

Formative Assessment of the Visual Arts: a study of the experiences and perspectives of pupils and teachers in Irish primary schools (2 volumes)

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The benefits of using formative assessment in education are becoming more widely acknowledged. This study brings together the varied discourses of pivotal researchers in the fields of art education and assessment and examines the effects of implementing formative assessment in teaching and learning in the visual arts from the perspectives of pupils and teachers in Irish primary education. The study addresses questions such as: Do formative assessment strategies work in the teaching of art at primary level? If so, how best can teachers think of formative assessment in art education? What do teachers think of formative assessment in art education? How do pupils of various age groups in primary school fare when formative assessment methods are incorporated into the teaching of art? What do pupils think of formative assessment in art education? Can the use of formative assessment help generalist primary teachers gain confidence and competence in their teaching of the visual arts? // The fieldwork took the form of a qualitative study with an emergent design which was conducted from June 2011 to January 2013. It involved an action research project with a sixth class in an urban primary school in which the researcher as participant incorporated formative assessment into teaching and learning in art education. The researcher conducted group interviews with these pupils at the beginning and end of the project. Interviews were also recorded with six primary teachers of classes from senior infants (aged 6) to sixth class (aged 12) who took part in a coordinated formative assessment art project. // Data consisted of films of the art lessons from the sixth class formative assessment art project, film notes, the reflective journal of the researcher, transcripts of interviews with the pupils before and after the project, transcripts of teacher interviews after the project, teacher responses to follow-up email and artefacts from the various formative assessment art projects. These were analysed qualitatively using the constant comparative method recommended by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). // Seven major thematic findings emerged. A number of teaching and learning strategies were identified as effective in

implementing formative assessment in art education. Teachers and pupils believed that the quality of the artwork improved as a result of formative assessment. Pupils welcomed the benefits of formative assessment strategies. Teachers indicated that they would in future continue to incorporate formative assessment into their teaching of art. Each teacher developed a personal style of implementing formative assessment. Formative assessment may be more effective in art if also practiced in other curriculum areas. Teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, time requirements, pupils' understandings of what constituted good quality art and the quality of pupil interrelationships posed challenges to the successful implementation of formative assessment in art education. // The study proposes that formative assessment has the capacity to improve teaching and learning in the visual arts at primary level. It is suggested that generalist primary teachers can benefit from a flexible framework for formative assessment in art education.