

One of my first thoughts while reading through the report was how unbelievably progressive the thought and ideas were surrounding the arts. The report discussed the importance of the arts, this highlighted how similar my own thoughts are on the topic. One of the talking points was how the arts promote our sense and appreciation of the range of meanings within ourselves. This resonated with me, as I understand and appreciate the confusing time it is to be a child/teenager/young adult. I liked how the report was suggesting the arts as a tool for self-discovery and reflection. Another interesting point the report made was the view of the arts being viewed as less than that of subjects like science and mathematics. Art is 'merely subjective' while the latter are subjects of knowledge, the report questions this line of thinking and calls for a radical reappraisal. Similarly, the report discussed the segregation of the arts and the other subjects, 'scientist cannot be artists or vice versa'. It's suggested that schools embrace the compatible elements are the arts and the other subjects and how creativity within the typically 'more academic' subjects can be beneficial for the students. All of these points I agreed with but this one stood out to me as it made me reflect on my own personal experience with the arts and science. I was shocked that these points were being discussed as early as 1982 as I myself had been told in 2016 when choosing my A Levels I was not allowed to pursue art, biology, and chemistry, as I would be unable to switch from such scientific subjects to a creative subject like art. The majority of the themes surrounding the arts in the report I agreed with but when reflecting I couldn't help feeling as though they are still relevant today, 40 years later.

The report seemed almost too idyllic with such revolutionary ideas and recommendations about education and the arts. It almost felt to me as though it fell short of its realistic framework for schools to be able to achieve these progressive ideas. When reflecting on the contents of the report it became extremely apparent how unachievable some of the recommendations would have been for my high school and the majority of public schools for that matter. This was a topic we discussed in one of our meetings which led to an interesting debate on the responsibility of the government and the responsibility of private schools. It was discussed how private schools should be responsible for sharing resources and tools with less fortunate schools in their local area. This was a little off-topic of the report, but I thought it was important to mention it as I see no other way the goals highlighted in the report could be achieved. I expected the report to touch on how important government funding and support would be in the big-picture plans laid out in the report. I felt as though this was a large gap when discussing the arts, particularly in schools as the funding is truly minimal.

Another interesting point that was discussed during our meetings was how one of the ways the report valued the arts was by suggesting the arts as a great way to build valuable skills for later life in particular later working life. The statement itself I don't disagree with, but it did highlight the lens through which the arts were being viewed, making them a commodity. That I disagree with. We had a short discussion about this topic, and it was something that stuck with me, we debated the importance of the arts and why the arts are viewed in such a money-focused way. For example, many children and adults shy away from the arts for not being 'successful' which within the capitalist society we live in means just not always 'well paid'. I don't think the arts should be valued in that way as the arts can be immensely valuable for the individual for mental and personal development.

Although there are some gripes I have with the report, I am grateful for its publication and the impact it did have on the curriculum. I am grateful I myself got to experience the arts in my education, but we need something more radical again as it feels at least to me that arts within schools have become stagnant. More conversations and discussions with those in power to increase the funding for the arts, pay the teachers more, and overall, truly appreciate the value art has for students. Not treating the arts as a creative way to build skills for later jobs but funding the arts just to preserve the arts.

The main challenges discussed in the report were: explaining the importance of the arts and the value that they hold, schools having a succinct curriculum and the arts being equal to other subjects, and linking what is taught, and how it is taught to the needs of a changing society, the discussion of assessments and what that looks like, and finally addressing equality, diversity, and inclusion. When reflecting on these themes they are still relevant today, maybe even more so. Although much has changed since the report's publication, we are still tackling major challenges. There is not a simple solution or a quick fix, but the arts are worth scratching heads for.