

HOW CAN NORTHERN TERRITORY
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IMPLEMENT A
QUALITY ARTS EDUCATION FOR EVERY
STUDENT?



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Section 1 - Introduction

Through working as an arts educator in the Northern Territory (NT) I have observed and experienced a broad range of arts education practices of varying quality and sustainability in remote and urban settings, north and south. This variation is not particular to the NT, and is the subject of a global body of research and discussion that can be used to commence framing an examination and discussion as an education system in the local context.

Despite decades of evidence demonstrating the positive impact of arts education on student outcomes and consistent recognition of the value and importance of arts education over many years by policy makers, there has been little translation into practice. Given our unique and ancient cultural context steeped in the arts, this is a missed opportunity. The provision of arts education in the Northern Territory has long been marginalised by inhibiting factors such as the higher priority given in curriculum and resourcing to other areas, a shortage of specialised capacity among teachers, insufficient appropriate professional learning opportunities, and no co-ordinated strategy to deliver evidence based and effective services as an education system.

Despite these limitations, in my experience, positive examples persevere in the Territory, and the data presented in this paper suggests that many of the pre-requisite conditions for quality arts education do exist. With the introduction of global budgeting and school Autonomy, the Indigenous Education Review, and the impending full implementation of the Australian Arts Curriculum, it is timely to review the pre-conditions known to influence the success of an arts education, the subsequent benefits to students, and ask **how NT Government can schools implement a quality Arts education for every student.**

In order to answer this question and establish an understanding of how we are positioned in the Northern Territory to realise our obligations and opportunities in Section 2 this paper will describe the definitions, “foundational issues”, and inhibiting factors to be found in the field of arts education as they apply in the NT along with presenting a rubric for the attributes of quality which may be used to guide our efforts in NT Government schools. In seeking to answer the question of *why* schools should implement a quality arts education for every student, there will follow a discussion of the policy and curriculum mandate for a quality arts education, and the attendant benefits and opportunities that can accrue. In Section 3 this study offers a current schematic of arts education in NT government schools by presenting the results of a survey completed by NT government school principals in April 2015 and their 2014 A-E arts reporting data. Based on these responses, perceptions and dispositions among NT Government School leaders, Section 4 will conclude the paper with five recommendations to help chart the next steps to ensuring our schools can implement a quality arts education for every child.

Section 2 – Foundations, research and policy in arts education

Definitions and “foundational” issues in the arts education field.

For the purpose of this research, the term *arts education* refers to planning, teaching, learning, assessment and reporting based on the art forms of Dance, Drama, Media, Music and Visual Arts as drawn together in the arts learning area of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Arts (Referred to for expressive expediency in this paper as “the Australian Arts Curriculum”): *While these art forms have close relationships and are often used in interrelated ways, each involves different approaches to arts practices and critical and creative thinking that reflect distinct bodies of knowledge, understanding and skills.*¹

To preface discussions in this work, it is also important to explain a key distinction commonly associated with the arts and education:

Arts in education and education through the arts – these concepts describe using arts strategies and processes as a pedagogical tool to support learning and engagement in other areas, develop general capabilities and integrated approaches to curriculum and help students make connections between different kinds of knowledge.

Education in the arts and arts education – this describes explicit teaching and learning of arts skills and processes, the concepts, symbols and terms of the specific art form and responses to art as audience.

There are also a number of “foundational” concepts and questions² commonly found in the literature from around Australia and the world that are relevant in the NT, and that are addressed in this paper, and which in turn will help frame further research and debate in our education system toward the provision of quality arts education:

- What should be taught and how?
- How should learning be assessed?
- Who should teach the arts?
- Where should the arts be taught?

What are the factors inhibiting the provision of a quality arts education?

There are universal factors³ that can inhibit or constrain a schools’ capacity to deliver a quality arts education, and that in my experience are also salient in the NT. These can be defined as follows:

- A gulf between the intention or lip service given to arts education and the actual provision in schools
- Dominance of traditional academic curricula as the accepted means to tertiary entry and employment
- Disposition and perceptions of teachers and principals toward the arts

¹ (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2015)

² (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009)

³ (Bamford, Issues of Global and Local Quality in Arts Education, 2010) (Ewing, 2010) (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009) (Russell-Bowie, 2011)

- Lack of teachers’ confidence or expertise in art forms as a result of:
- Inadequate pre-service and in-service professional learning for teachers
- Scarcity of specialist teachers and services
- Lack of resources

For this research NT School leaders were asked to comment on their experience of these factors, their responses are detailed in Section 3.

What constitutes quality arts education?

Anne Bamford’s study *The Wow Factor – Global Compendium of Research on the Impact of Arts Education*⁴ found that there is a remarkable consistency in the conceptions and realisations of what constitutes quality in arts education around the world (though approaches to arts educations can be subjective and culturally differentiated, and what works in one context may not be appropriate in another). Regardless of context Bamford also argues in a more recent paper that quality arts education must be planned for.⁵ It requires “quality assurance”, which measures the quality of processes, and “quality control”, which measures the outcomes of programs against standards. She states that programs should be “fit for purpose” and therefore suitable and relevant for students, and further argues that quality arts education should be “right the first time”. It is vital that there are high expectations for quality in the provision of arts education. There is substantial evidence that arts education contributes to student achievement in the arts and in other areas, but only where there is “effective practice and quality educational provision.”⁶

Attributes of quality arts education programs⁷:

1. Active partnerships and collaboration including shared responsibility for planning, implementation, and assessment and evaluation
2. Opportunities for public performance and exhibition and presentation
3. A combination of development within specific art forms (education in the arts) with artistic and creative approaches to learning (education through the arts)
4. Provision for critical reflection, problem solving, and risk taking
5. Accessibility to all children and young people
6. Detailed strategies for assessing and reporting on children’s learning, experiences and development
7. Ongoing professional development for teachers, artists and the community
8. Flexible structures and permeable boundaries between schools and the community
9. Access and relevance to local resources, environment, and context for both materials and content.

It is proposed that these attributes be adopted as a rubric to measure quality arts education in the NT.

⁴ (Bamford, the Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education., 2009 (2nd edition))

⁵ (Bamford, Issues of Global and Local Quality in Arts Education, 2010)

⁶ (Bamford, Issues of Global and Local Quality in Arts Education, 2010)

⁷ (UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education, 2006)

Why a quality arts education for Northern Territory students?

Mandated in policy and curriculum.

The question of *why* every child in the Northern Territory should have a quality arts education is inevitably asked. The arts are mandated in policy and curriculum, schools are obliged to deliver an effective arts education just as they should deliver a quality education in all the learning areas. However, whilst education systems mandate curriculum, principals control how curriculum is prioritised and implemented in practice. For often understandable reasons, unfortunately not every school is compliant with curriculum requirements in the NT, and of those that are, few can consistently offer programs of high quality.

National and International Policy

For the majority of students in Australia since the industrial revolution arts education in school has been sporadic and peripheral for a range of reasons including poverty, relative remoteness and a lack of suitably qualified teachers, and a society focussed on producing workers for an industrial economy⁸. Since the Second World War and the shift to the “Knowledge Age” of globalisation and post-industrial society, there has been a growing understanding of the importance of arts education, underpinned by research and the economic necessity to equip students with the capacity to thrive in an unpredictable employment future. International and national trends in policy and education curriculum increasingly recognise that the arts should be a core component in education not only for their inherent value, but also for their suitability for helping students develop “21st Century Skills” such as creativity and innovation, critical thinking, communication and collaborative skills.⁹ According to UNESCO, arts education is a “universal right for all learners,” and all children have creative potential which through active engagement in Arts experiences and processes can help develop their imagination and initiative, ethical and emotional intelligence, and capacity for critical reflection and cognitive growth. Children also acquire unique perspectives through Arts education that cannot be discovered otherwise.¹⁰

In a joint statement made in 2007 by the Australian Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and the Cultural Ministers’ Council (CMC) on Education and the Arts, “there is a growing body of international and Australian research demonstrating the multiple benefits of an arts-rich education from an early age” and “all children and young people should have a high quality arts education in every phase of learning.”¹¹ In December 2008 all the Australian Education Ministers jointly published the Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians in which the arts feature as a mandated element in “world-class curriculum and assessment designed to develop successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.”¹²

⁸ Ken Robinson (Robinson, 2012)

⁹ (Trilling & Fadel, 2009)

¹⁰ (UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education, 2006)

¹¹ (MCEETYA, 2007)

¹² (MCEETYA, 2008)

The arts are included in the forthcoming F-10 Australian Curriculum as one subject area comprising the five art forms of Dance, Drama, Media, Music and Visual Arts. The Northern Territory participated in the development of this curriculum, which also identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and Australia's engagement with Asia as cross-curricula priorities along with a focus on developing general capabilities such as critical thinking and creativity. The arts were described in a review commissioned by the Australian Government in 2014 as "a crucial part of school education that should not be viewed as an add-on component."¹³

Northern Territory policy and curriculum

Goal 2 of The NT Department of Education 2013-15 Strategic Plan *Creating Success Together: Every Child A Successful Learner*, outlines a range of strategies such as the delivery of "quality teaching and learning that is relevant, meaningful and differentiated for successful futures," and undertakes to "continue to implement the Australian Curriculum in a way that is relevant and meets the needs of all students."

The arts are mandated for study by all students in both the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) and the Australian Arts Curriculum from Transition to Year 9. The Northern Territory Board of Studies carries the responsibility for curriculum, assessment and reporting policy in the NT, and currently requires teachers to teach "within a dual curriculum environment,"¹⁴ based on a timeline for gradual implementation of Australian Curriculum learning areas as they are endorsed by Ministerial authorities. According to this implementation timeline, schools in 2015 should be using the NTCF: Arts Learning Area and engaging in familiarisation with The Australian Curriculum: the arts, scheduled for full implementation in 2016. Additionally, The NT Board of Studies policy also requires schools to implement a "whole school curriculum and assessment plan that ensures the systematic delivery of curriculum,"¹⁵ with assessment based on alignment to curriculum and to targeted achievement standards, including the arts learning area. Schools are also required to provide reports that are based on five achievement levels, most commonly manifested as A-E grades in the NT.¹⁶

A basic goal for this paper is to examine how arts curriculum is currently being implemented, assessed and reported in NT Government Schools according to these mandated timelines and requirements.

Intrinsic benefits and opportunities for all students

There are fundamental intrinsic benefits for a quality education, in and through the arts for students, that are ancient and essentially human, that foster unique capacities for reflection, expression and creativity. The arts are common in various forms to all cultures, and have been pivotal in our experience and development as a species. Some of the earliest human artefacts are bone flutes, cave art, decorative pottery or stonework. Palaeolithic cave paintings show instruments being played, and there are wall paintings in the Middle East from the 6th millennium

¹³ (Ricci, 2015)

¹⁴ (Northern Territory Board of Studies, 2013)

¹⁵ (Northern Territory Board of Studies, 2013)

¹⁶ (Studies, 2013)

BC showing drummers playing for dancers; an artefact representing three of the major art forms. ¹⁷ Australian Indigenous art is the oldest continuous tradition on earth, with rock carvings more than 30,000 years old. ¹⁸

The universal significance of the arts to humanity is clear when considered from a historic and cultural perspective, and the evidence suggests that an increasing majority of Australians participate in a vibrant arts culture in their everyday lives,¹⁹ with 85 per cent of Australians agreeing that the “arts make for a more rich and meaningful life”.²⁰ The arts offer an intrinsically beneficial dimension to our existence that cannot be found elsewhere, and this reason alone provides us a moral obligation to ensure every student can access quality arts education. Despite resourcing for arts programs falling over many years in government schools, Australian independent schools maintain strong programs.²¹ The arts attract students and families looking for enriched education, and should be considered as a strategy to arrest enrolment attrition in the government school sector.

Most Australians consider the arts to have a large impact on how we express ourselves, and that they enable us to innovate and think creatively, and help us deal with stress, depression and anxiety. According to ABS data Aboriginal people who participate in Arts and cultural activities have “markedly better physical and mental health and self-reported happiness and are more likely to complete secondary school and be employed.”²²

Intrinsic benefits and opportunities for Indigenous students

The arts are central to Indigenous life and culture, and are the traditional means for transmission of knowledge, identity and culture.²³ Recent ABS data suggests that active participation in arts activity can significantly boost wellbeing and employment prospects in remote Indigenous populations.²⁴ As Gumatj elder, leader of the successful NT Band Yothu Yindi, and former Principal of Yirrkala School, the late Mandawuy Yunupingu said; “Song is embedded in the Aboriginal psyche and worldview.”²⁵ World renowned Yolgnu artist Gurrumul Yunupingu was educated “by cultural immersion – from his aunties, parents and grandmothers, with love and lullabies; from his uncles, fathers and grandfathers through ceremony songs and storytelling, much of it through music.” (Michael Hohnen²⁶) My own experience and constructivist theories of education suggest that the centrality of the arts in Indigenous culture should be considered a tool for engaging students and communities in remote communities.

Impact on student achievement

There is a significant and growing body of research showing that an arts-rich education of quality from early childhood can have beneficial cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural, health, social and economic impact for

¹⁷ (Wallin, Merker, & Brown, 2000), (Burkholder, Grout, & Palisca, 2006)

¹⁸ (Australian Government, 2015)

¹⁹ (Australia Council For the Arts, 2014)

²⁰ (Australia Council for the Arts, 2015)

²¹ (Russell-Bowie, 2011)

²² (Dockery, 2011)

²³ (Ewing, 2010)

²⁴ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010)

²⁵ (Yunupingu, 2009)

²⁶ (Music Council of Australia, 2013)

students. The education agenda in the Northern Territory is particularly focussed on improving Literacy and Numeracy achievement for all students, based on our comparatively low national standing in the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results. Research indicates that students' literacy and numeracy can improve when learned through the arts, and that literacy and numeracy scores increase for students participating in quality arts programs.²⁷

The reality that the prime learning time devoted to conventional approaches to literacy and numeracy is not producing the desired results suggest that it may be prudent to accommodate other strategies that support cognitive neural development in the early years, such as is supported by the raft of research conducted over the last two decades that "music education grows, hones and permanently improves neural networks like no other activity".²⁸ Despite the recognised benefits of engagement and cognition they provide, the arts appear to have been overlooked in the initial implementation stages of the 10 year Indigenous Education strategy *A Share In the Future* produced as a result of the 2013 Indigenous Education Review. Research would suggest that quality arts education programs offer the potential to support the aims presented in all the strategy's five focus areas: Foundations, Essentials, Pathways, Engagement and Workforce in order to meet the strategy's goal of ensuring that "Indigenous students in the Northern Territory are both confident and successful in their education journeys and have real career choices and options, both within and beyond their communities."²⁹

There are a number of summaries and meta-analyses of the studies on the impacts of the arts on learning at international, national and NT levels which were drawn on for this paper. The most significant of these can be found in Anne Bamford's 2006 *Wow Factor Global Compendium on the Impact of Arts Education*, the first international analyses of Arts education research, and Professor Robyn Ewing's comprehensive 2010 ACER publication *Realising Potential, the Arts and Australian Education*. Professor Brian Caldwell's' 2011 research *Transforming Education through the Arts* also contains an excellent summary of the extrinsic benefits of arts education.

Economic and strategic opportunities

The rhetoric and policy previously referred to from employers, academics and governments about the need to equip students with the General Capabilities prescribed in the Australian Curriculum, the "21st Century" skills of creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking required for a modern globalised economy³⁰ also demands that attention should be given to how arts curriculum and pedagogies are placed to help achieve them. The Arts and culture industry is a significant sector within our national economy representing more than \$30 billion of annual GDP, outstripping the agriculture, fishing and gas industries for example³¹, yet is not prioritised

²⁷ (Fiske, 1999)

²⁸ (Collins, 2015)

²⁹ (Northern territory Department of Education, 2015)

³⁰ (National Education Association, 2011)

³¹ (Australian Commonwealth Government, 2011)

or recognised in our local education system for this potential. Increasingly education systems such as ours and our neighbours' in Asia will need to implement pedagogies to help students develop the skills to compete globally.

The arts are highly valued in Asian education systems, as I have witnessed through recent visits to schools in China and Hong Kong. In these countries and others such as Korea³², (also in Finland³³ and the UK³⁴), arts subjects are considered vital for the future of their nations in developing a creative economy and healthy society. Given our Federal and Territory Government's focus on Asian markets, our unique cultural context should be considered an opportunity for engagement and comparative advantage, particularly in Indigenous arts and culture; and 'soft diplomacy' through cultural exchanges with our regional partners.

A prioritised arts education of quality is consistent with the NT Government's *Framing the Future* strategic plan that is focussed on achieving a 'Confident culture' and a 'Prosperous Economy.'³⁵ This rationale is supported by research data presented in the Australia Council's 2015 report, *Arts Nation: An Overview of Australian Arts*:

Cultural knowledge leads to jobs and income based on artistic activity, connections to country and cultural experience. Cultural tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing tourism markets.

The number of international arts tourists coming to Australia has increased in recent years, by 19% to 2.4 million in 2013/14. 700,000 of these tourists participated in Indigenous arts activity over the same period, an increase of 9%.³⁶ If the NT is to credibly engage with Asia, we must identify and develop our points of difference with other Australian states and territories. With a 40 per cent Indigenous student population in the NT we have potential to build our comparative advantage through our local arts and culture industry, enhanced into the future through higher expectations for arts education in our schools.

There is a moral obligation, a weight of research and policy, and a significant potential economic and cultural opportunity that suggests quality arts education should be a priority for the NT. This has yet to translate effectively into practice, and as this research will show, although some students do receive a quality arts education in Northern Territory schools, unfortunately most do not.

³² (Hoseong Yong, 2004)

³³ (Ministry of Education and Culture Finland, 2010)

³⁴ (Neelands, et al., 2015)

³⁵ (Northern Territory Government, 2015)

³⁶ (Australia Council for the Arts, 2015)

Section 3 – School leader survey data and analysis

Methodology

There is no centrally collected data relating to the provision of arts education in NT Schools, apart from A-E reporting data. In order to form an authentic ‘snapshot’ view of how the NT arts curriculum policy is perceived and implemented in NT Government school principals were surveyed.

This survey, comprising 24 questions, soliciting both qualitative and quantitative responses, was completed by 139 school leaders out of a possible 152, representing 91% of all Government schools in the NT. Approximately 66% of respondents identified themselves as representing remote schools, 34% as urban or regional urban, i.e. Alice Springs and Katherine.

Which curriculum?

In order to determine alignment with the NT Board of Studies Australian Curriculum implementation timeline with the expectation of full implementation in 2016, respondents were asked to indicate which curriculum they are currently using:

Which curriculum?	Response count	Response %
Teachers only use the NTCF arts curriculum.	44/139	31.65%
Teachers use the NTCF arts curriculum, but are beginning to familiarise themselves with the Australian Arts Curriculum.	64/139	46.04%
Teachers already use the Australian Arts Curriculum.	31/139	22.30%

Some respondents offered additional comments which suggest that in some cases there is a level of uncertainty about school and systemic expectations for Arts curriculum implementation generally such as;

It is up to teachers to create their programs – they are very rarely looked at and most teachers do not make direct reference to ACARA or any other curriculum source.

I think many teachers make their own program up.

Currently not using any in any detail.

It appears the majority of schools are adhering to, or are operating in advance of the NT Board of Studies timeline for implementation of the Australian Arts Curriculum, but approximately one third of schools have not yet engaged with it.

Assessment and reporting on the arts

The data and comments from respondents indicate that assessment and reporting on arts education is inconsistent and mostly ad hoc. In around 10% of schools students are not assessed at all. For non-specialist teachers the existing achievement standards are not helpful without practical examples or experience. The Australian Curriculum offers a potential solution to this over time as work samples are collected and become available for all teachers to use for benchmarking achievement standards.

A-E results are currently the only centrally collected data that might be used to monitor the degree of implementation of arts curriculum, and also might be considered one possible measure of quality. The survey asked if teachers assessed and reported on the arts in general and then if they reported achievement using the centrally collected A-E grades. 124 schools out of the 139 respondents indicated they assessed and reported on the arts:

Do teachers assess and report on student achievement in the arts?	Response count	Response %
No/no response	15/139	10.79%
Sometimes	45/139	32.37%
Yes	79/139	56.83%

Of those who did not assess using A-E, some offered comments such as:

Because I am a one teacher school teaching preschool to year 7 and I am unable to do the requirements for all year levels.

Programs are not as directed through to create data.

Operational constraints, sustained pupil turnover (churn) means our focus is on literacy and numeracy and Arts is used as an adjunct to this

Report on effort only - few students above C Level trying to keep positive - focus on process."

Other priorities.

112 schools indicated they used A-E for reporting:

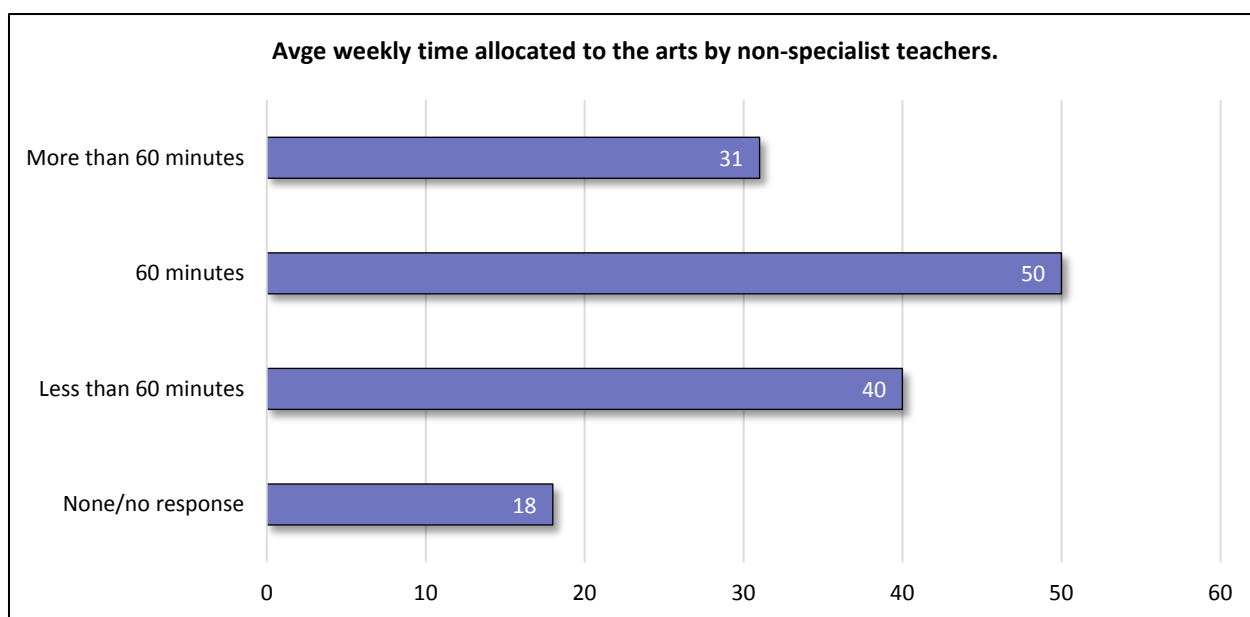
Do teachers use A-E when assessing and reporting on student achievement in the arts?	Response count	Response %
No/no response	27/139	19.42%
Sometimes	24/139	17.26%
Yes	88/139	63.30%

These figures correlate with the 2014 A-E reporting data for the NT. An examination of that data shows that more than 65% of students assessed receive a "C" grade. This does not suggest there are high expectations for students in the arts. The A-E data further shows that the arts are inconsistently reported on across the year, which may be explained by school priorities for covering curriculum content. For example, a school might choose to focus on

music for semester one, and drama in semester 2. Whilst this may be a reasonable strategy to cover curriculum requirements with limited time available, it is not conducive to quality arts education, where consistent and sequential skills acquisition is ideal.

How much time is allocated to the arts?

ACARA (Australian Curriculum & Reporting Authority) has provided a guide for “indicative time allocations for curriculum delivery to assist in managing implementation of learning areas”.³⁷ For the arts, comprising five discrete subject areas, 60 minutes per week are suggested from T to Year 2, 75 minutes from Year 3 to Year 6, and 120 minutes from Year 7 to 10. Respondents were asked how much time on average teachers (excluding arts specialists) allocated to teaching the arts each week:



More than half of schools are adhering to the ACARA recommendation. It should be of concern that 58 schools are allowing less or no time. Based on this data **some students have little or no access to arts education**, regardless of quality.

Arts “specialist” teachers

According to various conceptions of quality arts education described by Bamford³⁸, Seidler et al³⁹ and others, a significant factor is the question of *who* should teach the arts. Whilst quality arts education programs may rely on a congruence of several conditions, many hold the view that such subjects should be taught by appropriately qualified teachers. This is certainly the tradition in our high schools where teachers are expected for the most part to hold relevant tertiary qualifications and subject-specific expertise for their area of specialisation. In some jurisdictions a state certification or licensure via a professional association may be a pre-requisite for employment

³⁷ (NT Department of Education, 2015)

³⁸ (Bamford, the Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education., 2009 (2nd edition))

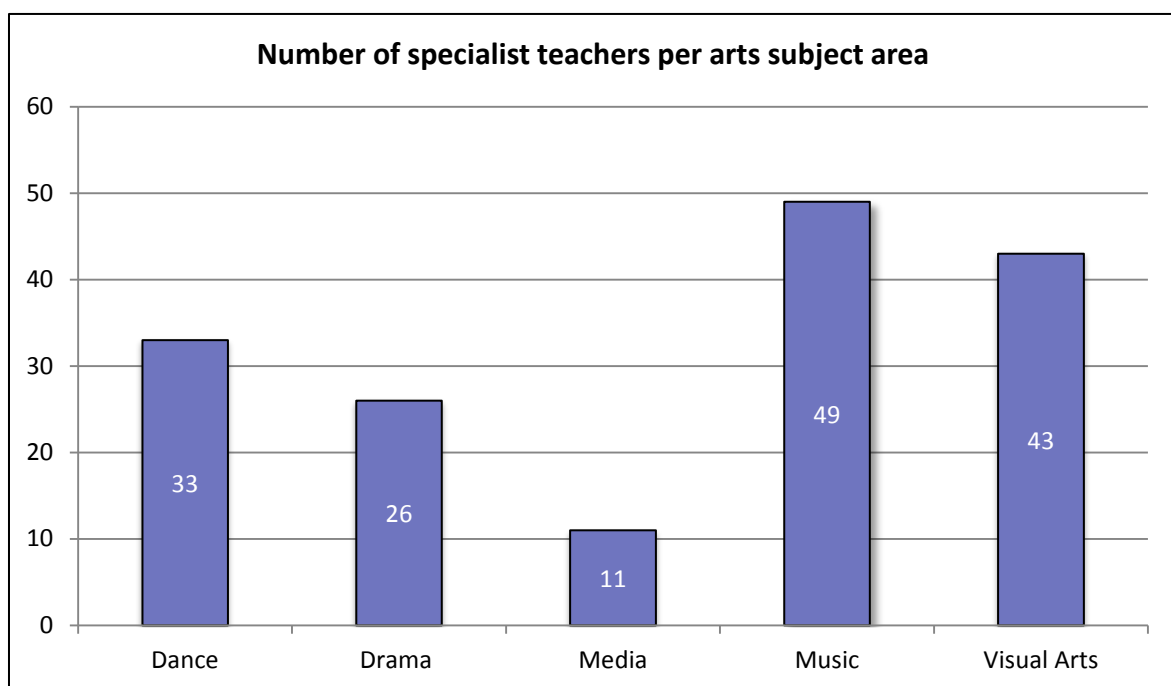
³⁹ (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009)

as a subject specialist. There is no such requirement in the Northern Territory, and whilst there seems to be recognition of the value of having an arts specialist teacher, there is no common standard by which these practitioners are identified as qualified for such roles, other than the due diligence of recruiters and Principals. A quality arts education program should be relative to the extent of specialised arts teaching expertise and experience utilised in schools. Survey respondents were therefore asked to indicate whether there were designated arts specialists on staff, and the nature of their employment:

Does your school employ an arts specialist teacher?	Response count	Response %
No	74/139	53.2%
Yes – part time	27/139	19.42%
Yes – full time	38/139	27.33%

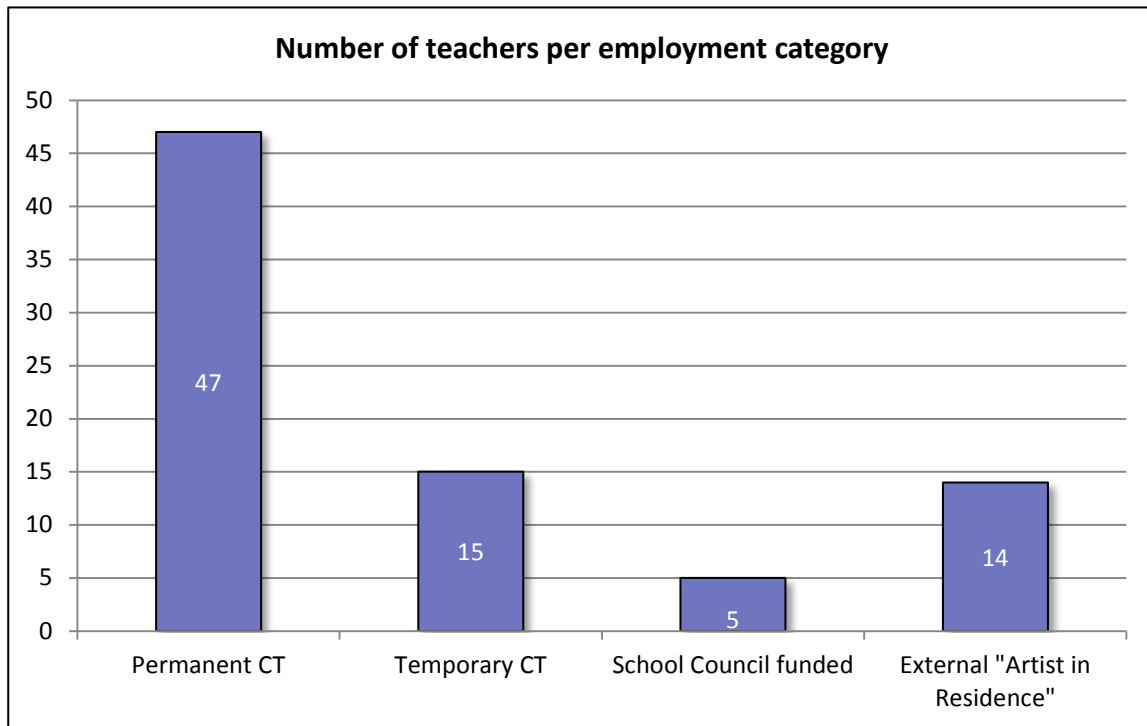
It appears less than half of schools employ specialist arts teachers, and that significantly **less than one third of NT Government Schools employ an arts specialist teacher on a full time basis.**

Respondents were also asked to indicate which of the arts subject areas their arts specialist supported. Some indicated multiple areas. The following table represents the level of support by Arts subject area.



It is clear that most specialist support is offered for music and visual arts. It is likely that dance and drama are taught in some schools as part of physical education and English teaching programs and media as an ‘integrated’ general capability.

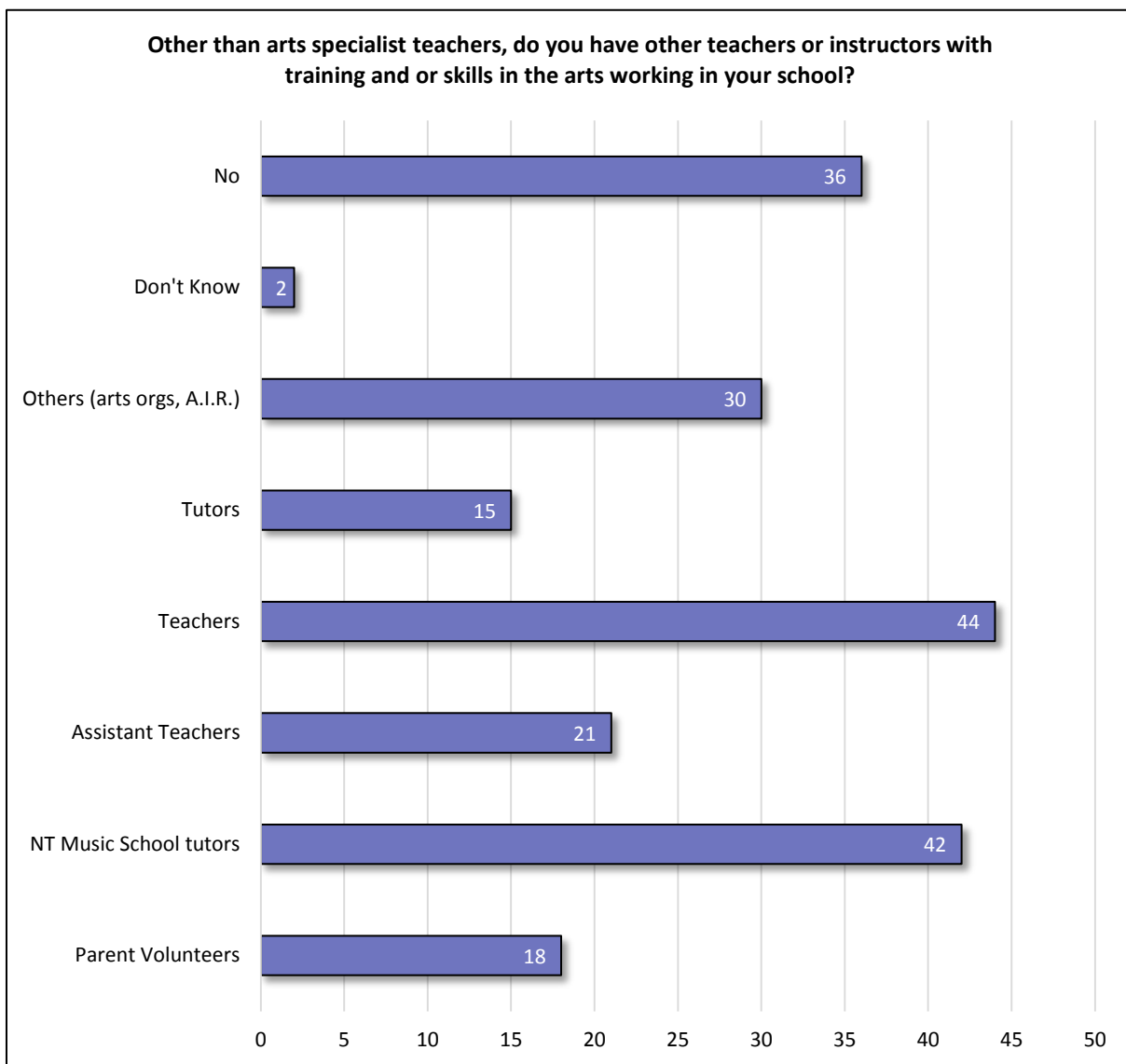
Given that resourcing for specialist staff above normal classroom teacher quotas is cited as a constraint, and that schools priorities might be reflected in the staffing choices made by principals over time, respondents were asked to indicate the basis on which their Arts specialist was employed:



Artists in Residence

Bringing specialised skills in the arts into schools is possible through employment of practicing artists. This is a well-established practice, and may be a short term solution for schools with limited capacity to employ suitable teachers through their corporate staffing budgets. In most cases however Artists in Residence (AiR) are not trained as teachers, and according to our quality rubric are most likely to be successful where there is a collaborative approach taken between the classroom teacher and the AiR in planning, implementation and evaluation of programs. In this way the AiR might grow pedagogical capacity and the teacher might grow artistic capacities, leading to better longer term arts education outcomes. It is often the case that arts specialist teachers and AiRs and teachers are used to provide release time for generalist teachers. For a quality arts education, both specialist and generalists must be engaged in teaching the arts if generalists do not have the confidence or efficacy to teach an adequate arts curriculum in their own weekly program.

There are a range of other possibilities for students to access specialist instruction, outside the traditional AiR and specialist teacher. The NT Music School for example offers a range of specialist teaching services across the NT in partnership with schools. In remote communities Indigenous assistant teachers with arts skills can be a sustainable option for principals. Sometimes other teachers or senior staff have these skills, though do not teach them in normal classroom programming. The survey asked respondents to give an indication of the extent of this:



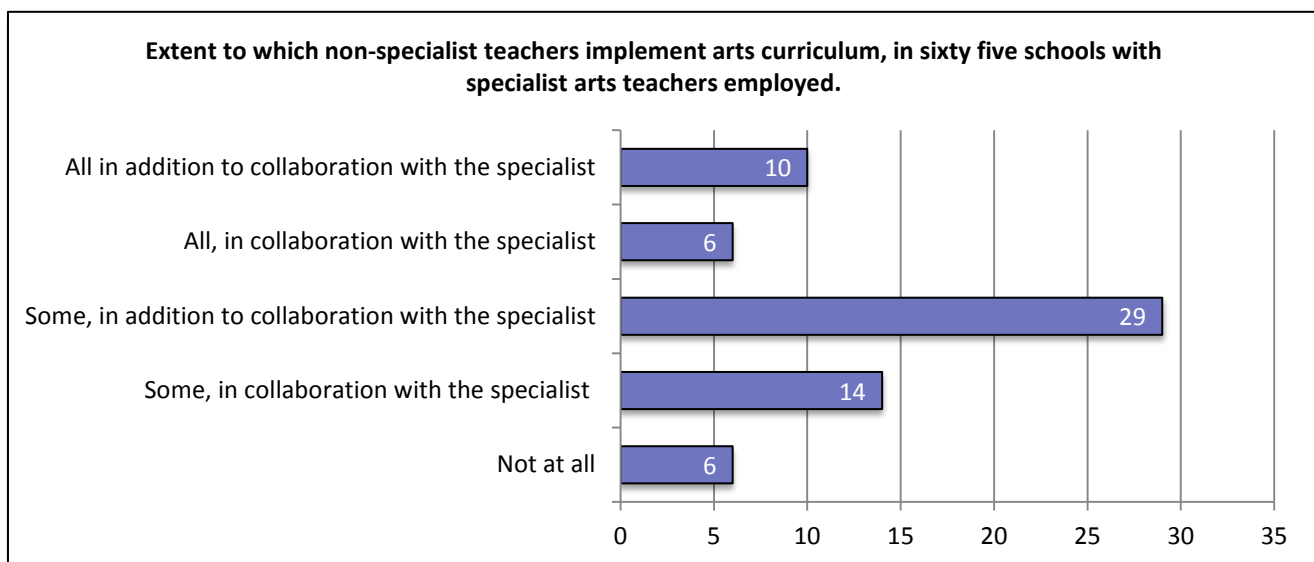
It is not within the scope to determine the relative quality of programs delivered by these arts specialist teachers, nor their levels of training, experience and aptitude. It may well be that some are expert practitioners delivering the best possible programs; others may have a reasonable level of skill and experience; and still others may have been placed in these roles arbitrarily in the absence of any suitable alternative, without any qualification in experience or training. It seems likely on the whole that within the range of designated arts specialist teachers, there will also be a range of education outcomes of varying quality. This would suggest that **the number of schools benefiting from high quality arts specialist teaching in the NT is relatively low.**

More than 2500 school based teaching staff are employed in the NT Government school sector delivering programs to around 33,000 students in 152 schools. Based on data representing 91% of these schools, only a very small fraction of these teachers are employed by the NT Department of Education as Arts specialists. The data shows that a small number of schools employ specialist teachers through their school councils or as “AiR”, often in partnership with external organisations such as Incite Youth Arts or Corrugated Iron Youth Arts or funded through grants. Whilst these may be of high quality and authenticity, **we currently have no quality assurance and quality control systems in place to support schools to measure effectiveness of specialist Arts programs.**

Generalist teachers and the arts

Arts education is mandated in school curriculum, and should be taught in all schools. In the absence of an arts specialist the task falls, particularly in primary schools, to the generalist classroom teacher. This kind of integration into the classroom routine can often manifest as an education ‘through the arts’ where outcomes in other subject areas are also sought through arts activities and ‘cross-curricula’ approaches. The potential benefits of this integration include the regular opportunities for arts experiences and managing competing curriculum priorities in limited time allowances through learning experiences that can be very rich. The “best examples of these programs bring classroom teachers together with teaching artists with the goal of developing the generalist teachers’ arts education skills and attitudes, and developing the artist’s pedagogical skills and attitudes,”⁴⁰ Unfortunately very few generalist teachers receive adequate training in the arts,⁴¹ and few students receive an authentic arts experience. Studies suggest that when “classroom arts integration is substituted for sequential arts programs in systems strapped for funds lower quality arts experiences result.”⁴² The ideal scenario for a strong arts program is to have dedicated specialist arts classes in addition to an integrated classroom arts program.

In the current study therefore, survey respondents who indicated they had specialist teachers on staff were asked “to what extent do other (non-specialist) teachers implement arts curriculum in their planning?” Based on the results below, there are sixteen schools where all teachers are implementing some form of arts curriculum either in addition to or in collaboration with the specialist arts teacher. In almost all of these schools the specialist arts teacher is permanently employed. Most are urban schools and almost all indicated high levels of participation by students in extra-curricular arts activity facilitated by the school or externally, and all indicated their view that students should have an effective education in the arts. **These schools appear to have the basic elements that support quality arts education, but unfortunately represent only 10% of all NT Government schools.**

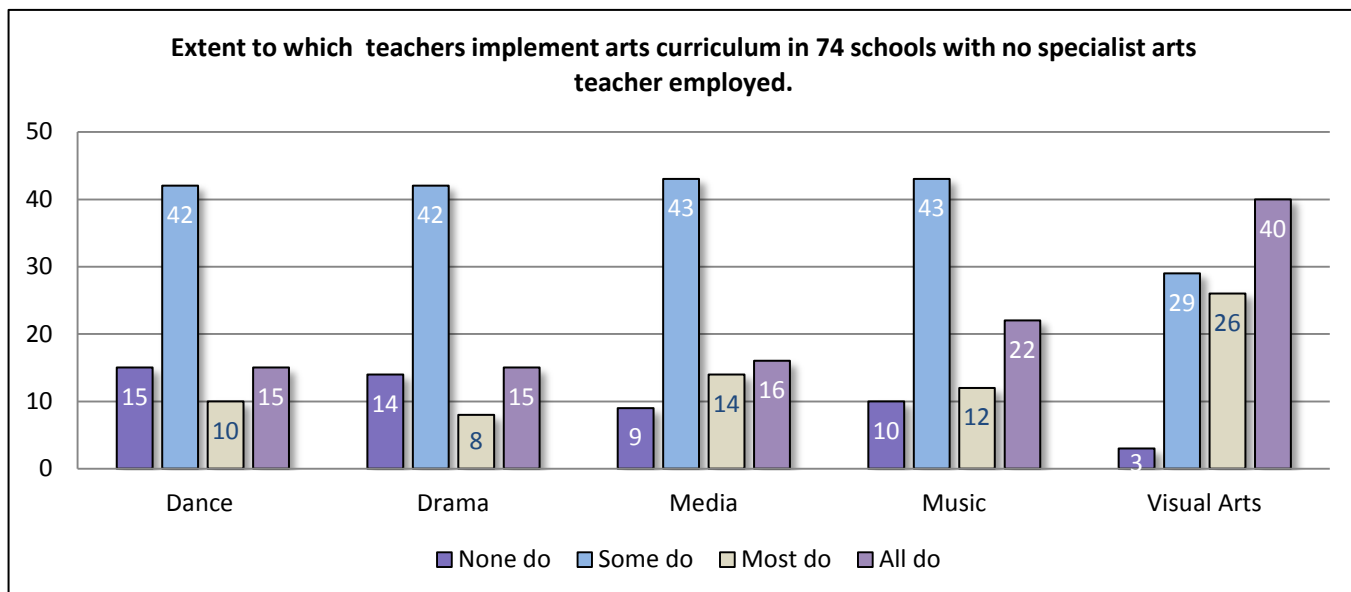


⁴⁰ (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009)

⁴¹ (Russell-Bowie, 2011)

⁴² (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009)

Those respondents who indicated they did not have a dedicated arts specialist on staff were then asked if teachers at their school implemented arts curriculum, and in which arts subject areas:



Once again it appears the highest levels of implementation are in Visual Arts and Music. **Of the 74 respondent schools without arts specialist teachers in most cases only some teachers implement arts curriculum, and in approximately 7% of the surveyed schools, none do.** Almost all of the schools in the latter case are remote schools. **In only 25% of schools without arts specialist teachers are most or all teachers implementing arts curriculum.** As in the case of those schools that do employ specialist teachers, there is little or no information about the relative quality of these programs.

Extra-curricular arts education activities

Authentic arts experiences are integral in quality programs, where students experience the real life engagement with processes, materials and audiences. In addition to day-to-day teacher implemented arts curriculum, these are typically represented by concerts, plays, musicals, exhibitions and activities where students work with others to develop work for public presentation to peers, family and community. They can be considered an assessable outcome or product, and support engagement, wellbeing and the ‘permeable boundaries’ between school and community that are characteristic of quality arts education.

The survey sought response about the nature and extent of this kind of activity facilitated or supported by the school. 29% of respondents offered no response or indicated such activity is not supported in their school. 71% of schools responded that such activity is supported, commonly listing end of year concerts, choirs, and visual arts exhibitions. Whilst these are vital to quality arts education programs, they are most effective when supported consistently throughout the year by high quality teaching in the arts, and when viewed as an important adjunct to such teaching, these high profile events can offer tremendous enrichment and engagement opportunity to the students, the school, the community and the system.

Externally facilitated arts events, programs and activities.

There are a range of arts education service providers operating in the Northern Territory, offering access to specialist programs, events and services that are not usually available within schools. The best results are obtained through collaborative partnerships between these providers and schools, where programs are aligned with school objectives and priorities for education outcomes in the longer term. Some of these providers are private businesses, some are not-for-profit NGOs, some are agencies within the NT Department of Education, and some act in partnerships with other organisations.

Survey respondents were asked to describe the nature and extent of their participation in events and programs facilitated by external providers. 33% did not respond to the question or indicated they did not participate or contribute to externally facilitated arts events and programs, whilst 67% schools indicated they did. The majority of these were programs delivered by the Department of Education's NT Music School, such as the multi-art form Beat performances in Darwin and Alice Springs, Battle of the School Bands, and VAMPtv (a multimedia programs supporting all of the arts in remote schools).

A number of schools also accessed the services of third party Arts providers such as the Darwin-based Corrugated Iron Youth Arts, Art Exhibitions and Arts Centres, STAMP Music, Musica Viva, Indigenous Hip Hop Project, various community Arts festivals such as Barunga and Desert Harmony, excursions to theatre productions. Whilst there are a number of services, events and programs accessible to remote schools, the majority of opportunities are in Darwin.

Student participation in the arts outside of school

ABS data suggests that a growing number of Australians not only participate in arts and cultural activities as consumers and as audiences, but that they increasingly are participating in arts and culture as active participants themselves.⁴³ This survey asked respondents to offer their perception about the degree to which students were engaged in such activity:

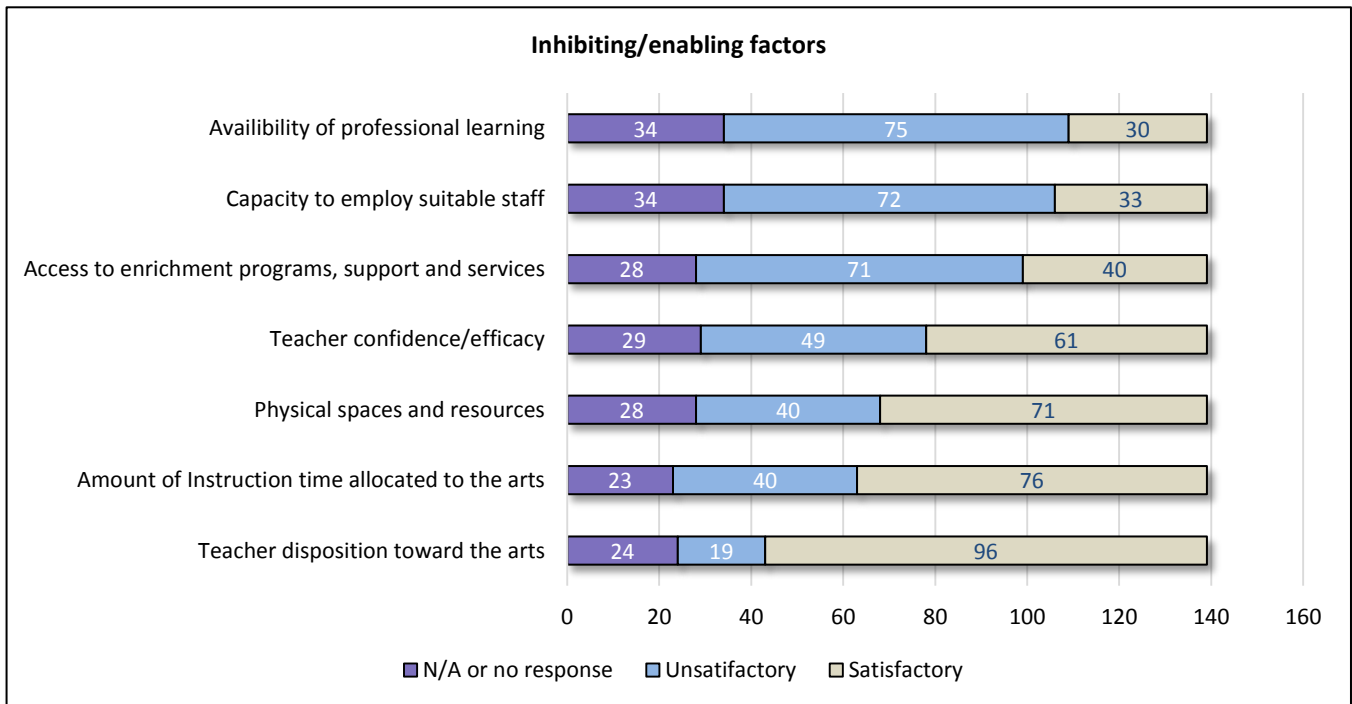
Principals perceptions	Don't know	No students	25% of students	50% of students	75% of students	All students
Traditional & cultural ceremony	23	9	42	16	12	23
Formal training & tuition	24	57	41			
Community groups & clubs	30	42	40	9	5	
Personal & family leisure	35	17	41	5	5	9

⁴³ (Australia Council For the Arts, 2014)

Twenty-three schools, all remote schools, indicated that all of their students participated in traditional and cultural ceremony. Most of these schools do not have arts specialists and do not support extra-curricular arts activity.

Principals’ perspectives on the factors affecting arts education

Given the commonly acknowledged and understood constraining factors as described in section 2, Principals in this survey were asked to respond to a range of factors as ‘unsatisfactory’ if they were inhibiting quality Arts education in their school, and conversely ‘satisfactory’ if they considered these to be enabling factors. Responses are presented here in order of highest dissatisfaction:



There is clearly an unacceptably high level of dissatisfaction. The survey also sought comments from respondents as an opportunity for direct input. Most of the commentary offered confirmed the findings in the table above, with many also indicating they also considered funding to be an inhibiting factor.

Principals in principle

Finally, the survey asked whether respondents believed every student should have an effective education in the Arts. 90% responded in the affirmative. Not surprisingly around 10% said no, or did not respond, which corresponds approximately with the number of schools where Arts education appears non-existent.

Section 4 – Conclusions and recommendations for the NT education system

In order to support the best long-term social and economic outcomes for our society, every child in Northern Territory Government schools should have a quality arts education. This idea is supported in principle by the majority of teachers and schools leaders, though is not always implemented in practice. This is cause for concern, not least because the arts are mandated for study. The Australian Curriculum offers a common standard for assessment and reporting, and access to resources and transferrable expertise from around the nation with the potential to address our inconsistencies and improve outcomes for students. *The Australian Curriculum: the Arts* is scheduled for full implementation in 2016 (subject to final endorsement), and our system must ensure all our schools are positioned to do so, with a clear statement of prioritisation.

Recommendation 1: Prioritise the full implementation of the Australian Arts Curriculum with high expectations for quality as a Key Action in the 2016 Strategic plan.

The potential for arts education in the NT has not been realised. It is not surprising that there is cynicism in some quarters about this potential, as we do not have a common vision for what constitutes quality in arts education, and as the data shows very few students are receiving a quality arts education while some appear to receive none at all. The attributes of quality in arts education are described in this paper and can be adopted as a rubric for measuring school's efforts to implement such an education for every student. For the best results, every NT Government school should employ a high calibre arts specialist to work in collaboration with all staff and the school community to plan, implement and evaluate programs in alignment with systemic policy and curriculum, with access to externally provided services and enrichment programs that engage the whole school community. Principals and school councils ultimately make the decisions about staffing priorities, though profoundly influenced by systemic priorities and levers. Such levers can be used to raise systemic expectations for arts education.

Recommendation 2: Require all NT Government schools to assess and report on Australian Arts Curriculum achievement standards using centrally collected A-E grades or similar comparable measure.

This will form the foundation for more transferrable and systematic approaches to curriculum and assessment, yielding consistent and comprehensive student tracking data over time and serving as a measure for monitoring quality. It will also signal higher systemic expectations and potentially drive staffing priorities to ensure higher quality service delivery.

The factors inhibiting the implementation of arts education in the NT as perceived by principals can be summarised as a shortage of suitably trained/experienced/qualified teachers and access to specialised services and support; a shortage of relevant professional learning opportunities for generalist teachers; and perceptions of insufficient physical and financial resources. Clearly the data shows these factors are not inhibiting arts programs in all schools in the NT, particularly in Darwin and Alice Springs, where a majority of schools have some if not all of

the elements consistent with the provision of quality arts education. It seems a logical conclusion to draw that principals can drive arts education as a priority should they so choose, and global budgets and school autonomy should address resourcing flexibility in the longer term. On the other hand the data also shows that Bamford's "right the first time" conditions for quality are present in only a small number of schools. If the system signals a higher expectation for arts education, specialist arts teachers and in-servicing for generalists will be in demand, and principals will require support to identify suitably qualified recruits and facilitate professional learning for others. There are existing internal and external agencies equipped to advise and support in these areas, though these are not co-ordinated.

Recommendation 3: Establish and facilitate a cross-sector arts education working group to design a long term strategy to develop our capacity for quality arts education as a system, with a commitment to implement such a strategy.

Such a group would consider existing programs and structures; practical strategies to support schools in curriculum implementation; strategies for improving existing workforce capacity through professional learning for assistant and generalist teachers; quality assurance and quality control measures for third party arts providers and the recruitment and licensure of arts specialist teachers; strategic and sustainable partnerships with business, communities and the arts sector for enrichment programs and services across the NT. Such a group should include representatives of relevant DoE business units such as Curriculum Services, NT Music School, Human Resources; arts teachers' professional associations; Charles Darwin University; the NT Teacher's Registration Board and the arts industry. Such an initiative should have clear terms of reference, key performance indicators and reporting and accountability processes in place.

There are broad ranging intrinsic and extrinsic achievement benefits for students, schools and communities possible through provision of a quality arts education at the school level in each region of the NT. If the Department of Education chooses to prioritise it, there will need to be advocacy, consultation and co-ordinated leadership across the system and community to ensure a successful outcome. There is also potential to support strategic goals for Indigenous education outcomes and the Northern Territory's broader international economic aims, and partnerships with industry, arts organisations and other government departments and jurisdictions will be vital.

Recommendation 4: Establish a "Champion": a temporary project management unit in the directorate, reporting to the Executive Director, Education Partnerships to lead and co-ordinate a strategic cross sector implementation of arts Education policy across the NT.

Responsibilities would include establishment, co-ordination and oversight of the arts education working group previously recommended; operational leadership and advocacy for the implementation of quality arts education in all NT schools at the directorate level; arts industry and community partnership development; Asian and Indigenous arts and cultural partnership development; inter-agency partnerships development and co-ordination.

The existing networks, high level and independence afforded by Education Partnerships would reinforce high systemic expectations and offer strategic positioning to avoid vested interest and maximise cross-sector impact.

Every child in the Northern Territory deserves a quality arts education. Currently not every child receives it. Some have no arts education at all at school. Whilst the rhetoric about the importance and value of arts education has increased, and there are some positive signs of improvement, in real terms the outcomes are still inconsistent. Only with high expectations for quality based on best practice can the potential offered by the arts in and through education be realised. These expectations must be signalled and maintained at the highest level in order to influence priorities at the school and community level.

Recommendation 5: The Chief Executive and executive leadership team drive cultural and perceptual change by explicitly reinforcing high expectations for arts education in systemic communications and public statements.

Our system must ensure schools can implement a quality arts education for every child and advocate this goal with all stakeholders, this is our moral obligation and will support our broader objectives: the best schools have the best arts programs. Excellence in education and excellence in the arts go hand in hand.⁴⁴ Such a goal will help us navigate the obstacles and opportunities toward “Creative Success Together”.

I would teach children music, physics and philosophy; but most importantly music; for in the patterns of music and all the Arts, are the keys to learning.

Plato

⁴⁴ (Fowler, 1994)

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