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'I'm Just Not Artistic'—An Exploration of Initial Teacher Education Trainees' Confidence in Their Art Ability and their Perceptions of Teaching the Primary Art and Design Curriculum

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Abstract

This study explores the ongoing debate surrounding the degradation of art and design in primary education and the perceptions of trainee teachers preparing to teach the subject. It provides a starting point for further research into the role of initial teacher education (ITE) in reframing trainee teachers' conceptions of the nature and importance of the art and design curriculum. This qualitative study interviewed six trainee teachers at the beginning of their first year of teacher education to ascertain their experiences of art to date and explore themes around artistic confidence and preparedness for teaching primary art. The data indicate a surprising trend where trainee teachers have little confidence in their own artistic abilities yet consider themselves effective future art teachers. The study identifies a number of common misconceptions around the nature of primary art as a subject that is fun, low-stakes and expendable as well as highlighting key tensions about trainees' perception of artistic skill as pre-ordained rather than learned.

Keywords

Introduction

Art and design is a statutory part of the primary national curriculum in England (Department for Education 2013) and offers children many tangible benefits such as problem-solving, celebrating multiple perspectives and communicating and experiencing the world (Eisner 2002). More recently, causal links have even been made between the arts and the development of cognitive function, social mobility, academic outcomes and improved life chances (Catterall *et al.* 2012; Cultural Learning Alliance 2017) all compounding the importance of a robust primary art education available for all.

Despite significant research illustrating the importance of art and design in a child's education, the position of art and design in the primary curriculum has long been under threat with the subject deemed as 'expendable' through a reduction in teaching time, resources and continuous professional development (Broadhead *et al.* 2022). Low levels of teacher confidence are consistently cited as one of many reasons that art has become marginalised in the primary curriculum (Lemon & Garvis 2013; Cooper 2019).

The generalist nature of the primary teaching role means that formal training in art is not a necessity and as a result, a rarity (Thomson & Coles 2023) and this lack of arts expertise is exacerbated by the documented absence of further art-specific training for practicing teachers (Cooper 2019; Ofsted 2023). As a result, many children miss out on the significant benefits of instruction from an art specialist (Robb 2023), and without schools prioritising creative ways for teachers to work alongside subject specialists to develop artistic confidence (Noble 2021), teachers miss out on valuable specialist support (Fahy 2023). With many school leaders entrenched in the idea that the arts hold no value (Ashton & Ashton 2022), little is done to facilitate primary art teachers to upskill or seek support to break the cycle of negative confidence and attitudes that are endemic in schools (Hallam *et al.* 2022).

The increasing pressure on schools to standardise progression and assessment has also led to more formal and structured approaches to art that can impact negatively on both pupil and teacher engagement (Cooper 2019; Clark-Fookes 2025). Inspiration and creativity are often overshadowed by linear progression models and the formulaic acquisition of knowledge (Tyler & Likova 2012). With limited National Curriculum guidance (Department for Education 2013), many teachers simply replicate the little they remember of their own art education, preventing the much-needed evolution of the primary art offer available in schools (Cameron *et al.* 2024). The overwhelming focus on drawing in many schools, due to cost, resources, space and lack of expertise also comes at the expense of wider art disciplines such as three-dimensional art (Ofsted 2012) that perpetuates the fallacy that art is exclusively the domain of those who can draw (O'Connor 2000).

'Art anxiety' plays a significant role in trainee teachers' ability to consider themselves effective art teachers (Metcalf & Smith-Shank 2001) with this negative sense of self often derived from their own formative experiences of art (Lindsay 2021). Despite most young children displaying an initial love of art (McArdle &

Wong [2010]), myths around innate talent often infiltrate this desire to create, instilling feelings of insecurity and inadequacy (Howe *et al.* [1998]). The influence of teachers, friends and families is the most reliable indicator of artistic confidence (Karwowski [2023]; Thomson *et al.* [2023c]); therefore, without the intervention of a quality art education (Ofsted [2023]), the development of confident future art teachers may largely be decided by parental role-models and influences during the formative early years (Tang [2024]), providing the 'arts positive' environment required to nurture the artistic confidence of future primary art teachers (Russell-Bowie [2005]).

The deficit of teacher confidence in primary art identifies the significance of the role of initial teacher education (ITE) in breaking this cycle by empowering trainees to deliver a high-quality art and design curriculum (Tambling & Bacon [2023]). However, with many ITE institutions offering less than a meagre 4 h of art-specific training (Gregory [2017]; Thomson *et al.* [2023b]), little is done within teacher education to address trainees' lack of confidence (Green & Mitchel [2002]; Ofsted [2020]). The shift in emphasis within ITE from university-based instruction to school mentorship by 'expert colleagues' (Department for Education [2021a], [2021b]) also assumes the existence of specialist teachers within schools who are proficient in the knowledge, understanding and subject-specific pedagogies required to model the teaching of art and design effectively. With only one in three primary schools providing art education considered good or above (Ofsted [2012]) and the subsequent decline in the quality of art education (Ofsted [2023]), trainees are unlikely to access high-quality art teaching in any aspect of their teacher training (National Education Union [2024]).

To develop a secure pedagogical knowledge in art and design, it is imperative to change the attitudes and misconceptions that are upheld by trainee teachers (Kowalchuk & Stone [2003]; Marzilli Miraglia [2008]). If existing teachers do not value the role of art education because of either their limited confidence in art teaching or because they are not positively predisposed towards the arts (Gatt & Karppinen [2014]), this prejudice can be passed on to both pupils and colleagues, leading to large cohorts of trainee teachers beginning their training with low confidence or investment in quality art and design education (Garvis & Pendergast [2010]). Without significant intervention, a perpetual cycle prevails where teachers enter the primary classroom without the opportunity to develop the 'skills, knowledge and confidence' required to become effective teachers of the art curriculum (Thomson *et al.* [2023a]).

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore first-year undergraduate, primary education trainees' confidence in art and how this has influenced their confidence as future art teachers. The research aims to ascertain where these self-reported perceptions originate and derive ways to most effectively support trainee teachers in the development of their art teaching.

For the purposes of this study, the term 'trainee teacher' has been used to describe the participants in accordance with the terminology used in the initial teacher training and early career framework (ITTECF), the Department for Education's evidence-based development programme that sets out the minimum training entitlement for new teachers in England (Department for Education [2024]).

An interpretivist, qualitative and exploratory approach was used to discover the trainees' own perceptions, thoughts and feelings around art and art teaching (Myers 1997) recognising that each participant's personal understanding of art education would be shaped by a plethora of social, cultural and historical influences (Stuhr 2003). Semi-structured interviews were employed to gain depth of insight (Denscombe 2017) and provide the flexibility to explore the individual experience of each participant (Wilson 2017) acknowledging that the dialogue and interactions of the interview itself will also contribute to the cultivation of meaning (Bastos 2006).

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Worcester Research Ethics Committee before first-year undergraduates, studying a Bachelor of Arts in Primary Education at the University of Worcester, were approached in September 2022, prior to any formal art instruction. The interviewer was the primary art lead at the university; however, trainees were invited to participate before their first art lectures to mitigate issues of power between tutor and tutee (Kim 2023). Convenience sampling was employed for ease of access (Golzar 2022) and an invitation to participate was sent via the course administrator to all eligible trainees to remove any perception of pressure to respond (Bartholomay & Sifers 2016). The first six participants to indicate an interest in contributing to the research were selected: five women and one man, a gender sample broadly representative of the teaching workforce (UK Government 2024) and the participants' ages ranged between 18 and 25, all of whom were new to higher education. None of the participants had any formal training in art beyond GCSE level and only one participant had chosen to take art as an option at school beyond Year 9 (age 14).

All information about the research was shared in advance via email, including the participants' right to withdraw within 2 weeks of data collection. Written consent was then obtained to ensure that all participants were fully informed. The interview questions were also shared at this point to ensure transparency and give trainees the opportunity to reflect upon their answers prior to data collection. The questions were as follows:

- How confident are you as an artist?
- How would you describe your relationship with art?
- What has been your experience of art to date?
- How important do you consider art to be in a pupil's primary school education?
- How effective do you feel you will be as an art teacher?
- What might enhance your art teaching?Before each interview, further verbal ascent was obtained and the purposes of the research discussed to ensure clarity and allow initial conversation between researcher and participant to build rapport. The interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams to allow the selection of a convenient and comfortable interview location and to encourage open and honest responses (Green & Thorogood 2018). All interviews were conducted within October 2022 and the recordings were transcribed verbatim on the day of collection and shared with the trainees to allow participants to verify and supplement their responses to ensure a true and accurate representation in the form of member checking (McKim 2023). At this point, for the purposes of anonymity, the participants were pseudonymised to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

The data from this study was analysed using Braun and Clarke's model of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) where an inductive approach was used to actively produce themes from the data through a structured process of grouping and analysing codes to allow patterns of shared meaning to form

(Braun & Clarke 2022). Codes were manually identified as recurring words and phrases and then systematically grouped by an ongoing process of review and refinement. The themes were reassessed throughout for suitability to maintain the reflexive nature of the analysis.

Findings

The findings of this study were identified within five key themes:

i. trainees' self-described confidence in their own artistic ability;
ii. the influence of family, friends and school on the perceptions of trainees' own art ability;
iii. trainees' perceptions of the purpose of primary art education;
iv. trainees' confidence in their abilities as future art teachers;
v. strategies identified to improve trainees' confidence in teaching primary art.

Trainees' self-described confidence in their own artistic ability

Majority of the trainee teachers felt that they had no confidence in themselves as artists and that their perceived lack of artistic talent caused them to 'switch off completely' (Participant A) from the subject at an early age. The idea that artists are born and not made was apparent (Holdhus & Espeland 2013) with trainees making many references to a reverence for people who are 'naturally talented' (Participant B, D and F) and the more confident trainees feeling they had 'always been good at art' (Participant E and F) without consideration that this might have been through continued engagement and practice (Howe *et al.* 1998).

Interestingly, when participants were asked about their own artistic confidence, their overwhelmingly negative dispositions were consistently derived from the trainees' narrow understanding of art as synonymous with only drawing (O'Connor 2000). Despite the English national curriculum encouraging the teaching of a 'wide range of art and design techniques' (Department for Education 2013), participants attributed their perceptions of artistic self-confidence to their perceived ability to draw. The status attached to drawing as a benchmark for artistic aptitude was replicated by all the participants with Participant B stating that although they could draw, this ability was only applicable to 'easy things' with Participant F describing themselves as 'crafty and creative' but 'definitely not a drawer.'

> I am terrible at art, I can't draw at all. If I had something to copy I could probably do it, but no, I definitely can't draw.   (Participant E)

There was infrequent mention of three-dimensional art in any of the interviews (Ofsted 2012), but in every instance, the participants described positive memories attributed to these disciplines. Pottery was cited by both Participant A and C as being one of their most fondly remembered school art activities with Participant F describing a statue made from wire that is still in their possession.

> Actually, come to think about it, I made a pot once. I was actually pretty proud of that. Much less of a catastrophe than everything else.   (Participant C)

Despite an apparent lack of confidence in art and design, most participants described an enjoyment of the subject as a child (McArdle & Wong 2010). Apart from Participant A, all trainees had at least one positive memory of an art experience from their childhood and expressed a regret that their enthusiasm for the subject had been eroded because of their perceived lack of natural ability (Howe *et al.* 1998). Participants B and D referred to an ongoing relationship with art maintained through their appreciation of the work of others and an enjoyment of engaging with museums and galleries.

> I enjoy going to art galleries and having a look round, and I did the Van Gogh exhibit. I find all of it really interesting, but I wouldn't do it myself. I can appreciate other people's art rather than my own. (Participant D)

The influence of family, friends and school on the trainee teachers' perceptions of their artistic abilities

Trainees' negative perceptions of themselves as artists were all attributed to the perceived feeling that others did not consider them to have artistic capabilities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common and significant variable that impacted trainees' perceptions was derived from their own education (Lindsay 2021).

All trainees described the negative impact that their secondary school education had on their experiences of art and design citing the relationship with their teacher as the most significant factor (Thomson *et al.* 2023c).

> Back in secondary school I had this art teacher and we did not get along. Nothing I did was ever good enough. (Participant A)

For the majority, this was due to the perception that the teacher had already labelled them as 'bad at art' (Participant B) to 'focus on the people who could do it' (Participant C) (Howe *et al.* 1998). Trainees attributed their art anxieties to being 'forgotten about and given up on' (Participant A) and 'not liked' (Participant D) by their teachers (Metcalf & Smith-Shank 2001). As well as the breakdown of the teacher–student relationship, trainee teachers described more subtle ways in which their confidence had been eroded. Participant C recalled the feeling of being 'overshadowed' as a result of never seeing their artwork displayed on the wall.

> When you do art in school there's always the good drawings that get put on the board... mine never got put on the display or anything like that. (Participant B)

The majority of trainees interviewed also described the awareness that their peers were 'better' at art (Participant E) than they were (Karwowski 2023). Participant B, for example, recalls the frustration of sitting next to someone whose work always looked better:

> So, I thought, why bother? I can't do it so what's the point? (Participant B)

There was also a common theme that art became 'too structured' (Participant C) in secondary education (Clark-Fookes 2025), with Participant F recalling the sense that their teacher felt they 'were not doing it right.' Participant E discussed

their reason for not pursuing art beyond age 16, describing the transition of their art lessons from 'enjoyable' to 'forced' (Tyler & Likova 2012). The prescriptive nature of the art and design curriculum was cited by half the trainee teachers as their reason for giving up art.

> Secondary art was all "you've gotta do this" and "what does this mean?" Too serious. That's why I didn't take art further. That's why I didn't do it for A level (post 16 education) because it just got too serious at GCSE (secondary education). I dread to think what A level (post 16 education) would be like. (Participant E)

Participant A attributed their decision to give up art to inference made by the school that choosing ICT over art would make them 'more employable.' A worrying finding suggests that schools may be actively encouraging their pupils not to pursue art by dismissing the subject in terms of its future value.

Participant F and Participant B had attempted to rediscover art as adults and described the influence that friends and families had on this decision (Thomson *et al.* 2023c). Participant F, who had successfully reengaged with art, described the positive experience of reigniting their passion for art as a result of meeting their partner's mum 'who is incredibly crafty' and being surrounded by people who are 'really into art.' Participant B, whose experience had not been so positive, described crafting with polymer clay, showing their work to an artistic friend and being laughed at and told to 'stop it', which caused them to give up this hobby for good (Karwowski 2023).

Narrow perceptions of primary art education

Majority of the trainee teachers interviewed appeared to have a rather narrow view of the primary art curriculum. Many of the trainees said they could not remember their own experiences of primary art and design (Lindsay 2021) and defaulted to traditional stereotypes of the subject with the assumption that they must have engaged in making Christmas cards, using glitter and doing colouring in.

> I guess I must have done it (primary art). I expect I did the usual stuff, Christmas cards and colouring in. And glitter. Oh my, I hate glitter. No glitter here I'm afraid. (Participant A)

Participant E referred to art being important for prior lower attaining children so that they would 'get a chance to shine.' There were also implications within the trainees' responses that art and design were considered less significant in the primary curriculum than core subjects such as Maths and English (Ashton & Ashton 2022). Art was seen to be 'light relief' and an antidote to 'struggling with Maths and English' (Participant E). Participant A commented:

> It's okay to be bad at it because you know, it's not going to affect you in later life. (Participant A)

Although all trainees expressed the importance of art and design, there were other indications that expectations of children in art lessons would be low (Gatt & Karppinen 2014).

> Art is important, children need it because it's a bit of a stress reliever. It's a break from the harder subjects. (Participant F)

Participant D described their art teaching style as 'chilled out' and described art as a 'no pressure lesson'. Their aspirations for the children were for them to 'Do what you can do, don't push yourself too much and don't stress yourself out.' (Participant D). This indifferent attitude to art teaching was mirrored in the thoughts of Participant A:

> The quality of it doesn't matter you know, the kids will all think it's good. (Participant A)

In addition, the idea that art could be used to help children 'relax' or 'have fun' (Participant B) after engaging with subjects deemed by the trainees to be more challenging (Broadhead, Noble, Broadhead *et al.* 2022) was consistent throughout. Participants F and A also discussed the use of mindfulness colouring as art lessons to support children with stress relief.

Variations in trainee teachers' perceptions of their abilities as art educators

Considering the varying artistic confidences of the trainee teachers interviewed for this study, it is unsurprising that the trainees' perceptions of themselves as art teachers also showed a high degree of variation. When asked how effective the trainees felt they would be as art teachers, the range of responses was:

Participant A: 'Mediocre'
Participant B: 'Okay'
Participant C: 'Confident'
Participant D: 'Quite Good'
Participant E: 'Good'
Participant F: 'Very Effective'

Over half of these trainees considered themselves to be poor at art (Garvis & Pendergast 2010), but unexpectedly, the majority of the trainee teachers felt that they would be average or above in their capabilities as an art teacher. Many trainees cited empathetic reasons for this apparent anomaly. Ideas around reciprocating feelings of inadequacy as a supportive approach were commonplace. Responses illustrate their intentions to turn their own lack of confidence into a supportive learning tool.

> I'll say: "It doesn't matter if you can't do it, because I can't do it either." (Participant E)

This implies a worrying perception that acknowledging children's lack of confidence by sharing their own will provide reassurance, instead of considering the implications that validating children's feelings of insecurity may have on children's willingness to engage and persevere in art in the future. In contradiction, some trainees also felt that hiding their own lack of perceived ability would allow them to appear to be effective teachers.

> I think I'll be okay, it's not like I'm going to display that I don't like art or that I think I'm not good at it.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Participant B)

Participants A and C expressed the most confidence in their abilities as art teachers, explaining that a fundamental shift in their confidence had occurred because of input from a school-based mentor (Department for Education 2021a, 2021b). They discussed how the experience had built their confidence but still expressed concerns as lessons had been planned for them and resources provided (Fahy 2023). Participant C was asked how they would have felt at the thought of teaching art prior to this experience and responded: 'Terrified. I didn't want to do it.'

The area of art and design that caused the most anxiety in the trainee teachers was the idea of modelling art for the children (Metcalf & Smith-Shank 2001) with Participant C predicting that this is something they would be 'dreadful' at. Participant A felt they would be unable to model in front of the children without careful practice at home to prepare and even then, this would only be enough to be able to 'just pull it off'.

Strategies that trainee teachers perceive will improve in art and as art teachers

The development of subject knowledge was a common theme among the trainee teachers interviewed (Tambling & Bacon 2023). It was clear that the majority of trainees felt that there was information that they needed to know to pass it on to children during lessons. Both Participants C and A felt that they needed to develop their understanding of artists and both Participants D and F hoped to broaden their knowledge of 'different types of art'.

Only Participant B considered the importance of improving their confidence and skills in practical art through practice. They also recognised that developing their mindset towards the subject would be important (Kowalchuk & Stone 2003):

> (I need to) keep trying and not give up. Not saying "Oh this is rubbish; I'm not doing this anymore".　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Participant B)

Some trainee teachers hoped to shape their art teaching based on the positive experiences they could recall from their own childhoods (McArdle & Wong 2010). Participant D remembered drawing to music on large pieces of paper and hoped to one day do this activity with their own class. Participant F also planned to draw on their own experiences (Cameron *et al.* 2024), hoping to share the artistic experiences gained from extensive travel as a medium to inspire the children. Although this personal approach to art teaching could be deemed positive, if trainees' own experience of primary art education has been lacking (Ofsted 2023), this could suggest evidence of the ongoing cycle of poor confidence and outcomes being passed from teacher to pupil (Hallam *et al.* 2022).

The trainees had limited suggestions as to how their practice could develop further. Participant E expressed concerns about knowing if a lesson was a 'proper art lesson' and how to pitch lessons for different children. Participant D hoped to develop their understanding of ways to make the subject 'more interesting' and Participant C recognised the need for support in taking knowledge and 'making it meaningful for the children.' Participant F came the closest to demonstrate an understanding of the true nature of primary art:

I want to learn how to make it open so the children will be able to find their own passion and not just have to follow. I want to move beyond "this is how you shade…" and do more exploring instead of being told what to do.   (Participant F)

Both Participants A and C described ways in which they hoped their university provision would support their subject development (Tambling & Bacon 2023). One suggestion was a visual aid that would list vocabulary linked to different movements of art. Most trainees felt that the disproportionate amount of teaching time offered in core subjects in comparison to foundation subjects at university would leave them without the required understanding of the subject necessary to be effective teachers (Gregory 2017; Ofsted 2020).

Many trainees also expressed a hope that they would be offered CPD opportunities in art during their ECT years (Ofsted 2023).

Once you've qualified, it would be good to get some CPD. Maybe art training days for the teacher?   (Participant C)

Discussion

The findings of this exploratory study indicate that a lack of artistic confidence existed in many of the trainee teachers interviewed. This aligns with the findings of many other larger studies (Metcalf & Smith-Shank 2001; Kowalchuk & Stone 2003; Marzilli Miraglia 2008; Gatt & Karppinen 2014; Ofsted 2020) which reported that generalist primary teachers feel unprepared to teach the primary art curriculum. The negative experiences described by all the trainee teachers (Lindsay 2021) come as no surprise given the ongoing decline in the value placed on art in the primary curriculum (Ashton & Ashton 2022; Ofsted 2023).

The lack of confidence reported is arguably derived from a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of art (Hallam *et al.* 2022). It was clear from the interviews that trainee teachers considered competence in drawing and overall ability in art to be inextricably aligned (Cooper 2019). This narrow and limited view of the curriculum potentially results in a reduced offer of artistic opportunities for primary children (Thomson *et al.* 2023a), restricting their understanding and enjoyment of the full breadth and depth of art as a discipline (Ofsted 2012).

Another misconception was that the trainees considered artistic talent to be something preordained, rather than something that can be practiced, developed and improved (Howe *et al.* 1998). Without challenge, this idea could lead to future teachers labelling primary pupils as 'non-artists' early in their educational journey, denying children the powerful reinforcement of arts-positive role models (Karwowski 2023; Thomson *et al.* 2023c). Given that all the trainee teachers felt they themselves had been discounted by their art teachers, it appears that this misconception could underpin an ongoing cycle of disaffection with art (Noble 2021).

Another concern from the themes identified was the evidence of lower expectations for children in art than in other subjects in the curriculum (Ofsted 2012). Although trainees considered art important, the significance of the subject was aligned with the opinion that art was a subject in which to recover from the rigour of other more purposeful subjects. It was apparent that trainees felt that the

remedy to their poor experiences in art was to take a more relaxed attitude towards the subject (Hallam *et al*. 2022) and reduce the pressure on children to do well. It was also concerning that the trainees' intentions to share their perceived inadequacies in art through their teaching would only serve to validate children's own existing insecurities in the subject.

Despite a lack of perceived art ability among the trainee teachers (Garvis & Pendergast 2010; Gatt & Karppinen 2014) and misconceptions around the nature and purpose of the art curriculum (Kowalchuk & Stone 2003; Marzilli Miraglia 2008), it was surprising to ascertain that most of the trainees felt that they would be effective art teachers. This was supported by evidence suggesting that trainees believed that children's engagement in the subject would be the measure of successful art teaching rather than measures of progress of knowledge or skill acquisition as expected from subjects deemed 'more important' (Ashton & Ashton 2022). This apparent contradiction appeared to derive from the trainee teachers' perception that primary art education conforms to the traditional stereotype of Christmas card making, colouring in and glitter.

Conclusion

Although this is a small-scale study, the worrying trend of participants' displaying narrow subject knowledge, having low expectations for artistic outcomes from primary children and displaying poor artistic self-confidence holds clear implications for the future of primary art education (Howe *et al*. 1998). Without robust primary initial teacher training with art-specific interventions to challenge trainees' assumptions, the cycle of teachers passing on their misconceptions and low confidence to their pupils will prevail (Hallam *et al*. 2022).

While concerns remain around the quantity and quality of provision of training for teachers in primary art (Gregory 2017; Ofsted 2020), it is worrying that trainees do not recognise art teaching as an area for their own development. If trainees receive little or no intervention to challenge their conception of art education during their initial teacher education, then the cycle of poor art provision in primary schools will prevail (Tambling & Bacon 2023). Within school placements, trainee teachers are unlikely to have access to an art specialist (Robb 2023; Thomson & Coles 2023), meaning that, in addition to poor university provision, attitudes towards art will rarely be challenged by school colleagues (Noble 2021). Considering that all the trainee teachers related their lack of confidence in art back to negative experiences of their own schooling (Lindsay 2021), it is clear how poor art education is becoming a perpetual cycle of low standards and disengagement (Ashton & Ashton 2022).

Trainees recognised gaps in their subject knowledge in art and design, but this was centred around the desire to know more about art history through the development of their understanding of artists and art movements. There was little concern for the development of pedagogical approaches, their own art ability or understanding of the uniqueness of art as a subject (Kowalchuk & Stone 2003; Marzilli Miraglia 2008). This is unsurprising given the simplistic nature of the perceptions of 'what art is' and how art might be taught.

It is evident that improvements made to initial teacher training could have a considerable impact on primary art education (Tambling & Bacon 2023). More time needs to be allocated to the subject specific pedagogy of art and design, as well as

to advocating for its importance within the education of young people (Gregory 2017). There should also be opportunities for primary art teachers to train as art specialists to support existing primary practitioners (Noble 2021; Fahy 2023; Robb 2023).

Although there is a drive within education for a 'Broad and Balanced Curriculum,' (Ofsted 2020), this vision cannot be progressed without proper investment in the skills of primary teachers. Many of the trainee teachers commented on their desire for ongoing CPD in school (Cooper 2019) to build their confidence in art, yet most currently serving primary teachers have never received any art-specific training within school or have had to fund CPD for themselves in their own time (Broadhead *et al.* 2022). With 30,000 trainee teachers entering initial teacher education each year (Department for Education 2019), building the profile of art and design in ITE is the obvious vehicle from which to drive change in both attitudes and confidence in teaching art.

Acknowledgements

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