

**“We need to put the Arts on the map!”—
Exploring the perspectives of primary
educators about the teaching of the Arts in
Australian primary schools**

Susan Mary Lane
BA (UNE); Dip Ed (UNE)

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School of Education

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Required Statements

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

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Table of contents

Title page “We need to put the Arts on the map!”– Exploring the perspectives of primary educators to the teaching of the Arts in Australian primary schools.....	1
Required statements.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Table of contents.....	4
Tables.....	12
Figures.....	14
Abstract.....	14
Chapter 1 Introduction and Project Overview.....	17
1.1 Background to the study.....	17
1.2 Purpose.....	19
1.3 Research significance.....	20
1.3.1 Research design.....	20
1.3.1.1 Opportunities for comparison.....	20
1.3.1.2 Extending previous research.....	20
1.3.2 Instigating a Foucault lens.....	21
1.4 Research question.....	22
1.4.1 Sub-question One.....	22
1.4.2 Sub-question Two.....	23
1.5 Method summary.....	23
1.6 Limitations of the research.....	25
1.7 Chapter summaries.....	26
Chapter 2 Literature Review.....	29
2.1 Introduction.....	29
2.2 Context for the Arts.....	30
2.2.1 Defining the Arts.....	30
2.2.2 Education in the Arts.....	32
2.2.3 Arts education curriculum focus.....	33
2.2.3.1 Arts education in Australia: a history.....	33
2.2.3.1.1 The Arts for First Nations People.....	33
2.2.3.1.2 Since colonial settlement.....	35
2.2.3.1.3 Early 20 th century.....	36
2.2.3.1.4 Mid 20 th century.....	37

2.2.3.1.5 Late 20 th century – 21 st century.....	38
2.2.3.2 Arts education in other spaces.....	40
2.3 Recognition of the importance of Arts education.....	43
2.3.1 Recognition in research and advocacy documents.....	43
2.3.1.1 Advocacy.....	46
2.3.2 Recognition in curriculum planning.....	47
2.3.3 Recognition in the community and schools.....	50
2.3.4 Lack of appreciation of the importance of Arts education.....	51
2.4 Challenges to the implementation of Arts education in different primary school teaching spaces	54
2.4.1 Variation in teacher background.....	54
2.4.2 Limited skills.....	55
2.4.3 Pre-service training issues.....	58
2.4.4 Attitudes, feelings and confidence.....	60
2.4.5 Gender expectations and attitudes.....	61
2.4.6 The crowded curriculum.....	61
2.4.7 Need for Support.....	63
2.4.7.1 Support from school executive and community.....	63
2.4.7.2 Mentoring.....	64
2.4.7.3 External providers.....	65
2.4.8 Teaching spaces for the Arts.....	66
2.4.8.1 Physical space.....	67
2.4.8.2 Concerns within regional spaces.....	69
2.5 Strategies to support the implementation of Arts education in different primary school teaching space.....	71
2.5.1 Specialists.....	72
2.5.2 Partnerships.....	73
2.5.3 Mentoring.....	76
2.5.4 Integration.....	77
2.5.5 Changing the culture.....	80
2.6 Research process in this project.....	82
2.6.1 Foucault’s spatial thinking and analytical tools to interrogate Arts education implementation.....	82
2.6.1.1 Spatial considerations.....	83
2.6.1.2 Analytical tools.....	86
2.6.1.3 Kaleidoscopic metaphor.....	87

2.7 Summary of key research literature findings	88
Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology	90
3.1 Introduction.....	90
3.1.1 The curriculum context	91
3.2 Research Design	93
3.2.1 Research paradigm: Pragmatic.....	93
3.2.2 Ontology: Constructivist.....	94
3.2.3 Epistemology: Interpretivist.....	95
3.2.4 Methodology: Constructivist Grounded Theory	95
3.3 Research Phases.....	98
3.3.1 Phase One.....	99
3.3.1.1 Initial research questions.....	100
3.3.1.2 Document study and Pilot study.....	101
3.3.1.3 Analysis.....	102
3.3.1.4 Trustworthiness and credibility processes.....	105
3.3.2 Phase Two.....	106
3.3.2.1 Refined research questions.....	106
3.3.2.2 Ethics.....	107
3.3.2.2.1 Research approval process.....	111
3.3.2.2.2 Information statement.....	111
3.3.2.2.3 Communication with schools and principals.....	112
3.3.2.3 Questionnaires.....	113
3.3.2.3.1 Questionnaire planning.....	113
3.3.2.3.2 Participants.....	117
3.3.2.3.2.1 Summary of comparison of regional demographics.....	117
3.3.2.3.2.2 Consideration of research codes, schools enrolments and staff numbers.....	118
3.3.2.3.2.3 Questionnaire distribution.....	119
3.3.2.3.2.4 Questionnaire return.....	120
3.3.2.3.2.5 School size in sample.....	122
3.3.2.4 Initial analysis.....	122
3.3.2.4.1 Documentation of demographic information and strand responses.....	122
3.3.2.4.2 Documentation of quantitative responses to statements.....	123
3.3.2.4.3 Documentation of qualitative data.....	123
3.3.2.5 Interviews.....	124

3.3.2.5.1 Interview planning.....	124
3.3.2.5.2 Determination of interviewees.....	125
3.3.2.5.3 Interview process.....	127
3.3.2.5.4 Transcription of interviews.....	133
3.3.2.6 Analysis: Coding of themes.....	133
3.3.2.7 Trustworthiness and credibility process.....	137
3.3.3 Phase Three.....	139
3.3.3.1 Instigating a Foucault lens.....	139
3.3.3.1.1 Spatial thinking.....	140
3.3.3.1.2 Problematisation.....	146
3.3.3.1.3 Genealogy.....	147
3.3.3.1.4 Power relations.....	148
3.3.3.1.5 Freedom and resistance.....	146
3.3.3.1.6 Parrhesia.....	149
3.3.3.1.7 Foucault in Focus: Vignettes.....	150
3.4 Researcher reflection.....	151
Chapter 4 Results and Discussion: from Questionnaires and Interviews.....	153
4.1 Introduction.....	153
4.1.1 Research Question and Sub-questions.....	153
4.1.2 Sources of Data and Analysis.....	154
4.1.3 Summary of results.....	155
4.1.4 The importance of Arts education areas.....	157
4.2 Research question 1a (RQ1a): What are the challenges to the implementation of primary Arts education in different teaching spaces?	160
4.2.1 Hierarchy of confidence in the teaching of each art-form.....	163
4.2.2 Teachers' perceptions regarding challenges to the teaching of the Arts in their classroom.....	160
4.2.3 Being in a personal space to teach the Arts.....	161
4.2.3.1 Characteristics.....	165
4.2.3.1.1 Personal characteristics.....	165
4.2.3.1.1.1 Talent or ability.....	165
4.2.3.1.1.2 Personality traits and attitudes.....	167
4.2.3.1.1.3 Gender.....	168
4.2.3.1.1.4 Background.....	173
4.2.3.1.2 Professional characteristics.....	174
4.2.3.1.2.1 Interest, motivation and involvement.....	174

4.2.3.1.2.2 The teacher's role.....	174
4.2.3.1.2.3 Specialists.....	176
4.2.3.2 Skills.....	177
4.2.3.2.1 Levels of teaching experience.....	178
4.2.3.2.1.1 Levels of teaching experience influenced confidence in some Arts areas.....	179
4.2.3.2.2 Levels of training.....	181
4.2.3.2.2.1 Levels of training influenced confidence in some Arts areas.....	183
4.2.3.2.3 Teaching experience, highest level of study and confidence.....	185
4.2.3.3 Emotions.....	187
4.2.3.3.1 Enthusiasm.....	188
4.2.3.3.2 Inadequacy.....	189
4.2.3.3.3 Fear and uncertainty: Loss of control.....	190
4.2.3.4 Summary of "Being in a personal space to teach the Arts"	190
4.2.4 The teaching space: Where you teach.....	192
4.2.4.1 The physical space.....	192
4.2.4.2 Resources.....	195
4.2.4.3 Need for support.....	197
4.2.4.3.1 Executive support.....	198
4.2.4.3.2 Professional Development.....	202
4.2.4.3.3 Collegiate support.....	203
4.2.4.3.4 External providers.....	205
4.2.4.3.5 Parental support.....	206
4.2.4.3.6 Financial support.....	207
4.2.5 The teaching space: Where you live.....	208
4.2.5.1 Regional variation in questionnaire return.....	209
4.2.5.2 Confidence across the regions.....	209
4.2.5.3 Demographic variation.....	211
4.2.5.3.1 Variation in school size across the regions.....	211
4.2.5.3.2 Teaching experience across the regions.....	212
4.2.5.3.3.1 Central Coast.....	212
4.2.5.3.3.2 Central West.....	213
4.2.5.3.3.3 ACT.....	213
4.2.5.3.3 Training in each Arts area, across the regions.....	213
4.2.5.3.3.1 Central Coast.....	213
4.2.5.3.3.2 Central West.....	214

4.2.5.3.3 ACT.....	214
4.2.5.4 Mobility of staff.....	215
4.2.5.5 Distance.....	215
4.2.6 Summary of data within “The teaching space: Where you teach, Where you Live.....	217
4.3 Research question 1b (RQ1b): What strategies would support the implementation of primary Arts education in different teaching spaces?	219
4.3.1 Creating space for the Arts.....	219
4.3.1.1 The challenges of curriculum demands.....	221
4.3.1.2 Creativity of the Arts education space.....	223
4.3.1.3 Strategies to support Arts education implementation.....	224
4.3.1.3.1 Accessing external providers.....	224
4.3.1.3.2 Arts in the classroom.....	227
4.3.1.4 Community attitudes.....	228
4.4 Returning to the research question: How do primary teachers perceive Arts education implementation in their teaching space?	230
Chapter 5 Turning the kaleidoscope: Foucault in focus.....	233
5.1 Introduction.....	233
5.2 Vignettes.....	234
5.2.1 School A “Minimal Arts Public School”	234
5.2.2 School B “Collegial Arts Public School”	235
5.2.3 School C “Extending the Arts Space Public School”	236
5.3 Exploration of Foucault’s tools of analysis	237
5.4 Participant perspectives at spatial levels.....	238
5.5. Turning the lens: comparing the micro, meso and macro across the vignette spaces.....	238
5.5.1. Micro lens: Being in a personal space to teach the Arts	238
5.5.1.1 Characteristics: Personal.....	239
5.5.1.2 Characteristics: Professional.....	242
5.5.1.3 Skills.....	244
5.5.1.4 Emotions.....	248
5.5.2 Meso lens: The teaching space.....	251
5.5.2.1 Where you teach.....	251
5.5.2.1.1 Physical space.....	251
5.5.2.1.2 Resources.....	253
5.5.2.1.3 Need for support.....	257
5.5.2.2 Where you live.....	261

5.5.2.2.1 Regional variation.....	261
5.5.2.2.2 Distance.....	264
5.5.3 Macro lens: Creating space for the Arts	267
5.5.3.1 The challenges of curriculum demands.....	267
5.5.3.2 Creativity of Arts education space.....	270
5.5.3.3 Strategies to support Arts education implementation.....	274
5.5.3.4 Community attitudes.....	278
5.6 Summary.....	281
5.6.1 School A “Minimal Arts Public School”	282
5.6.2 School B “Collegial Arts Public School”	285
5.6.3 School C “Extending the Arts Space Public School”	288
Chapter 6 Conclusion	294
6.1 Introduction.....	294
6.2 Value of the research process.....	294
6.2.1 Multiple approaches to clarifying key ideas and themes.....	294
6.2.1.1 Studying the literature.....	295
6.2.1.2 Phase One.....	295
6.2.1.3 Phase Two.....	296
6.2.1.4 Phase Three.....	296
6.3 Allocation of a spatial lens when considering Arts education implementation within different contexts.....	297
6.3.1 The practical application of Foucauldian tools of analysis.....	298
6.4 Considering the research question and sub-questions.....	299
6.4.1 Research question 1a: What are the challenges to the implementation of primary Arts education in different teaching spaces?	299
6.4.1.1 Micro: Being in a personal space to teach the Arts.....	299
6.4.1.2 Meso: The teaching space. Where you teach, Where you live.....	300
6.4.1.3 Macro: Creating space for Arts education.....	302
6.4.2 Research question 1b: What strategies would support the implementation of primary Arts education implementation in different teaching spaces?	303
6.4.3 Research question 1: How do primary teachers perceive Arts education implementation in their teaching space?	304
6.5 Significance of the study.....	305
6.6 Limitations of the study.....	306
6.7 Areas for future research.....	307
6.8 Final concluding comments.....	307

References.....	309
Appendices.....	335
Appendix A: Information statement accompanying questionnaires.....	335
Appendix B: Education authority approvals.....	338
Appendix C: Research questionnaire.....	341
Appendix D: Comparison of estimated population, land area and population density.....	345
Appendix E: Participating school, P classification and estimated staffing numbers.....	345
Appendix F: Regional Comparison: School Size.....	347
Appendix G: Demographic information spreadsheet example.....	349
Appendix H: Descriptive table example, frequency count and percentages (strand valuing Central Coast)	350
Appendix I: Confidence details for each Arts area.....	351
Appendix J: Comparing numbers and percentages of participants who made comments about their level of confidence across the Arts areas.....	352
Appendix K: Being in a personal space – coding.....	353
Appendix L: Gender comparison of strand statement responses.....	354
Appendix M: Comparing gender and the number of strands that participants indicated confidence to teach.....	356
Appendix N: Documentation of participants’ highest level of study in each Arts strand.....	357
Appendix O: The teaching space: Where you teach - coding.....	358
Appendix P: The teaching space: Where you live - coding.....	359
Appendix Q: Regional responses – valuing and confidence in each Arts area.....	360
Appendix R: Comparison of highest level of study in each Arts area, across the regions.....	365
Appendix S: Creating space for the Arts - coding.....	368

Tables

Table 3.1	<i>Research design</i>	<i>p. 93</i>
Table 3.2	<i>Research phases</i>	<i>p. 99</i>
Table 3.3	<i>Phase One data collection and analysis</i>	<i>p. 100</i>
Table 3.4	<i>Main themes: Coding from Arts education document study and pilot study data</i>	<i>p. 103</i>
Table 3.5	<i>Phase Two data collection and analysis</i>	<i>p. 106</i>
Table 3.6	<i>Revised research questions</i>	<i>p. 107</i>
Table 3.7	<i>Communication with schools and principals</i>	<i>p. 113</i>
Table 3.8	<i>Music table example from questionnaire incorporating Likert scale</i>	<i>p. 114</i>
Table 3.9	<i>Questionnaire distribution and return</i>	<i>p. 121</i>
Table 3.10	<i>Interview data across the regions</i>	<i>p. 127</i>
Table 3.11	<i>Comparing numbers and percentages of participants who made comments about their level of confidence across the Arts strands</i>	<i>p. 134</i>
Table 4.1	<i>Key findings summary - Phase Two and Three: RQ1a</i>	<i>p. 156</i>
Table 4.2	<i>Key findings summary - Phase Two and Three: RQ1b</i>	<i>p. 157</i>
Table 4.3	<i>Likert scale responses regarding valuing of each strand</i>	<i>p. 158</i>
Table 4.4	<i>Likert scale responses regarding confidence to teach in each Arts area</i>	<i>p. 164</i>
Table 4.5	<i>Gender of participants compared to ABS 2011</i>	<i>p. 168</i>
Table 4.6	<i>Years of teaching experience</i>	<i>p. 179</i>
Table 4.7	<i>Comparing levels of experience and confidence across the strands</i>	<i>p. 181</i>
Table 4.8	<i>Comparing confidence and highest level of study in each Arts area</i>	<i>p. 184</i>
Table 4.9	<i>Comparing confidence in each Arts area, across the regions</i>	<i>p. 211</i>
Table 4.10	<i>Teaching experience across the regions</i>	<i>p. 213</i>
Table 4.11	<i>Number of coded responses referring to time / overcrowded curriculum</i>	<i>p. 221</i>

Table 5.1	<i>Micro level: Characteristics (personal) - Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 239</i>
Table 5.2	<i>Micro level: Characteristics (professional) - Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 242</i>
Table 5.3	<i>Micro level: Skills – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 244</i>
Table 5.4	<i>Micro level: Emotions – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 249</i>
Table 5.5	<i>Meso level: Physical space - Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 251</i>
Table 5.6	<i>Meso level: Resources – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 253</i>
Table 5.7	<i>Meso level: Need for support – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 257</i>
Table 5.8	<i>Meso level: Regional variation – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 261</i>
Table 5.9	<i>Meso level: Distance – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 263</i>
Table 5.10	<i>Macro level: The challenges of curriculum demands – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 267</i>
Table 5.11	<i>Macro level: Creativity of the Arts education space – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 270</i>
Table 5.12	<i>Macro level: Strategies to support Arts education implementation – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 274</i>
Table 5.13	<i>Macro level: Community attitudes – Foucault tools within each vignette</i>	<i>p. 278</i>
Table 5.14	<i>Summary of power relations at spatial levels- School A</i>	<i>p. 283</i>
Table 5.15	<i>Summary of power relations at spatial levels- School B</i>	<i>p. 286</i>
Table 5.16	<i>Summary of power relations at spatial levels- School C</i>	<i>p. 289</i>

Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i>	Pilot study and initial document analysis	p. 104
<i>Figure 2.</i>	Participant coding example	p. 109
<i>Figure 3.</i>	Strand node examples in NVivo, including each strand	p. 135
<i>Figure 4.</i>	Capacity coding within each Arts area (NVivo)	p. 136
<i>Figure 5.</i>	Tree node examples (Dance strand)	p. 136
<i>Figure 6.</i>	Space mind map of parent and child nodes	p. 142
<i>Figure 7.</i>	Kaleidoscope image created from key themes: Being in a personal space to teach the Arts	p. 144, 161, 238
<i>Figure 8.</i>	Kaleidoscope image created from key themes: The teaching space-Where you teach	p. 144, 192, 251
<i>Figure 9.</i>	Kaleidoscope image created from key themes: The teaching space-Where you live	p. 145, 208, 261
<i>Figure 10.</i>	Kaleidoscope image created from key themes: Creating space for the Arts	p. 145, 219, 267
<i>Figure 11.</i>	School A power relations illustration	p. 282
<i>Figure 12.</i>	School B power relations illustration	p. 285
<i>Figure 13.</i>	School C power relations illustration	p. 288

Abstract

This research contributes to investigation of the place of Arts education in Australian primary schools, a mandated area of study largely reliant on presentation by general classroom teachers with little background and limited training in the Arts. The project considers the perspectives of public primary school educators in three different regional areas about their presentation of learning experiences across the five different disciplines of Arts education (Music, Visual Arts, Drama, Dance and Media Arts). A mixed method approach, including descriptive quantitative and qualitative data from 196 questionnaires and 25 follow-up interviews, was undertaken, with educators discussing the implementation of each Arts education area in their teaching space.

Participants reflected on their own confidence to teach in each Arts area in the classroom, expressing their appreciation of Arts education, but also feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty in the Arts education space, leading to a need for training and ongoing support within their schools and communities. Concern was expressed at the lack of time allocated to the Arts in several teaching spaces, with an already crowded curriculum giving priority to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. This emphasis away from the Arts, together with classroom teachers' perceived lack of confidence, was described as leading to considerable neglect of Arts education implementation in several teaching spaces.

Spatial themes emerged, with educators reflecting not only on their own personal space to teach the Arts, but also considering the challenges faced in different teaching contexts, where appropriate spaces for Arts learning experiences were reported to be limited and resources were perceived to be inadequate. The work of Michel Foucault inspired further analysis and interpretation of the data through a spatial lens, akin to observing patterns within a kaleidoscope: problematising the current situation, described through truth-telling by

participants (parrhesia), exploring the network of power relations perceived in different spaces, considering historical influences on the present, leading to contemplation of freedom and resistance. Examples where challenges had been navigated within different school contexts, demonstrated strategies explored to create space for the Arts, ensuring that the Arts are put on the map.