts and sports aids neighbourhood renewal through improved performance on indicators of health, crime, education, and employment (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999). In the Netherlands, van Kassteel (2011) discusses a variety of community arts projects and views them as bridges between learning opportunities inside and outside the school, between school and family culture, and between home and the world outside. This evidence suggests a school's participation in community arts projects can enhance teaching and learning.

Transforming Communities

The ability of community arts projects to support the regeneration of communities is well documented (Bowles, 1989; Braden & Mayo, 1999; Landry, Greene, Matarasso, & Bianchini, 1996; Matarasso, 1997), with a body of literature emphasising the transformative effect of community arts projects on communities (Andrews, 2011; Kay, 2000; Matarasso, 1998; Van Kassteel, 2011; Williams, 1997). Since the 1970s, the use of community arts projects to regenerate local communities has grown. In the last 15 years major cultural centres (museums and galleries) have become associated with community regeneration through community arts projects. Some cultural centres have become cultural brokers' co-ordinating and instigating arts-based projects within their local communities. London's Tate Modern is one such centre. Since its establishment in 2000, it has been involved in a range of community projects such as the establishment of a garden for use by local schools and the community, and the Walkways project in the local borough of Southwark where two artists worked with the local community to transform everyday activities into street performances. In 2000, London's National Theatre developed a creative arts programme aimed at socially excluded youth with the aim of improving their education and employment prospects and reducing social exclusion. In talking about cultural projects in the US, Borrup (2006) makes the point that these projects should be seen as vehicles to boost the prospects of disadvantaged groups within the community. A report commissioned by the National Museum Directors' Conference (2004) in the UK highlighted the kinds of activities explored by UK cultural centres. These activities included the use of cultural power to regenerate run-down urban areas and initiatives to engage excluded communities.

Cultural Centres Support Teaching and Learning

Cultural centres' support for local communities is also evident in the work they do with schools, providing support for teachers and students within their local communities. Frequently, support for teachers is seen where museum and gallery education is offered within the cultural centre. They provide teacher professional development programmes; for example, New York's Museum of Modern Art offers a range of teacher professional development courses. In the UK, Davies (2010) described the use of cultural centres (children's theatres and museums) to help student teachers develop confidence in the teaching of the arts. Cultural centres often offer a comprehensive range of practical activities for students - the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney provides practical visual art activities associated with its exhibitions; in Boston, the Museum of Fine Arts is working with eight community organisations to introduce youth to both the Museum's collections and to art-making processes; and In London, the National Gallery's Out of Art into Literacy (2010) exhibition showcased a project between the gallery and local primary schools that used artworks to develop children's literacy skills.

If community arts projects address contemporary social challenges, what role do schools play when they take part in them? Can the transformative nature of community arts projects described by Andrews (2011), Kay (2000), Matarasso (1998), Van Kassteele (2011), and Williams (1997) extend to teaching and learning in schools?

Case Studies

The research project informing this paper began in New Zealand in June 2012 and was instigated by the author. It set out to discover the effect on teaching and learning in schools participating in a community arts project. The project consists of a range of comparative case studies and at the time of writing this paper data from five case studies have been completed. Each case study, written by the author, was chosen to ensure the comparative case studies

represented a range of school contexts, differing student ages and varying community arts projects organisers including local community centres, arts councils and museums and galleries. This paper presents and considers analysed data collected from those five case studies which are:

- Matariki mural project
- Masked parade project
- Kinetic sculpture and dance project
- Prayer flag project
- Beach murals project.

The Matariki mural project took place in a provincial New Zealand city in June 2012 and was instigated by a local community centre organiser. The city's arts council funded the project and a local community artist organised local primary, intermediate and high school students to design and paint the mural. The mural depicted the story of Matariki (Māori New Year) and was painted on the outside wall of a primary school's classroom, next to a public footpath, making it visible to the public. This case study focussed on the four schools involved in the design and painting of the mural.



Figure 1. Primary students working on the Matariki Mural.

The masked parade project took place in December 2012. The parade is the opening event of the annual Arts Festival of a New Zealand city. Each year the parade is themed, which participants interpret through costume and mask. In 2012, the theme was Myths and Legends.

Local community groups are encouraged to take part in the parade, with the majority of participants coming from local schools. This case study focussed on one school's participation in the 2012 masked parade. The whole school (424 children) worked for a term (10 weeks) on their entry for the masked parade, integrating their design work into the teaching of all curriculum areas.



Figure 2. Students participating in the Masked Parade.

The kinetic sculpture and dance project was associated with an exhibition of Len Lye's kinetic sculpture at a New Zealand city gallery, and took place in April 2013. The gallery's education department organised the project and a dance education organisation offered a programme to local primary schools that involved students responding to the kinetic sculptures through dance. The children's choreographed responses were performed in the gallery space during their gallery visit, with workshops facilitated by the gallery educator and a dance education expert. This case study focussed on four classes from one of the participating primary schools.



Figure 3. Primary students dancing in the gallery (Kinetic sculpture project).

The prayer flag project was co-ordinated by a provincial New Zealand museum and gallery in conjunction with a community artist, and took place in May 2013. The artist designed the project and the museum co-ordinated it. The project involved the artist working with students from local schools to design and make flags in the style of Buddhist prayer flags. Each student created a design representing their concerns and hopes for their community. The designs were realised as woodblocks and printed on the flags. The project's goal was to hang the resulting 3000 flags in the community during their arts festival. This project was part of a national project organised by the artist and was replicated in two other cities in New Zealand. This case study focussed on three secondary schools' participation in the project.



Figure 4. Prayer flags hung in the local community.

The beach mural project, completed in February 2014, was instigated and co-ordinated by a provincial city arts and heritage officer. Over a period of five years a beachside playground had been re-landscaped. Consultation with the city's youth council identified a need for an area for local youth to congregate, and to accommodate this need an outside stage and picnic area was designed. The final component of the design was a series of large boards which formed a screen. These boards could be replaced and the concept was that different schools and youth groups would create artworks on each board. The first board designs were created by two local secondary schools and an alternative education centre. The case study focussed on two high

school classes and an at-risk youth alternative education centre's response to the beach mural project.

Research Design

The research project used to inform this paper used a multiple case study methodology (Yin, 2006, 2009) grounded in pragmatic perspectives. Prior to starting the project, ethics approval was granted and informed consent gained from all interviewees before the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted.

All semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants at the completion of each community arts project and these face-to-face interviews were recorded and transcribed. Semi- structured interviews questions focussed on 3 areas.

1. How the community arts project was instigated?
2. What processes were involved in completing the projects?
3. What was learnt both during and after the completion of the projects?

All transcripts of interviews and focus group discussions were analysed using a system of open coding (Denscombe, 2005; Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process generated a series of themes specific for each case study. Themes generated from the initial analysed data were compared to discover if evidence from the five case studies was convergent. These themes were re-analysed to identify any themes common to the five case studies. Those common themes were used as codes to re-analyse all the transcripts.

Each case study focussed on a school or schools that chose to take part in a community arts project. Data in the form of semi-structured interviews, observations, and focus group discussions were collected from participants in each case study and analysed for evidence that might indicate an impact upon teaching and learning within the schools, both during and after taking part in the community arts project.

Across the five case studies, 32 semi-structured interviews and two focus group discussions were conducted. The interviewees included:

- Twenty-one teachers (17 generalist primary teachers, one specialist visual art intermediate teacher, two specialist visual art secondary teachers, one specialist visual art youth worker)
- Three gallery educators
- Three community artists
- One arts festival director
- One community arts manager
- One community centre organiser
- One community youth organiser
- One community arts organiser.

The first focus group discussion included:

- One community artist
- Two gallery educators
- One teacher.

The second focus group discussion included:

- One gallery educator
- One community artist
- One teacher.

Initial data analysis generated a series of themes which were analysed to identify those common to all the case studies. The following common themes were identified:

- Communities supporting schools
- Collaboration
- Teacher learning
- Student learning.

All data were then re-analysed using these four themes as codes.

Communities Supporting Schools

Interviewees talked about the important role of schools and youth groups within their local community:

I wanted it to be a whole community event. I wanted to see the connection between primary school and intermediate and high school, that was important for me to see the kids coming together and taking ownership of their area ...connecting the schools and the communities and pulling them into working cohesively on the one project. (Community centre organiser, Matariki mural project)

The community centre used the mural project as a vehicle to encourage local school students to become involved in, and connected to, their community. The community centre organiser used the design and painting of a public mural depicting the celebration of a cultural event as a way of developing a sense of community. The organiser believed local schools are ideally placed to realise this goal. A teacher of Te Reo Māori involved in the mural project commented:

Fostering a sense of community so it is really important for our Māori students to be involved within the community as part of that contributing back. (High school teacher, Matariki mural project)

The teachers and youth workers involved in the beach mural project emphasised the importance of the students being given the opportunity to have their voice heard. They associated this process with being an important ingredient in developing the students' relationship with their local community. The council officers saw their role as giving the students the opportunity, through the project, to engage with the community and foster the development of their social well-being by having their voice heard. A student who took part in the project said:

I think it is cool to share our work with the public and I think people will be impressed that it came from such young students. (Written feedback from High school student, beach mural project)

A community arts organiser said:

I do I think it helps them to said build a better world view and that they have done something they are connected to. (Community arts organiser, beach mural project)

The community arts organiser made the connection between students' participation in the project and developing a greater understanding of their community. The council officers also talked about the students making their mark, both literally and metaphorically, within their local community.

Teacher and youth worker interviewees expressed the view that students should be encouraged to be actively involved within their local community. They felt that one function of participating in a community-based arts project was the opportunity for students to become active within the community. Within all five case studies the teacher and youth worker interviewees emphasised the way schools provide a focal point for diverse community groups within their community. Interviewees from cultural centres, community organisations, councils, and the community artists emphasised that supporting schools and students within their community was an integral part of their role. Teachers and youth workers highlighted the importance for schools and youth centres to be actively involved within their community.

Participation in community arts projects helps realise that goal:

Part of our role is to develop a sense of community, and schools are the hub of that community. (School principal, masked parade project)

Seeing the gallery as a place where a group or a community can meet ... galleries and museums should be a meeting place and that community should have ownership of and learn something new or they will be challenged with things, but they will feel comfortable enough to come in and connect with the space and think that it is their space. I see myself as a connector, the person who is bringing the opportunities to educators and students or to the artist. (Gallery educator, prayer flag project)

Both the school principal and the gallery educator talked about the part played by schools and cultural centres in developing local communities. The gallery educator talked about "bringing together opportunities" and the school principal talked about the school's ability to "develop a sense of community". Both roles complement each other. The relationship

between cultural centres and schools must be interdependent if their goal of developing their local communities is to be realised.

Collaboration

Data analysis highlighted the importance of collaboration in developing a community arts project. In each case study a community group or cultural centre brought together separate community groups to focus on a common theme through an arts activity.

Interviewees talked about collaboration when discussing the organisation of, or participation in, community arts projects. Teachers talked about collaborating with other teachers, experts outside school, and students collaborating with each other. Youth workers talked about collaborating with community groups and students working collaboratively. Community artists and museum and gallery educators talked about collaborating with different groups within the community.

Analysis of the theme collaboration revealed it was described in the following ways:

- Collaborating community groups
- Collaboration between teachers
- Collaboration between teachers and experts
- Collaboration between students.

When teachers and youth workers talked about collaboration they focussed on the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers within their schools and experts outside school:

We met in our groups.... It was co-operative and nice to work with other teachers.
(Teacher, masked parade project)

You get to work with other people with different talents and strengths and you don't get to do that all the time. (Teacher, Mural project)

Teachers and youth workers attributed the success of the community arts projects to the collaborative process used in the projects. Evidence from teacher and youth worker

interviewees suggests the success of community arts projects relies on the collaboration of participants and the use of expertise offered by individuals from within their institutions and the wider community.

Teachers also talked about students collaborating with each other and the impact of this upon student learning:

Our older children were working alongside our younger children helping them and supporting them. (Principal, masked parade project)

In each case study students were required to work collaboratively on the projects. Students were asked to discuss ideas and develop a creative response such as a mural design, a choreographed movement, or mask design. Individual creative contributions became part of the group's collective response. Responding collectively mirrored the organisation of community arts projects and the way communities respond to their environment:

... everyone using their skills and feeling valued and proud of the whole project; it is better that you have everyone on board and everybody's input. (Maori immersion class teacher, mural project)

Interviewees talked about what they have learnt as a result of working collaboratively. They talked about learning from each other and from the expertise of others involved in the collaboration.

Experts such as the artists and the cultural centre educators also talked about how they learnt from working with the students, the teachers, and others within the context of the projects. The evidence demonstrates that community arts projects work when those involved collaborate, and as a result collaboration informs teaching and learning.

Teacher Learning

Teacher and youth worker interviewees talked about the collaborative process informing their own professional development. Each school approached the project with staff collaborating to use their expertise within their institution, and collaborating with experts outside. When the

teacher and youth worker interviewees talked about seeing other experts working with the students they emphasised how they learnt from that experience. In talking about the kinetic sculpture dance project, one of the teachers said:

Being so close to these expert people you get more technique and more confidence to carry out those things yourself.

They related the process of observing experts working with the students and clients to the development of their own professional competence. They discussed how the experience of being part of a project informed their own practice following the completion of the projects.

I know the teachers have gone over there and used it and talked about the story and gone back to the classroom and written about it. (Māori immersion class teacher, mural project)

The above quote describes how other teachers within the school used the visual metaphors contained in the mural as a teaching resource, once the mural project had been completed. As well as depicting the story of Matariki, the mural contained visual references to the history of the local landscape and its importance to local Māori. Images within the mural were visual metaphors for Māori concepts:

There is symbolism in all parts of the mural. Teachers have gone over there and used it and talked about the story and gone back to the classroom and written about it. To participate in a Māori piece of art it has significance to all cultures about the explanation of creation, sharing different versions of creation and Whakapapa (genealogy) so they can talk about where they come from and their own stories. (Māori immersion class teacher, mural project)

The mural was created using the collective knowledge and expertise of the local community. Once completed, themes from the mural informed the teaching and learning of teachers and students within the school.

Interviewees emphasised the importance of collaboration with experts to support the projects. During the early stages of the masked parade project, when developing the theme for their masks, local community experts on Māori protocol were consulted. The school broadened its learning community beyond the school gates using community expertise. An art materials

supplier and the local council provided support in the form of workshops on designing and making masks. The local council also organised local businesses to donate materials to the schools for mask making and costume design. The community arts project therefore brought together various threads of the community in order for the masked parade to be realised.

Creating a collaborative teaching community to support teacher learning is described in a range of literature (Crebbin, 2004; Huberman, 1993; Lieberman, 1996; Loewenberg Ball & Cohen, 1999; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002; Timperley & Robinson, 2002). This literature discusses how teachers can develop confidence in teaching by working in collaborative groups towards common goals. Analysed data from these five case studies highlighted the importance teachers place on collaboration with experts within and outside school. The literature describing community arts projects emphasises their transformative nature on communities (Andrews, 2011; Bowles, 1989; Kay, 2000; Matarasso, 1997, 1998; Van Kassteele, 2011). They describe the benefit of participation in community arts projects as contributing to social change. The literature describing collaborative teaching communities and the literature describing community arts projects attribute an increase in participants' confidence to the process of collaboration. The interviewees highlighted the importance of working with experts both inside and outside school to developing confidence in teaching, which reflects the findings of the literature.

Student Learning

Analysis of the theme student learning identified two categories: student learning during the project and student leaning once back in the classroom. Teacher interviewees talked about students learning in groups and in some cases learning in groups across a range of ages. For example, the mural project was organised into working groups comprising students from

primary, intermediate, and high school. Older students took responsibility for supporting younger students:

There was a lot of social learning that went on particularly for the teenagers; for the boys there was that responsibility and they took that seriously. (Community artist, mural project)

The boys she referred to took responsibility for designing a stylised weta (native insect) for the mural. They created a stencil of their design and the younger students worked with the older students to manufacture the stencils and use them to create the mural. The collaborative nature of the projects gave teachers the opportunity to organise how the students would work together, and as a result students were able to support one another. In the following quote the teacher talked about students learning from the expertise of the community artist, and about students seeing that visual art can be a profession:

... the students seeing that you could work as an artist and learn about the various techniques used. (High school visual art teacher, prayer flag project)

Interviewees talked about students learning about the process of creating a work as well as learning about arts-specific techniques:

I hope they learn that this is an art process. That collaboration and the idea of being a part of the collaboration that they learn, it is a process that isn't necessarily about sticking a painting on a wall in a gallery, that it is a practice that involves a community, creating a community that creates an artwork. (Cultural centre educator, prayer flag project)

The educator emphasised the creation of an artwork within a collaborative setting, which she calls a community. A link is made between creating an artwork collaboratively and working within a community towards a common goal. The community centre organiser talked about connecting the schools to their local community (see Communities supporting schools). The cultural centre educator talked about working within a community on a common goal. The underlying belief in these examples is that working collaboratively towards a common goal within a community setting can develop the students' understanding of how communities can effect change.

Although the focus of these projects was the arts, often the primary school teachers talked about how learning associated with the projects informed other curriculum areas:

It was integrated into other areas of literacy and writing and everything else. (Teacher, masked parade project)

The school that took part in the masked parade project integrated its work on the project into all curriculum teaching for the 10-week term. This integrated approach to teaching is common in primary schools and reflects their approach to teaching a crowded curriculum. The impetus provided by taking part in the project supported the teaching of all curriculum areas within the school.

Interviewees talked about the projects' "real" or "authentic" setting, motivating students and enabling them to learn:

This is a real thing happening in real time and there is something exciting about that. (Secondary visual art teacher, prayer flag project)

According to Lave (1988), learning is a function of the activity, context and culture in which it sits. She calls this "situated learning". A critical component of situated learning is social interaction, where learners become involved within the site and activities associated with that site. The data indicate that interviewees attribute student and teacher learning to the projects being real or situated. Some researchers (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991) further developed the theory of situated learning, emphasising the concept of "cognitive apprenticeship", which describes learners developing and using skills in an authentic setting. They make the point that learning advances via collaborative social interaction and the social construction of knowledge.

Data used to inform this paper highlight the importance the interviewees attach to the effect of collaborative social interaction and the context of the community arts projects in their learning. They talk about leaning from the expertise of others within an authentic setting.

Conclusion

This paper set out to discuss how teaching and learning in schools can be enhanced when schools participate in community arts projects. Analysed data from five case studies revealed the following four common themes which were factors enabling teaching and learning to be enhanced in the schools that participated in community arts projects:

- Communities supporting schools
- Collaboration
- Teacher learning
- Student learning.

Interviewees either worked in schools, cultural centres or community organisations. Those from cultural centres or community organisations talked about organising community arts events as a way of supporting schools within their community while interviewees from schools talked about the role of schools in developing local communities. The data demonstrated the interdependent relationship between schools and cultural centres or community organisations. Each needed to collaborate to realise their goal of developing their local community.

All interviewees emphasised collaboration as an important element within the projects. Literature describing collaborative teaching communities (Crebbin, 2004; Huberman, 1993; Lieberman, 1996; Loewenberg Ball & Cohen, 1999; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002; Timperley & Robinson, 2002) and community arts projects (Andrews, 2011; Bowles, 1989; Kay, 2000; Matarasso, 1997, 1998; Van Kassteel, 2011) points to the importance of social interaction as a vehicle for change for participants in those communities or projects. The change can be seen in teacher/student learning or a social change within a community. The interviewees talked about becoming more confident in teaching through their interaction with each other and with experts, and this growing confidence supported learning.

In discussing collaborative teaching communities, Glazer and Hannafin (2006) outline a collaborative apprenticeship model which consists of four phases: introduction, developmental, proficient, and mastery. They describe a supportive community of practice where teacher leaders act as mentors to develop confidence and expertise within their learning community. The process is one of acculturation as teachers gain expertise within a social setting. Within the context of the five case studies, the teachers extended their community of practice outside the confines of the school. The teachers talked about learning from experts within the contexts of the case studies. The teachers from the case studies had extended their community of practice beyond the confines of the school.

The interviewees also talked about the opportunity for participants to bring their own understanding and knowledge to the projects:

We bring a piece of ourselves to it [artwork] and then if we are able to have a conversation about it, it is a really nice way of everyone feeding their own interests into the group and generating new interests that can be taken back to the classroom. (Gallery educator, dance project)

The educator talked about students and teachers bringing knowledge to a project and using it as a starting point when taking part in the project. The projects allowed teachers and students to share knowledge and generate a new understanding of the projects' content which was taken back to the classroom. This new understanding informs future learning, whether for the teacher or the students.

Data also highlighted the importance of situated learning in supporting teaching and learning. Situated learning research emphasises the importance of learners developing skills within an authentic setting (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991). All the interviewees emphasised the link between learning and community arts projects being real or situated.

Analysis of data from the five case studies has revealed a process where community arts projects inform teaching and learning. When a school works with either a cultural centre

or community arts organisation and collaborates in a community arts project, situated learning and collaboration informs teaching and learning, and this in turn informs the school and future learning. As a result of their participation in a community arts project, teachers' own learning was informed by student learning as well as students learning from the teachers (See fig. 5).

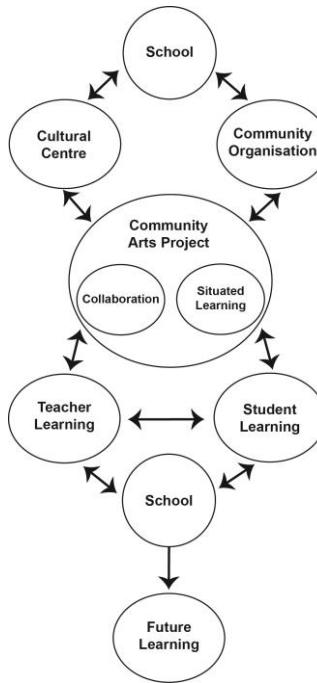


Figure 5. Community arts projects informing teaching and learning.

Analysed data from these five case studies shows how a school's participation in community arts projects can support teaching and learning in the school. Interviewees highlighted their participation in a community arts project supported them in their teaching of a range of curriculum areas. Earlier I asked the question about whether the transformative nature of community arts projects (Andrews, 2011; Kay, 2000; Matarasso, 1998; Van Kassteel, 2011; Williams, 1997) extended to teaching and learning in schools. In each case study the teacher interviewees discussed how their teaching had been informed through participating in the projects, and how that learning had transformed their teaching. They also talked about how the students had not only gained a greater understanding of the specific context of each community arts project, but they were also able to use this understanding to inform their future

learning. The role played by the community arts projects upon student leaning was transformative.

Currently, five case studies have been completed in this research project and analysis of data has revealed a model that describes how teaching and learning in schools can be informed by a school's participation in community arts projects. The model is continuous as future learning can feed back into participation in other community arts projects.

Schools represented in these case studies had easy access to either a cultural centre or organisation able to organise community arts projects. The schools were also receptive to collaborating in community arts projects. Without this receptiveness and the availability of organisations to organise community arts projects none of them could have taken place. In New Zealand not all schools have the same access to these institutions especially schools in the more remote rural locations. The community arts projects highlighted in these five case studies relied on developing local community links in order to function. One way to address the problem of access could be to replicate the interdependent relationship between a school and its local community in an online environment. An online support community could be developed connecting resources and expertise in community groups to schools in more remote environments. Collaborative community arts projects could then take place in an online setting.

It can be a challenge supporting students to understand their community and develop tools that will help them become successful participants within that community. Evidence from these five case studies demonstrates a school's participation in community arts projects can be a powerful tool in helping them to understand that diversity.

Primary schools often address the pressure of teaching an expanded curriculum by integrating the teaching of separate curriculum areas. The analysed data from these case studies demonstrate how participation in community arts projects is another aid to achieve integration of the teaching of curriculum areas. Further data from future case studies will be collected and

analysed and it is hoped the role played by community arts projects in supporting teaching and learning in schools will be better understood.

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About the author

Currently Ian is a lecturer in visual art education at the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. With experience in pre-service and in-service teacher education, Ian has a background in visual art education in both the primary and secondary sectors. Ian is also a practicing artist and has exhibited work in New Zealand and the UK. Ian's current research interest is the relationship between Museum and Gallery education and schools, investigating the link between student achievement and engagement following a Museum or Gallery visit.

His most recently completed research project examined ways to provide community support for teacher learning in visual art. The objective of this two-year project looked to provide a visual art support network for provisionally registered primary teachers. The network, built around cultural centres and community based arts expertise, was designed to help the provisionally registered teachers develop their confidence in the teaching of visual art.