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THE (PRE) FABRICATION

PREAMBLE

The tradition of drawing from observation, and its pedagogic role in secondary art and design education in the UK, forms the focus for this exploration of the experiences of a number of individuals identified as ‘dyspraxic’. My interest began with an initial uncertainty regarding the application of particular approaches to teaching observational drawing based on the work of Betty Edwards’ book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (Edwards, 1982:3). Revisiting Edwards’ manual, in the early stages of this work, I was struck by a focus within her introduction that, on many previous readings, I had missed. She suggests that ‘drawing is a skill that can be learned by every *normal* person with *average* eyesight and *average* eye-hand coordination’ (my emphasis) suggesting that there are some who may not be able to engage as successfully with the activities she promotes. The origins of this book came from my reservations about what it is to be a ‘normal’ person with ‘average eye-hand coordination’; hence the focus here on those who are identified as ‘dyspraxic’ since by definition individuals are recognised as being less well coordinated.

In considering a range of literature about dyspraxia I began to be compelled by the possibilities that the sensory integration and coordination required for drawing from observation may suggest particular challenges. However, I was also drawn to the ambiguities around definitions of dyspraxia and the social and cultural definitions that may result, not only in its identification against a concept of normalisation (Foucault, 1991:177) but also in the experience of this as a *learning* ‘disability’. This book does not aim to identify specific ‘problems’ but rather to explore the flexible social and cultural settings in which pupils may be defined against particular activities and the implications this might have for their learning. It is therefore less concerned with an understanding of what can be investigated by the analysis of drawings than it is with the sense that participants have made of their art education and the way in which drawing from observation is positioned within their stories of these experiences.

This book aims to critique the creation of the dyspraxic subject by exploring the point at which the ‘dyspraxic ideal’, derived from and produced by a range of literature, intersects with participants’ experiences of drawing from observation as part of their compulsory art education. Here I will explore the possibility that as a result of an exclusive approach to art and design, prioritising teaching of specific skills and mastery of techniques, pupils could be socially and culturally disadvantaged rather than ‘medically’ disabled. I will therefore offer a critical exploration of the pedagogy of observational drawing as a situated and potentially discriminatory activity through the lens of a number of ‘dyspraxic learners’, but with implications for all.

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The aim of my initial research was to gain an understanding of the lived experience of observational drawing by those perceived to be less well coordinated, in order to examine the nature of observational drawing as a pedagogic practice situated within socially constructed concepts of physical and technical ability. In this introduction I aim to establish the key themes of the work and explore the autobiographical and professional context for its origin. The latter half of this first chapter is therefore presented as a number of short narrative accounts, offering the space for personal reflections on how this work has evolved. These experiences have, over time, shaped the focus and direction of this research. Chapter 2 offers an in-depth exploration of narrative methodology, its positioning within critical research and its relevance for exploring the complex social sites of inclusion, ‘special’ education and art education. On a practical level this also allows for a better understanding of the tools that have been used to collect and analyse data.

Section 2 provides the main theoretical framework which is based on a detailed discussion of recent debates around inclusive education in Chapter 3; the creation of the dyspraxic ideal in Chapter 4; and the pedagogical and epistemological context of drawing from observation within the context of art and design education in Chapter 5. The data is presented, analysed and theorised via four narrative case studies (Chapters 6–9) in Section 3. The final section of the book draws together and develops some significant themes emerging from the research and concludes the work.

THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY AND RESEARCH TENSIONS

There is an immediate and obvious tension here in exploring the experiences of a number of individuals largely as a result of the way in which they have already been identified as in some way ‘different’. The starting point for me, as a researcher, was to identify the experiences of pupils identified as dyspraxic and to consider an aspect of art practice that may have been particularly problematic for ‘them’ because of their perceived ‘disability’. However, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the manner in which I had framed the original study, based on my first encounters with clinical research. This range of literature has been critically reviewed in Chapter 4 in order to create a text that presents the concept of a ‘dyspraxic ideal’, a set of ideas which are then positioned within a discussion of key literature in respect of art and design education in Chapter 5. The aim here is to shift the focus from a discussion of individual deficit to one where the construction of certain educational practices can be explored and interrogated. Here I acknowledge the flexible nature of definitions of ability and disability within social and cultural constructions and the role that systemic practices can have in shaping individual experience as well as our understanding of the ways in which we might define a ‘norm’ in respect of learning abilities.

ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION: THE CONTEXT

This book aims to explore a particular pedagogic practice, drawing from observation, and has a specific focus on the experiences of pupils and their engagement with this activity as part of their art and design education. The observation tradition in art

and design has a significant role in art education as part of the academic translation of the western European approach based on the classical representation described by Davies (2002). Although he outlines the tradition in relation to 19th century Schools of Design his description of this approach to art education resonates with more recent experiences. In a study by Downing and Watson (2004), drawing from direct observation was identified as a prevalent characteristic of the curriculum in ten randomly selected schools, and a further eight selected on the basis of their engagement with contemporary art work. This emphasis is illustrative of a focus on a skills-based approach to teaching art where pedagogy is related to the transmission of a specific set of practical and technical skills (Atkinson, 2006).

The tradition of observation has all the hallmarks of the notion of ‘Quality’ identified by Lippard (1990). She refers to a ‘sheep-like fidelity to a single criterion for good art’ based on high degrees of technical skill and, although referring to cross-cultural issues, her argument can be extended to a discussion of the constraints posed by the observational tradition within art education. Academic observational drawings are still held as examples of a ‘Quality’ to which only a minority can aspire. It may be that an emphasis on teaching observational drawing as a central skill contributes to a particular definition of disciplinary ‘ability’ and that such a definition may exclude pupils from aspects of their learning in art as a result of this emphasis. The role that drawing from observation has in defining disciplinary knowledge, in respect of art education, will therefore be explored, as will the ways in which this activity might create pupils as particular types of subject (Rabinow, 1984:188) and in doing so exclude them.

These ideas are not new in relation to a discussion of the pedagogy of art and design education. In 1998 Hughes claimed that:

... the lives and social conditions affecting young people in the UK have changed so much over a thirty year period that the drawing of a distorted self portrait in a kettle may no longer carry as much significance as it used to (Hughes,1998:45)

I would go further to suggest that there may never have been a time when this had significance for individuals other than for those with the specific skills necessary to render the said portrait to a ‘high standard’. Rather, that this type of observational drawing practice has been subsumed into art and design educational practice regardless of relevance or pedagogic or theoretical justification.

It is argued that the emergence of postmodern practices in art and design (Burgess and Addison, 2004) may present opportunities for this traditional pedagogical canon of practice to be challenged and that contemporary approaches to art practice can be seen to have real relevance to a discussion of less exclusive approaches. Writing about art education in the US, Efland, Freedman and Stuhr (1996:3) indicate that most practices used by Western art teachers remain ‘grounded in modernist conceptions of art’ and retain an emphasis on formal characteristics as a key principle in art education based on the modernist tradition.

The introduction of the most recent orders for the national curriculum (QCA, 2007) may present opportunities for a different pedagogical context. The nature of

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language is interesting here, with an emphasis on personalised learning, mistake making in safe environments and risk taking. The definition of ‘first-hand observation’ is expansive, encompassing a range of approaches:

Working from first-hand observation: This could include taking inspiration from the work of others, drawing on personal experiences, drawing on imagination in response to stimuli, or using first hand observation to record images, sounds and ideas in visual and written forms. (QCA, 2007:5)

The expansion of ‘drawing to express’ offers a similarly extensive range of approaches to drawing but it is too early to say whether the new curriculum for art and design will provide some potential for the development of new opportunities for art education (Steers, 2009). This research will engage with these contemporary debates in relation to pedagogy in art and design and aims to contribute to the discussion of inclusive curriculum design and delivery.

A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

I have drawn on the work of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu in order to provide a conceptual framework for the analysis of participant narratives. A main theme related to the subject of the book concerns the social and cultural boundaries that are set, resulting in the identification and formation of both the norm (Foucault, 1991) and consequently ‘the abnormal’, where difference (identified as dyspraxia) is a deficit (learning difficulty) in need of remediation. This is related to a further theme whereby issues of health are viewed as both political and power related (Foucault, 1976). Public health becomes a political objective linked to the preservation of an economic workforce where it is beneficial to identify differences and provide remediation in order to enable appropriate training. The regulation and formalisation of social structures, such as education, allow for interventions to take place in order to correct individual difference. Foucault refers to the history of schooling as a process of uninterrupted examination where there is the potential for ‘perpetual comparison’ making such types of measurement and judgement possible (Foucault, 1991:184). The role of observational drawing, as a practice situated within art education and the broader arena of secondary education, will be examined as a regulative and dominant discourse in providing a mechanism for defining concepts of ability in the discipline as well as the pupil.

The nature of the authorization of these cultural traditions can also be associated with ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) as part of a socially dominant code that could be described as purposefully exclusive. The ‘institutionalized’ state of this form of cultural capital can be seen to be re-enforced by the examination system and bodies such as the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) who give authority to a curriculum that still rewards the mastery of technical skills based on the nineteenth century model outlined by Davies (2002). Drawing from observation can perform a role within a process of normalisation with individual ability measured against a particular aesthetic, the ‘object’ and the drawing products of others. Those who do not display a particular type of ability may be identified as not only different but in need of remedial support or intervention.

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The second theme outlined above concerns the role of observational drawing as an official and discriminatory discourse. Connections between a perceived ability to draw and concepts of normality are firmly embedded, and it may be difficult for an art and design educator not to make judgements about the ability of a pupil to engage with the art and design curriculum. As a parallel, an English teacher may have difficulties in acknowledging the level of literacy of a pupil who has problems employing a consistent approach to spelling. This does not render an individual illiterate, but may result in a pupil being excluded from studying literature as an examination subject. My aim here is not to undermine a formalist approach to art and design education (although the pedagogic concepts that underpin such practices will be questioned) but to examine the concept of the authorisation of these systems and consider the implications for those who are excluded through identification of individual difference from an aesthetic norm.

The use of narrative as a form of inquiry resonates with Foucault's discussion of subjugated, naive or marginal forms of knowledge (Foucault, 1980). It could be argued that the participant's voice or narrative of their experience represents a previously 'occluded' way of knowing that is being brought to the fore. This theme is sympathetic with a characteristic of qualitative research where local or particular forms of knowledge are recognised as having the potential to introduce notions of difference. Clough (2002:12) suggests that narrative inquiry sits with other ethnographic and auto/biographical forms which attempt:

... to relate the 'micro' world of the individual to the 'macro' world of institutional meanings which they both inhabit and re-create. At its most fundamental, this is inquiry into the relations between subject and object.

The relationship between macro (institutional) and micro (individual) has additional relevance when considering those participating in this research project, since they are potentially marginalised by being children and by being identified as dyspraxic. They are identified and treated by 'expert' bodies whose knowledge is authenticated and given precedence by an adult and scientific voice. I would also include teachers within this group of experts, whose interventions are increasingly informed by medical identification of difference and the 'science' of assessment. Rigid curricula and age related expectations, for example, can contribute to the pathologising of learning for some pupils (Atkinson, 1998; Matthews, 2003). It is also useful to acknowledge however that the macro versus micro as a binary opposition is not unproblematic since it suggests a reductive view of complex social, cultural and educational sites.

INCLUSION

The range of concepts related to 'inclusive education' explored by Norwich (2002) confirms this as a complex social site (Foucault, 1991). This context provides a setting for the discussion of a specific educational practice based on hegemonic systems of representation and particular forms of aesthetic that may contribute to the production of a particular type of pupil. A consideration of potentially exclusive, socially situated practices will naturally necessitate a debate on inclusion which is

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informed by Foucault's discussion of 'normalisation' (Foucault, 1991) and the creation of the 'ideal pupil' or the 'norm'. The potential for a 'breach' between established and hegemonic art practices as sites for learning is set against the concept of the dyspraxic 'ideal'.

A central discussion in respect of inclusion in mainstream education relates to provision for 'special education' based on including pupils in mainstream provision. Baglieri and Knopf (2004) discuss the nature of truly inclusive schooling where differences are 'natural, acceptable and ordinary'. Norwich describes a 'separatist position' that assumes that special educational provision is different from mainstream and the Code of Practice (DfES, 2002), which gives statutory guidance for working with pupils with additional needs, is based on this principle. This type of provision assumes that special education and special educational needs arise from the inability of general education to accommodate and include diverse learners. Barton (1987) goes further to connect school failure more directly with the development of the special educational needs industry. Within this context, specific learner characteristics need to be identified and checked against *the* 'norm' in order to make individualised 'interventions' most effective (Graham and Slee, 2008).

Further to the issues of provision are the tensions present in a discussion of inclusive practices and the recognition of difference, the role of the individual and the implications for the social body explored here by Norwich:

Recognising difference can lead to different provision which might be stigmatised and devalued; but not recognising difference can lead to not providing adequately for individuality. Here is a tension between what we call the values of inclusion and individuality. (Norwich, 2002:496)

What this fails to negotiate are the ways in which such differences are produced by education systems which, in being designed to accommodate, must exclude (Graham and Slee, 2008). Observational drawing, explicit as a system for learning in art education, is positioned as a technology which identifies and therefore produces difference which, I argue here, is defined in particular by individual technical ability that constructs some pupils as *normal* and, by implication, others as *abnormal*.

A simplistic interpretation of inclusion as relating to the practical arrangements for educational provision fails to confront the nature of socially constructed attitudes towards 'special education' and disability identified in Riddell and Watson (2003). This research takes place within the context of such 'dilemmas' and these ideas will be central to exploring the notion of exclusivity in art and design education. This area of research will recognise the principals of inclusion as having implications for all pupils.

In considering these main themes the following questions are relevant for further exploration:

- How do pupils, defined as 'dyspraxic', experience observational drawing practices as part of their secondary art education in the UK?
- How are observational drawing practices defined historically and within the context of art education?
- What is dyspraxia in historical, conceptual and theoretical terms?

- Are the concepts of ‘observation’, ‘ideas’ and ‘imagination’ exclusive in the way in which they are defined in relation to art education?
- Does an emphasis on drawing from observation reflect cultural restrictions that may impact on the nature and definitions of inclusion in art and design education?
- What contribution does this work make to the broader political debate on inclusion, equity and participation in educational practices?

The following section will outline the autobiographical context for the development of this work in order to provide some further context.

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

My friend Justine had large beautiful handwriting. She had copied a small Saxon boat carefully and neatly. I'd struggled with the drawing, scarring the first page of my history book with deep pencil grooves. The ink ran under my ruler and smeared across the page as I underlined the date. Mr Tanktop picked up our books, holding them up to the rest of the class.

“Presentation!” he repeated firmly, “Presentation!”

The recommendations to place myself in the research by writing an autobiographical chapter came twice during introductory workshops within the first few weeks of becoming a research student. This autobiographical emphasis is advocated as a means of determining a clear context for the work. It is also a means of reciprocal sharing, moving towards a sense of balance for an ethical researcher anxious about presenting a story of ‘the other’ (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Within this field of inquiry there is little room for the disconnected, dispassionate or detached researcher, sometimes associated with ‘traditional’ quantitative analysis or a positivist perspective. The following ‘anecdotes’ provide something of my own narrative, a construction in which I recognise how I have defined myself against concepts of ‘a norm’ in respect of particular childhood memories, my own drawing abilities, my role as a teacher and my ‘judgements’ regarding the ‘ability’ of pupils.

At first I struggled, aware that I was viewing this work as a former teacher of art and design, not identified as ‘dyspraxic’, and with only a slight awareness of having taught pupils with coordination difficulties. I was certain of my status as an ‘outsider’. However, there were episodes from my own learning histories that seemed relevant as I started to explore concepts of skill, observation and ability. The role of the narrative, as a central element to my methodology has offered a heightened awareness of the relevance that my own stories have had in determining the shape and direction of this book.

We had to draw a jam jar full of random objects for our exam. Splinters of wood stuck in my back teeth as I bit through my pencil. I can still feel the sheer frustration of trying to make that drawing. Ms Nicely looked up from the front desk smiling encouragement.

I got a B for that drawing.

A B's Ok but it's not an A.

I didn't continue with art and design past that third year.

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Denzin and Lincoln (2005) discuss ‘the biographically situated researcher’ acknowledging their view of the world through a ‘filtered gaze’. It is the role of this autobiographical chapter to recognize the various filters at work within the project. Denzin and Lincoln claim that there are no objective observations, and the researcher can only offer stories or accounts that are both effects of and affected by the researcher. Bruner’s reflections on autobiography as narrative reinforce the connections with the central role of story in this project (Bruner, 1990). Before the interpretation and analyses of conversations with others can begin there must be an acknowledgement of one’s own set of stories, acknowledging the personal within the political (hooks, 2000). Although this could be considered as a narcissistic act of self indulgence, Fine (1994) identifies a different purpose. She describes the potential for the invisible researcher to be complicit in recreating the participant as ‘the other’ and advocates autobiography as a means of making one’s position more obvious. It could be argued that autobiography makes the researcher visible and allows the reader to trace the ways in which interpretations are made and represented. Autobiography, in this context, aligns with research as an ethical project.

I taught art and design for thirteen years working at two secondary schools in Liverpool between 1990 and 2003 and started this research after leaving the secondary sector to move into higher education. I still identified with being an art teacher and the aim to pursue research seemed a natural progression from gaining an MA as part of the Artist Teacher Scheme (Adams, 2003). As a consequence of my departure from teaching I became removed from these direct experiences, but as I have become disconnected from the specific contexts, other themes, particularly the notion of equity in education, and the development of my own drawing have taken on a greater significance. This book is based on the role of specific practices within art and design education in the secondary sector but this is set within the broader context of concepts of ability (and by implication disability) and how these are negotiated through power structures within society. It has ceased to be relevant that I no longer teach art and design. The importance for me now is as a member of a society where cultural norms and expectations dictate an epistemological stance that can render certain members ‘disabled’ and that this can result in reduced participation in ‘authorised’ forms of learning. However, cultural norms and academic expectations can be redefined and reworked according to particular foci and definitions of ability are therefore flexible rather than fixed. For me, this is where the significance of this work lies.

I WAS A CLUMSY CHILD

The house always smelt lovely. I raced up the veranda steps and hurled myself at Aunty Bea sending her cups crashing onto the pink flags. Claire! The rest of the holiday was spent in pursuit of a replacement cup and saucer.

But that was 35 years ago...

Can't we move on?

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Some things just seem to stick - pulling you back - like grandpa holding on to the hood of my coat cos I was always the one who was going to fall into the lake when we were fishing for sticklebacks. I never fell in, but I never got close enough to catch any fish.

I was always the one who spilt the milk or knocked things over. I was often referred to as 'clumsy'. I remain unsure as to whether or not I could have been described as dyspraxic but I do have an awareness of what it is like to grow up as a 'clumsy' child. Perhaps it was because I was the younger of two and therefore always comparatively less well coordinated. Another suggestion has been that I was single-minded as a young child and would push through or go over obstacles rather than make a diversion. In comparison to others, my sister or friends at school, I was not very technically accomplished with drawing or handwriting but these skills improved with practice. I was not remarkable in this respect or particularly disadvantaged, but I was often referred to as 'clumsy'. The odd thing is that I had forgotten about it until I started this project.

Dear Claire,

I saw this and thought of you.

I opened the envelope to find a newspaper cutting.

'Not just clumsy?

Professionals recognise an increasing number of children with dyspraxia.'

MY OWN ART PRACTICE

I have never considered myself to be an artist. I was a teacher who also did some of my own art work. I had taken a slightly unconventional route into teaching art and design, having an English degree with art as a minor subject. By the end of my degree I was convinced that art education was central to the career I wanted to pursue and I worked in a primary school as artist in residence on a voluntary basis for 12 months before applying for a place on a PGCE course to teach art and design. The course provided me with a heightened sense of inferiority. My small untidy scraps of work in one folder compared unfavourably to the body of very professional and accomplished work produced by others who had dedicated four years to their specialism. I was a hybrid, a 'jack of all trades and master of none'. I had no awareness of the structure of art and design based degree courses, but I felt myself to be a different sort of creature from others on the course, who appeared to me to be trained 'artists'. I considered that they had already proved their worth and could clearly identify themselves with the cultural definitions of what it was to be an artist. I did not carry the weight of authority that came from a certificated acknowledgement that I could make 'good art'. I lacked confidence in my own technical ability. I wasn't sure that I could draw. In comparison to my sister, I had always been the one who 'couldn't draw'. I remember her comment to me once:

If you ever want me to come in and talk to your class I could tell them how bad you were. If you can learn to draw anybody can.

I loved being an art teacher though and found that my own skills and confidence grew as I taught others, planned projects and practised the skills I wanted to teach.

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Drawing became part of my everyday life as well as work. I started to accrue a pile of sketchbooks, paintings and drawings based on direct observation. Drawing from objects and landscapes dominated my work. Drawing or recording what could be seen became central to my art practice and a focus for the way in which I taught art and design. I had not considered until now why working from observation had always had such an emphasis. Which came first, my own commitment to working from observation as an 'artist' or my belief in this as the most important set of skills I could teach? My development as an artist and a teacher were inseparable, each informing and informed by the other. My engagement with curriculum frameworks, examination requirements and assessment and standardisation impacted on my own drawing practice as much as it shaped my teaching philosophy.

LAZY BOY!

Michael was not the most likeable pupil in my form. He was a very capable mathematician and was aware of it. At times this gave him an arrogant edge. In a briefing meeting prior to the start of his first year I was informed that he had a mild form of dyspraxia. I was also informed that he was in fact just 'lazy' and had used dyspraxia as an excuse to have minimal involvement in a range of activities at his primary school. His reputation had preceded him and, on the advice of our special needs co-ordinator, I taught him art and design with an expectation that he would not fully engage because he was likely to be lazy. He did not appear to be particularly poorly coordinated and I had little understanding of any potential challenges that the work may have presented to him. I did not look for any reason for his lack of involvement other than the 'lazy' label passed on. This experience now leaves me feeling uncomfortable. Fortunately I did have a reasonably positive relationship with Michael and we both resigned ourselves to the fact that we would agree to differ in our appreciation of the practical dimensions of the subject. I helped him when I could by giving additional support, starting him off with tasks for example. I remember chiding him continuously for not getting on with the activity set and I marked his incomplete work on the poor effort he made and his almost complete lack of interest.

I offer this anecdote to provide some further context for the way in which this research has evolved. Michael's story is significant for me in highlighting a number of issues pertinent to this work. Firstly, this was the first time that I had encountered a pupil who had been identified by the relevant special educational needs agencies (the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) for the school and an educational psychologist) as being dyspraxic; secondly, the 'diagnosis' was questioned by the school SENCo and the learner was described as 'just lazy'; and finally, being presented with a learner identified as 'different' left me with a sense of being ill-equipped and ill-informed and as a result the 'specific learning difficulty' label appeared to disempower both learner and teacher. Of further significance is the way in which Michael and his 'learning difficulty' came under particular scrutiny whilst particular pedagogical practices, left unexamined, were far less visible.

A TEACHER'S STORY

In drawing these autobiographical strands to a conclusion I will finish with a reflection that relates to my professional practice as an art teacher. During the examination moderation procedures in the mid 1990s, the external examiner highlighted one student's work whose mark she had adjusted from a C grade to a D. She commented that if I had read Betty Edwards' 'Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain' (1982), I would have been able to teach the pupil to achieve the C grade that they had so narrowly missed. After feeling guilty and inadequate, I took the opportunity to engage with Edwards' techniques. I trialled the exercises myself, read the scientific context for the ideas and was excited by the prospect of having some 'real' evidence to support my belief that I could teach drawing and could therefore develop a scheme of work that would have real benefit for students in raising their achievement. From a practitioner's view point, reading about the mental processes involved in drawing from observation was intriguing and compelling. The 'scientific' basis of the drawing theory reinforced and authenticated the exercises as *the* 'correct' way to teach drawing.

The syllabus that we followed in school reinforced this skills based approach to painting and drawing and was interpreted with a strong emphasis on traditional skills. Drawing and painting from direct observation dominated upper and lower school curricula as a form of skills training. The A Level syllabus had a similar emphasis. During marking and moderation, the teacher assigned a grade to the work and it was reasonably easy to make the distinction between that achieving a Grade C or above. The elements of the drawing needed to be in place to a sufficiently 'high standard'. Ellipses had to be understood (continuous and circular rather than sharp edged and drawn in two halves), perspective needed to be used convincingly and rendering had to be mastered in order that three-dimensional solids could be represented effectively. The ideas informing the development of a piece of work may have been convincing but technical skill was the final arbiter in the grading decision.

My year as a probationary teacher coincided with the introduction of the National Curriculum and, with it, a potentially greater emphasis on the developmental aspects of the work and the range of materials and processes used. A short time later we started to plan for the Advanced and Intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ). We developed the schemes of work to accommodate the required changes, attempting to utilise the existing strengths within the department. This resulted in schemes of work that met the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GNVQ syllabus coverage but which were a reinterpretation of a formalist approach. Downing and Watson (2004) suggest that we may have not been on our own in the way in which we adapted and interpreted the curriculum guidance. Although the regulation of the curriculum may have presented some opportunity for a positive adaptation of existing practice, our new schemes of work were rebuilt from a pedagogical perspective that was underpinned by a belief in art and design education that was based on the transmission of a very specific and culturally based set of skills.

In this critical reflection of my own practice I am seeking to discover how and why I have had such a strong belief in the value and necessity of developing skills

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in working from direct observation and how this shaped my own concepts of pupil ability and subject pedagogy. Atkinson (2006:20) offers a useful exploration of the 'passionate attachments' teachers might have to particular pedagogical approaches that function to define discipline, teacher and pupil. Hughes questions the relevance of art and design for many pupils (Hughes, 1998), yet it is also possible to question the adherence to such skills based approaches that are reinforced during departmental apprenticeships and which reproduce the belief systems that constitute learning and teaching in art.

Returning to Michael, my 'lazy boy', I wondered where he would fit within Edwards' definitions of both 'normal' and 'average'. The reference to this culturally restrictive norm is difficult to disregard within concepts of art education that prioritise specific skills development. This book is not a vehicle for the denigration of existing practices, but, as Foucault (1980:81) might recommend, an attempt at unearthing the basis for such systems of thought. Without an understanding of the ways in which such systems have evolved there would be no hope of change.

A frustrating drawing/thinking session.

Heavy handed pencil marks scar the paper. Almost impossible to erase, they leave a memory of both accident and intention even after the page has been turned...

This chapter has provided an introduction to the book outlining some significant questions and presenting an overview of the main themes as well as an autobiographical context for the evolution of the research. In the next chapter I will provide a detailed explanation of methodological considerations as well as outlining more fully the practical aspects of the approach that I have taken.