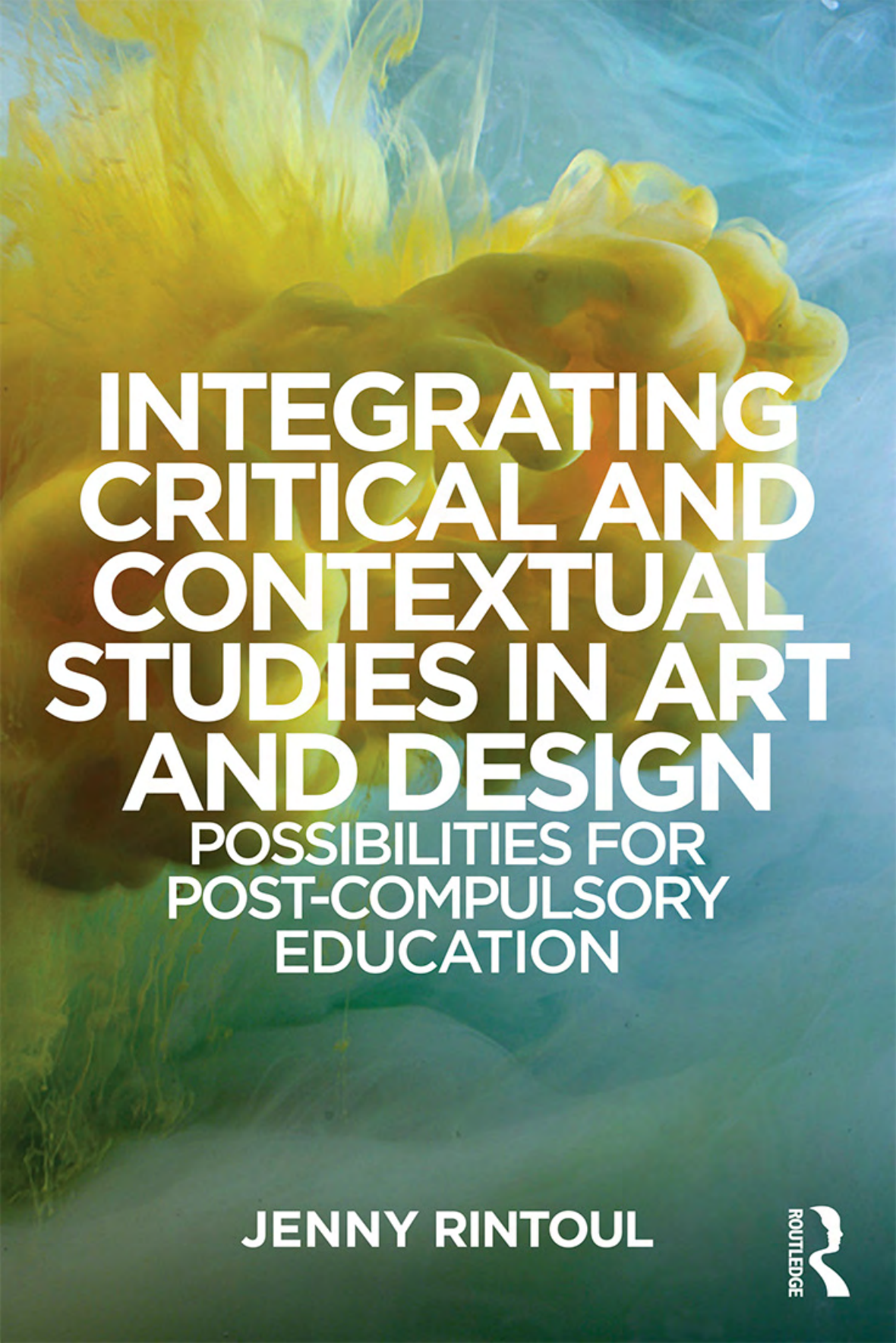
INTEGRATING CRITICAL AND CONTEXTUAL STUDIES IN ART AND DESIGN
POSSIBILITIES FOR POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION
JENNY RINTOUL
ROUTLEDGE

INTEGRATING CRITICAL AND CONTEXTUAL STUDIES IN ART AND DESIGN

Integrating Critical and Contextual Studies in Art and Design examines the relationship between two aspects of art education that appear at times inseparable or even indistinguishable, and at others isolated and in conflict: Critical and Contextual Studies (CCS) and studio practice. Underpinned by international contexts, this book is rooted in British art and design education and draws upon contemporary case studies of teaching and learning in post-compulsory settings in order to analyse and illustrate identities and practices of CCS and its integration.

The chapters in this book are divided into three sections that build on one another: 'Discourse and debate'; 'Models, types and tensions'; and 'Proposals and recommendations'. Key issues include:

- knowledge hierarchies and subject histories and identities;
- constructions of 'theory' and the symbiotic relationship between theory and practice;
- models and practices of CCS within current post-compulsory British art and design education;
- the reification of ubiquitous terms in the fields of art and design and of education: *intuition* and *integration*;
- approaches to curriculum integration, including design and management; and
- suggestions for integrating CCS in art and design courses, including implications for pedagogy and assessment.

Integrating Critical and Contextual Studies in Art and Design offers a comprehensive analysis of the current drive towards integration within art education, and elucidates what we understand by the theory and practice of integration. It explores the history, theory, teaching and student experience of CCS, and will be of interest to lecturers, teachers and pedagogues involved in art and design as well as researchers and students of art education.

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INTEGRATING CRITICAL AND CONTEXTUAL STUDIES IN ART AND DESIGN

Possibilities for post-compulsory education

Jenny Rintoul

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For my Nan, with love
1926–2016

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Term
AAH	Association of Art Historians
ABacc	Advanced Baccalaureate
AVCE	Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BFA	Bachelor of Fine Arts
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CAA	College Art Association of America
CCS	Critical and Contextual Studies
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
DBAE	Discipline-Based Art Education
DipAD	Diploma in Art and Design
EBacc	English Baccalaureate
ED	Extended Diploma
EDAD	Extended Diploma in Art and Design
FE	Further Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HE	Higher Education
ICA	Institute of Contemporary Arts
MFA	Master of Fine Arts
NACAE	National Advisory Council on Art Education
NCDAD	National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NDAD	National Diploma in Art and Design
NDD	National Diploma in Design
NLS	National Literacy Strategy

NNS	National Numeracy Strategy
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSAE	National Society for Art Education
NSEAD	National Society for Education in Art and Design
PGCHE	Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education
RA	Royal Academy of Arts
RCA	Royal College of Art
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
TLC	Teaching and Learning Cultures
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
ULEAC	University of London Examination and Assessment Council
YBAs	Young British Artists

INTRODUCTION

A broad view

Overview

In the UK there are thousands of courses within the field of art and design at post-compulsory level, delivered in schools, further education (FE) colleges and higher education (HE) institutions. Qualifications in art and design at these levels range from BTEC[1] Diplomas to Foundation courses, Foundation Degrees and BA (Hons)[2] undergraduate courses; around 107,290 students are currently enrolled full-time at these levels in HE institutions alone. In virtually every case there is some attempt to combine studio practice and 'theoretical' studies, formalised under a variety of labels including Visual Culture, Art History, and Critical and Contextual Studies. This book explores these practices and conceptualisations of assessed 'theory', referred to throughout as Critical and Contextual Studies (CCS). In so doing, and in recognising the multiple guises and identities of 'theory' in art and design, it examines the relationship between CCS and studio practice: two aspects of art education that at times appear inseparable and even indistinguishable, and at other times isolated and in conflict.

Two main themes run through this book: first, conceptualisations and practices of 'theory'; second, meanings of and possibilities for 'integration'. The first three chapters (grouped under the heading 'Discourse and debate') introduce and contextualise these themes, presenting a historical and theoretical overview of the field. Chapters 4 to 7 ('Models, types and tensions') analyse current practice, provide models of CCS and offer insights into the tensions that underpin its construction and integration. Chapters 8 and 9 ('Proposals and recommendations') present recommendations for conceptualising the integration of CCS, including proposals for practice and the extent to which integration can be controlled and managed within the curriculum. Through such discussion, this book goes some way to addressing the internal workings of an art and design curriculum.

Models of CCS and integration are proposed through this book. The intention is to provide a point of reference for teaching staff and curriculum designers to

consider in their own curriculum planning and delivery. Attempting to code models of CCS and integration might seem antithetical to the rhizomatic and unpredictable nature of 'theory' in 'practice' (introduced in Chapters 1 to 3). However, there is good reason for employing these codes – not least that the subject of art and design is itself located within education systems based on codes and structures. In addition, the dominant models and classifications presented here represent insights from current practice, highlighted across five case study sites. This coding has emerged from, and is structurally compatible with, the field of art and design education.

The significance of the post-compulsory sector

In the UK, full-time education is compulsory between the ages of five and sixteen, during which time children and young people are entitled to a free full-time education in a state school. Subsequently, at post-compulsory level, young people have a choice to continue with their education on an A-level course (the 'academic' route) or a vocational course. Post-compulsory study might take place in a school (depending on resources), an FE college or another type of learning institution. Following the early years of post-compulsory education, students might opt to continue their education on a degree programme. It should be noted that UK government policy recently changed so that in England, 16-year-olds must opt for two years of further full-time education, part-time education alongside paid or voluntary work, or an apprenticeship. This is the case following the Education and Skills Act (2008) which took effect in 2013 for sixteen-year-olds. UK government policy impacts England only, and therefore this Act does not affect Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Within this book, post-compulsory education covers the options after the compulsory full-time school-leaving age of sixteen, despite recent changes in English education policy, including both FE and HE.

The issue of CCS is pertinent in art education at all levels. However, its position is especially amplified at post-compulsory education in which students opt to study art and design full-time. The first post-compulsory opportunity for this focused study is the two-year BTEC Extended Diploma in Art and Design (EDAD) (see Figure 0.1), following which the majority of students proceed to degree-level study. Chapters 4 to 9 anchor some of the ideas presented by drawing on research data from five of these courses in the UK – each of which is a unique construction of CCS and its integration – providing a range of models relevant to courses elsewhere. This is a useful level for selecting case studies because compared with other sectors of the UK education system (and despite its volume and socioeconomic significance) FE provision remains relatively under-researched (Hughes, Taylor and Tight, 1996; James and Biesta, 2007) – especially in the field of art and design.

There is an established literature on art and design education at primary and secondary levels (for example: Hickman, 2005; Addison et al., 2010; Herne, Cox and Watts, 2009) and an increasing body of pedagogical work on art education at HE level. For example, Goldsmiths (University of London) hosts the Writing-PAD network[3] (following a four-year project that ran from 2002 to

2006) and in 2003 art staff at Lancaster University initiated the ongoing Visual Intelligences Research Project.[4] The position and practice of the writing and 'theory' associated with CCS are a particular concern in HE. However, given that FE is increasingly a platform for preparing students for HE study, there is a strong case for trying to understand how these issues 'play out' at this formative stage in a student's art and design education.

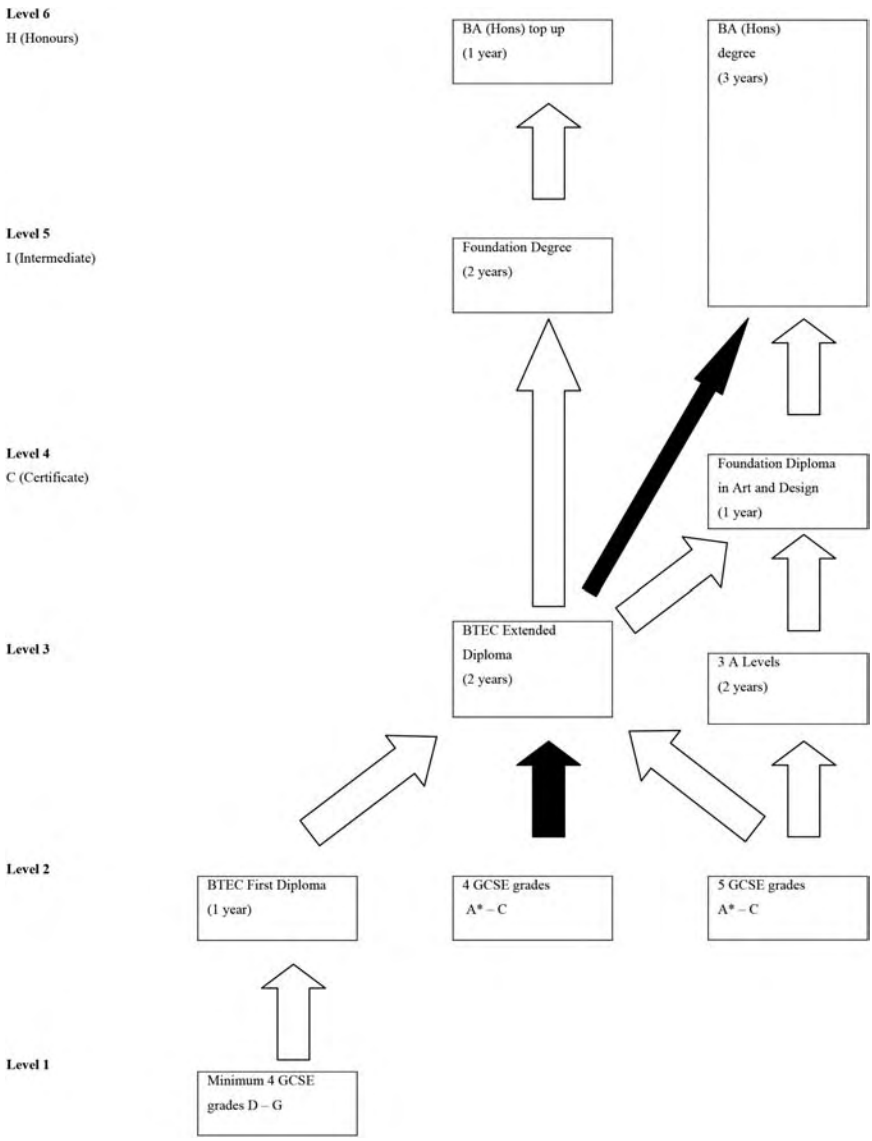

FIGURE 0.1 Main routes in UK post-compulsory art and design education within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

As with art education discourse, debate around the curriculum primarily focuses on compulsory-level schooling. Such debate often deals with contained subjects (Goodson, Anstead and Mangan, 1998: 137), particularly relationships between the content of subjects (Bernstein, 1971) across a school curriculum. Rather than looking at subject relationships across a broad curriculum, however, the focus here is on relationships within one subject field. Sociological perspectives on the curriculum are borrowed as a framework for exploring the *internal frictions* in art and design education. For example, in the 'Models, types and tensions' chapters, Goodson (1993, 1989, 1995 [1988]; Goodson, Anstead and Mangan, 1998) is useful in terms of subject status and the construction and maintenance of knowledge hierarchies within 'theory' and 'practice' and Bernstein's (1971) model of education codes provides a framework for analysis in identifying models of CCS and their perceived levels of integration. Lave and Wenger's (1991) learning cultures and communities of practice (later developed in Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002) also support this social constructivist perspective of education – a perspective that helps to identify the situated nature of learning in CCS and studio sessions.

Art education now: a British perspective

Art education is of current interest and debate across both compulsory (primary and secondary education up to age 16) and post-compulsory (FE, ages 16–19, and HE, age 18+) sectors. This is particularly true in light of recent shifts in UK education policy and practice. It should be noted that the UK government's education policy impacts arts education in England (rather than the whole of the UK), and therefore practices and policies in England are not necessarily reflective of those in other UK nations. The concerns and issues raised in this book, however, are not confined to English arts education. This section highlights the significance of the subject of art and design within the education system and demonstrates why we should be interested in an art and design curriculum in the contemporary education climate. In so doing, it provides a context for both the overall climate in which this book is written and the book's key themes: subject status, knowledge hierarchies and constructions of 'theory' in the post-compulsory sector.

The term 'creative subjects' is used here to refer to subjects across art and design, music, performing arts and dance, in acknowledgement that many of the current threats to art and design span 'creative subjects' more broadly. In response to these threats, an abundance of campaigns and initiatives have demonstrated strong support for arts education as well as the social and economic contributions of the arts, a few of which are highlighted throughout this discussion.

In HE, funding cuts and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) are among the recent shifts to impact upon art and design subjects. The TEF is a government initiative, introduced in an HE green paper in November 2015 (DBIS, 2015), which includes measures or metrics for assessing teaching quality in HE. One of these is employment or destination. As well as being potentially unrelated to teaching quality in all subjects, this raises a particular concern for art and design in that

it is not uncommon for students of creative subjects to enter low-paid work immediately after graduating while building their 'practice' – irrespective of (and perhaps even in some cases as a result of) excellence in teaching.

Another question to emerge from debates over the TEF is that of the position and identity of art and design subjects within universities. There are clear benefits to promoting excellence in teaching, including raising standards. Locating art and design subjects within the university potentially improves knowledge sharing and parity of research status between 'creative' and 'academic' subjects (at least in theory). However, with this comes the increased merging of the art and design faculty into the larger institution in HE, which compromises the integrity and learning cultures of art and design subjects. This is happening at the time of writing: for example, the Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design in the East End of London was closed down in early 2016 (despite broad campaigning) and relocated within the main London Metropolitan University campus in North London.

Across the FE sector – one function of which is to prepares students for HE – vocational qualifications have been reclassified, which has coincided with a reduced range in the provision of art and design courses (NSEAD, 2016: 5, 25). As students' choices to opt for 'creative' subjects are reduced across both FE and schools, art and design subjects are devalued, as evidenced by the National Society for Education in Art and Design's analysis of the impact of government policy on art and design education (both compulsory and FE) between 2010 and 2016 (NSEAD, 2016).

In compulsory schooling, the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measure is contributing to the reduction of both student choice and resourcing of art and design. The EBacc prioritises a narrow range of 'academic' subjects; since its introduction as a performance measure, fewer students are opting for creative subjects at GCSE level. With regard to schools, the 'Bacc for the Future' campaign is fighting to abolish the EBacc as a performance measure or to include creative subjects in the EBacc and Advanced Baccalaureate (ABacc). At the time of writing, the campaign is supported by over 180 leading arts organisations across the UK.[5] Concern over the UK government's impact on the arts in education has been ongoing for a number of years. For example, Darren Henley's review of cultural education in 2012 (DCMS, 2012) urged the government to include arts and cultural subjects in the curriculum. The EBacc and the Cultural Learning Alliance[6] also voiced concern over the September 2013 speech by then-Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education, Elizabeth Truss (Truss, 2013), which highlighted the government's curriculum reform as supporting 'high-value' subjects (maths, sciences, DT [design technology], computing, English and languages) with no mention of value in arts and cultural subjects.

Struggle for status in art and design: issues in compulsory education

Of all the threats outlined above, the EBacc is particularly pertinent. It is worth highlighting in more detail for its impact on perceptions of the arts in general

and art and design education in particular (including perceptions within the fields of both education and art and design). Furthermore, the EBacc also exemplifies the disparity between systems of art and design education. In its current (proposed) form, it also has the potential to affect students' choices at post-compulsory level – as well as the quality and quantity of art and design provision they receive in preparation for post-compulsory art and design education.

Plans to switch from GCSEs to the Baccalaureate in England were thwarted in 2013, following criticism from the arts community and teachers' unions and recommendations from Ofqual. However, this does not mitigate the damaging message that the arts should be 'downgraded' or are of lower value than 'academic' subjects. Although not currently a qualification in itself, the EBacc is a school performance measure. This means that it is the term applied to the achievement of GCSEs at grades A*–C across what the Department for Education terms 'core academic subjects' (DfE, 2016a): English, maths, history or geography, the sciences and a modern foreign language. Arts subjects are not included in this performance measure and the term 'academic' continues to dominate as the umbrella term for a narrow pool of subjects. This idea of an academic/Other binary, in which value is attributed to 'academic' over 'non-academic' subjects, is persistent. The government's intention is that, in 2020, GCSE students (who started Year 7 in September 2015) will be taking the EBacc subjects.

The message to schools, parents and students in the UK is that the arts are less valuable than those subjects labelled 'academic'. In compulsory education, the government is prioritising STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths) and EBacc subjects. Schools are incentivised to reduce the time and resources given to arts subjects in order to allocate more lesson time to STEM and EBacc subjects. This move is exacerbated by measures such as 'Progress 8' (DfE, 2016b), in operation from 2016/17, which places double weighting on maths and English and introduces a system of discount codes whereby arts subjects count for less than 'academic' subjects. While each science subject or each language subject is credited, the same does not apply to the creative arts. There is little incentive to take more than one arts subject at GCSE with the discount code system; for example, fine art and photography will be credited as one GCSE rather than two in the league tables. Students are thus primed for a specific route through education. Unsurprising, then, that the institutions heralded by ministers as the measure for quality and excellence in HE appear to be the Russell Group universities. While an excellent choice for the study of some subjects, these institutions are limited in what they offer to students wanting to pursue art and design.

The situation in schools has a direct impact on the post-compulsory sector in terms of not only potential student numbers but also the learning cultures from which students enter post-compulsory education. These learning cultures are built through the resourcing of art and design courses, the value attached to these subjects and the dispositions of both tutors and students. The message in secondary education that arts subjects are not academically valuable inevitably has an impact on such learning cultures.

This context indicates the challenges that art education faces, both now and in the near future. A 2013 Department for Education report suggests, for example, that arts education provision in schools has been reduced as a consequence of the EBacc:

> The most commonly withdrawn subject is drama or performing arts, with almost a quarter (23 percent) of teachers whose schools have withdrawn a subject saying that they no longer offer this. Around one in six (17 percent) say that art has been withdrawn, whilst around one in seven (14 percent) say that design or design technology has been withdrawn. Eleven percent say that textiles has been withdrawn.
>
> *(DfE, 2013: 6)*

This struggle for the status of creative subjects in English education is not new. Over the past forty years there has been a cycle of policy-driven threats to the arts followed by presentations to government of material that evidences and illustrates the necessity of creative subjects: for example, the Gulbenkian Report (Robinson, 1982), the Robinson Report (Robinson, 1999) and the Arts Council Evidence Review (Arts Council England, 2014). Persuading government that the arts are necessary has been the concern of those working in education as well as contemporary practising artists. For example, in response to the recent policy initiatives, Patrick Brill (better known as Bob and Roberta Smith) co-founded The Art Party in 2011 with filmmaker Tim Newton, produced a film (*Art Party*, released on 21 August 2014 to coincide with GCSE results day) and stood against the former UK Education Secretary Michael Gove in the UK General Election in May 2015 as an independent candidate for the constituency of Surrey Heath (Bob and Roberta Smith received 273 votes; Michael Gove retained the seat with 32,582).

The status and value of art and design education is not limited to the UK; it is an international issue. The UK forms the focus of this book; however, the issues are not unfamiliar to other 'western' education systems. For example, in the USA, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act[7] drew schools' attention and resources to providing access to quality education in the core curriculum, particularly in English and maths, and therefore away from high-cost subjects such as art and design. De-emphasising art and design has also been a consequence of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS):[8] an initiative to develop standards in schools with a focus on what students 'should know' at each year, level or grade of education. The goals set by the CCSS are for the 'core' subjects English and maths. There has been an incentive, then, for schools to direct resources towards 'core' subjects and away from subjects such as art and design. In response to concerns over the elimination of creative subjects from these initiatives, and therefore of their demise in schools, the National Core Arts Standards[9] were released in 2014 with the aim of aligning creative subjects with the CCSS.