The Arts and Australian Education: Realising potential

Robyn Ewing

Section 1 discusses and defines ‘the Arts’ collectively, as a way of knowing and learning – embodying play, inquiry, experimentation, creation, provocation and aesthetics – and provides vignettes which illustrate these elements. Section 2 reviews the growing research evidence about the impact of the Arts on learning, and the meaning and importance of ‘quality’ in arts education, and urges a more systematic and evaluative approach be undertaken in arts research. Section 3 uses project exemplars to argue the Arts provide a critical, quality pedagogy, one which leads to relevant and flexible education, enabling students to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Section 4 considers several community arts education initiatives in which arts-based programs are currently being utilised as a catalyst for social transformation and discusses policy implications associated with realising the potential of the Arts in Australian education, especially with the impending national curriculum.

Robyn Ewing is Professor of Teacher Education and the Arts at the University of Sydney. Her teaching, research and extensive publications include the use of drama with literature to enhance students’ English and literacy outcomes. For 15 years she has worked on professional learning projects alongside teachers in a Sydney primary school and is currently, in partnership with Sydney Theatre Company, working in a drama professional learning program for primary teachers.

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