What can Art Teachers do to Promote the Benefits of Studying Art and Design?

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Abstract
The aim of this research was to discover what teachers could do to promote the benefits of studying Art and Design (A&D) at GCSE, as the EBacc's[1] recent introduction has narrowed down GCSE options. Research was carried out with the hypothesis that students would neglect A&D at GCSE due to a limited understanding of the career prospects or transferable skills that A&D education promotes.

Research included the stigmatisation of A&D education, the attitudes of students towards the subject and how the EBacc might potentially impact the number of students opting for creative GCSEs.

A poster that communicated these benefits was produced in response to data. The poster, which could be displayed in A&D classrooms, was trialled with a focus group and a class of Year 9 students. The Year 9 students were asked to write what they felt were the benefits of studying A&D both before and after viewing the poster. The poster was found to have an 83.33% success rate.

Key words
Art and Design; GCSE choices; EBacc; creativity; transferable skills; STEAM.

Introduction
This research explores what teachers can do to raise awareness of the benefits of studying A&D. My research took place in an English secondary school, which has approximately 1000 pupils. Data were collected from 40 Year 9 students and 16 Year 10 students using an electronic survey. Using the data, a poster was developed and shown to a focus group; this ensured the pupil voice influenced the content of the display poster. To verify the effectiveness of the intervention poster, it was trialled with a final Year 9 class. Data concentrated on keywords within participants' answers, who were asked to list the benefits of studying A&D before and after viewing the poster, in order for a comparison to be made.

This research was influenced by attending a parents' evening shortly before the deadline for GCSE choices were made by students. The majority of the parents I spoke to mentioned their disappointment in the fact that the school allows only one non-EBacc subject to be chosen. I anticipate that this will be a common issue raised by participants. I also predict that participants will be mostly drawn to the career prospects on the poster, rather than the transferable skills.

Literature Review
The EBacc has been introduced at a time when "£146,000 a minute" is being contributed to the economy by creative industries (Martin, 2015). It could be argued that the requirement for pupils to take the EBacc is a decision that has been made with the students' best interests in mind and will also produce more employable graduates. Companies like Adobe have found that "80% of people

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[1] EBacc = English Baccalaureate: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc/english-baccalaureate-ebacc

feel that unlocking creativity is critical to economic growth" (Adobe, n.d.). So why is this not mirrored in our education system?

The government's 2016 budget states that in the future they expect schools to lengthen their hours "to offer a wider range of activities for pupils" (HM Treasury 2016). A&D could be demoted to an extra-curricular activity, further implying that the A&Ds are a hobby rather than a career choice. In his TED talk "Do Schools Kill Creativity?" Ken Robinson announced that *"creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status."* (Robinson 2006). However, there are several factors that currently prevent this from happening. Unlike core subjects A&D classes are not normally taught in sets, meaning that students may not be receiving the differentiation they require. In 2013 an Ofsted report stated that "too few schools set high enough expectations of what their brightest students can achieve" across the curriculum. This lack of challenge for those more likely to go on to contribute to the creative economy is leaving pupils with little choice but to "seek enrichment programs outside of the school setting" (Visconti 2012, p. 47). Deverell (1995) quoted in Boyd (1998, p2) argues that many teachers see A&D "as a non-serious pastime and therefore to be accommodated only on the fringe of the curriculum"; this could be due to the lack of knowledge about the creative industry's contribution to the economy. As long as academic ability continues to "dominate our view of intelligence" (Robinson 2006), A&D will continue to be seen as supplementary within education. If we fail to provide the extra challenge that our most gifted students require, they are unlikely to continue into a creative environment after education "because the thing they were good at school wasn't valued, or was actually stigmatized" (ibid).

What some teachers may be failing to notice is that an A&D education has the potential to encourage higher order thinking. In a revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001, in Coolidge Manley 2013) placed creativity at the top of the taxonomy pyramid, indicating that attitudes towards creativity are improving in academic fields. Creativity is also seen at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs within the *Self Actualisation* segment, suggesting that creativity is a key tool in motivating students to realise their talents and is essential for growth, but can only be reached if a student's deficiency needs are being met.

The idea of creativity is difficult to define as it is based on opinion and is immeasurable. Cropley (2001, p. 5) states that "creativity was initially looked at as an artistic/aesthetic phenomenon" but has recently been recognised within other subjects. This means that although creativity cannot be confined to what 'creativity tests test' (Cropley 2001, p. 97), we should be aware that creativity is not the same as being artistic.

Anecdotal evidence gained during my experience in two placement schools consisted of student and parent interactions. I have regularly been asked by students 'How is this going to help me get a job?' in relation to the task set. This made me think that there might be a potential lack of education regarding the career prospects for creative students within my classroom. It also raises a philosophical question about the purpose of education, and if this ethos is being accepted by students. Nelson (2009, p.16) states "academic success in the arts is strongly predicated on attention to the individual" and teachers should take the same approach with the student's futures in mind, rather than solely their grades. Alongside numerous creative careers, students should also be aware of the transferable skills that A&D can promote such as resilience, critical thinking and emotional intelligence.

The recent introduction of the EBacc has made no difference to the "hierarchy of subjects" (Robinson 2006) within the curriculum. The Department for Education claims that the EBacc will allow each child to have "an education that opens doors to their future" (DfE 2015, p. 4), but we cannot ignore the fact that creative industries have the potential to deteriorate - only a year before

the EBacc was introduced, Michael Gove stated that he wanted "all schools to be able to nurture creative talent in every child" (2014) but it appears that our current government also do not value A&D as highly as the other subjects the curriculum has to offer. Over 100 people from within the creative industry have signed a letter that explains how restrictive the EBacc could be to creative industries and students. They believe that there is a lack of choice for students and this change to GCSEs could "put the arts and technical subjects at risk" (NSEAD 2016).

The National curriculum for Key Stage (KS) 1 to KS4 states that all state-funded schools must promote "the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils" as well as prepare learners for the "opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life" (DfE 2014b). A&D would be a suitable subject to achieve both of these criteria because "the arts can tend to the intellectual, physical, and emotional needs of learners" (Nelson 2009 p16).

Ofsted's (2014) good practice example for A&D teachers highlighted the ways in which Cheslyn Hay School prepared their students for creative careers. They bring education and employment together from the start of KS3 by making students aware of "the culture of being an artist" (Ofsted 2014, p2) which includes using workbooks, routines and feedback. This is made possible because the teachers are creative practitioners. Students are "encouraged to make links" (Ofsted 2014, p3) to other aspects of the curriculum to inform the development of their ideas, but also to have an "awareness of different applications of fine art, craft and design to everyday life" (Ofsted, 2014 p3).

There has also been research into the holistic nature of the subject. A&D encourages students to form their own opinions on social issues and possesses the potential to aid the "personal development of an individual" (Visconti 2012, p. 47). Students studying creative subjects will benefit from the emotional well-being that they promote (Nelson 2009, p. 16); they gain skills and understanding of visual literacy and utilise them when communicating their own opinions and ideas on a chosen theme. They are in charge of the decision making within their project, which promotes the sharing of opinions and the pupil voice (Department for Education, 2014a).

I feel it would be contradictory to neglect the work of artists when reviewing the theory behind this issue. Bob and Roberta Smith's "Art Makes Children Powerful" (2012a) and "Art Gives All People A Voice" (2012b) are equally empowering for children as they are thought provoking. One theory I have about the decline in art education is that the government would like schools to produce students with specific qualities. A&D can be a politically motivated subject that can promote the communication of the artists' own opinions about controversial topics. Would the Government want schools to produce students who would question their ethics and how the country is run?

The EBacc might potentially affect students, staff and practitioners in one of two ways. Qualifications could become reserved for only the most outstanding students, producing high quality graduates that could contribute to the economy via the creative industry. Alternatively, students could be influenced by the academic nature of the EBacc and prioritise other subjects over A&D. This would be detrimental to the subject, which would continue to be stigmatised and possibly lead to a decline in creative aspects of the curriculum.

Methodology
The research data were collected via two surveys, a focus group and a poster review. One survey was given to Year 9 students who were in the process of choosing their GCSE options, whereas the other had been adapted so that it was suitable for year 10 students who had already chosen A&D at GCSE. The surveys were given to 60 Year 9 students, 40 of which were returned and to 16 Year 10 students of which all of them were returned. I used online self-completion surveys as Sharp (2012, p63) states they are an effective way of finding trends within data. Once I had sufficient general data

on my students, I went on to conduct an interview with a small focus group of 7 pupils. This allowed me to gain more detailed answers via qualitative rather than quantitative data. The focus group's discussion was semi structured, as I encouraged them to discuss their answers. Using data from the surveys and literature review, a poster (appendix 1) was produced that communicated the benefits of A&D for the individual and the economy. These benefits included a list of professions and transferable skills. My first draft was also discussed within the focus group, who were asked to annotate and highlight areas that they thought were most useful. Alongside the poster activity, students were questioned on their views of A&D in school. The prepared questions were checked by other academics to avoid "introduc[ing] unwanted interviewer bias" (Sharp 2012, p. 78) through the use of leading language. Parental consent forms were used to overcome the ethical matter of interviewing students. As it was made explicit on the consent forms that my research concerned A&D education, it could be argued that parents with a negative attitude towards A&D could have prevented their child from partaking in the interviews. On the other hand, many participants may have had an existing interest and therefore a positive attitude towards A&D, which could have led to biased results. However the parental consent forms were an ethical requirement in order for the focus groups to take place and it cannot be assumed that only students who enjoy A&D took part in the study.

This feedback informed the final draft of the poster (appendix 1), which then went on display in my classroom to be used as a resource that would improve my teaching. In order to assess how well the poster communicated the benefits of studying A&D, it was shown to a final group of 24 Year 9 students who had already chosen their GCSE options. They were asked to write about the benefits of studying A&D before and after seeing the display, in order to make a comparison between the most common key words used in their responses. Before showing the poster to the participants, I used the phrase 'What are the benefits of studying A&D?' as to not mislead students or produce biased answers (Sharp 2012, p78). However once the poster had been displayed, I briefly summarised the key points because this is how I would incorporate the poster into my future teaching.

Surveys, focus groups and the poster review were used because the pupil voice was integral to my research. Although I feel these methods were an accurate representation of the students I teach, we cannot apply these data to the rest of the country as the students used in my research all came from one catchment area, and had been taught by the same staff in the department. The same methods used within a school in a different area may produce contrasting data, as parents and staff could have an impact on the students' attitudes towards a subject.

Presentation of Findings and Analysis
Data Collection 1 – Surveys
Two sets of online self-completion surveys were completed by 40 Year 9 students and 16 Year 10s.The purpose of the task was to gage the popularity of the subject and to see why students had or hadn't chosen A&D at GCSE.

Year 9 Focus
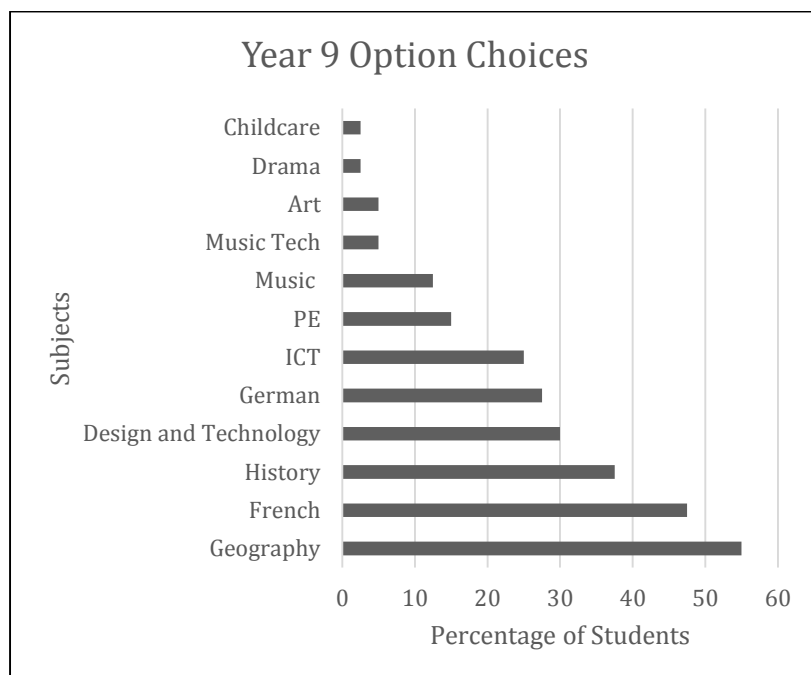
**Figure 1:** Year Nine Option Choices.

The interest in A&D in relation to the rest of the curriculum was lower than anticipated, with only 5% opting to take it at GCSE. Results indicated (see figure 1) that Design and Technology (D&T) was the most popular non-EBacc subject, with 30% of students taking it alongside a compulsory language and humanity subject.

Despite being one of the least popular optional subjects, A&D was the second most popular reserve choice alongside Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Of the students who had chosen A&D as their reserve subject, 66.67% had chosen D&T and 33.33% had chosen ICT as their first choice.

This implies that if the EBacc had not been introduced by the school, more students might have chosen A&D at GCSE. This might also mean that students think of A&D as a backup plan due to it being lower down within the 'hierarchy of subjects' (Robinson 2006) therefore prioritising other subjects. On the other hand it could mean that students are already aware of the benefits of A&D, but feel that there are more career options within other subject areas.

Year 10 Focus
The most common reason that year 10 students gave for choosing A&D at GCSE was because they enjoyed the subject. This suggests that students may see A&D as a hobby or a "non serious passtime" (Deverell in Boyd 1998, p2) but also shows that students at GCSE are already aware of the benefits of studying A&D. This is further evidenced by the 25% of participants who stated that studying A&D would help them towards a career.

Additional Subjects Chosen by Year 10 Art Students
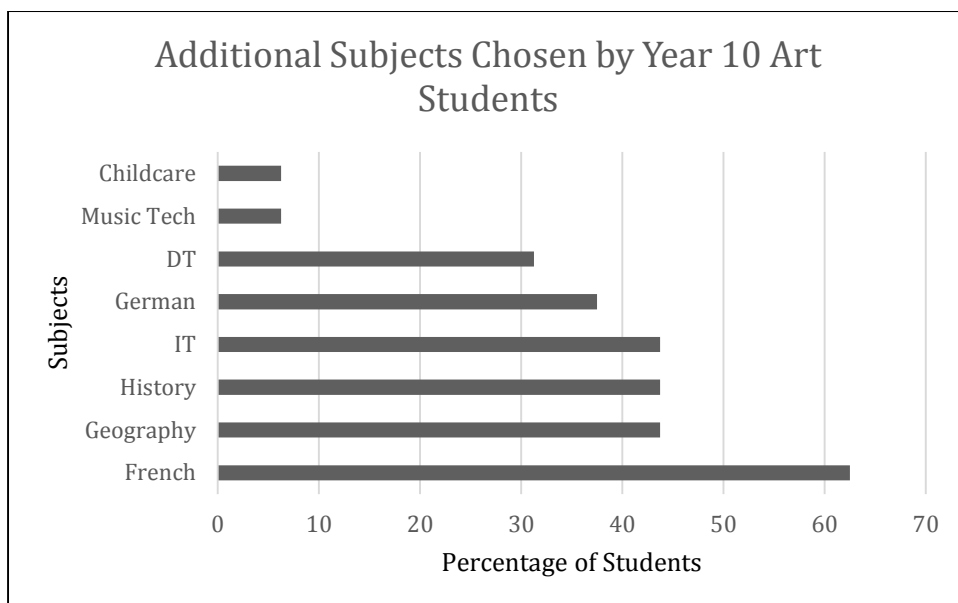
Figure 2: Additional Subjects Chosen by Year 10 Art Students.

ICT was the most popular non-EBacc subject choice by students currently studying A&D at GCSE (see figure 2). These were unexpected data due to the contrast of traditional sketchbook work and electronic submissions of classwork. However, many students in my GCSE class were confident when using Photoshop and this may be the reason why. The Year 10 participants are digital natives, who can make links to A&D and technology far more seamlessly than those born earlier. Adobe's (2012) research into creativity also suggested that "the increasing number of tools available to create with" is causing people to become more creative, often through digital outputs. The graph above also shows that A&D students were equally as likely to choose history or geography, but more likely to choose French compared with German in their options. D&T was the second most popular non-EBacc subject, however it is no longer possible to study two additional or non-EBacc subjects such as A&D alongside ICT.

When asked if they thought their A&D, music and drama teachers practiced their subject outside of school, 100% of Year 10 (GCSE) students said yes, whereas only 66.67% of Year 9 students thought this was true. This could suggest that we are teaching our GCSE students about "the culture of being an artist" (Ofsted 2014, p. 2) and applying this anecdotally to our own work, however this could be too late within the students' experience. I feel that my department and I could do more to promote this with KS3 students, and this could be why a smaller proportion of Year 9 students believed that their teachers were creative in their spare time. This realisation is what led me to seek further information from a focus group of Year 9 students.

Data Collection 2 – Focus Group
The focus group consisted of 7 students from a variety of Year 9 classes. The male and female students had varied artistc ability and attitudes towards A&D. Every participant was given a self completion questionnaire about their opinions towards A&D's benefits. When analysing the data from the focus group, there was a balanced amount of students that had chosen A&D at GCSE to those who had not. Overall, 42.81% of the focus group had chosen A&D; stating reasons such as: because it is enjoyable, A&Ds impact on the world and job opportunities.

When asked what A&D is for, only one student was unsure. The remaining participants felt it was 'for those with creative minds', 'explaining your feelings', expressing creativity, design, and advertising. One participant felt it helped 'children express themselves' and although this is true, it

was interesting that they specified children rather than people. This student's answer suggests that they think A&D is a hobby rather than a career, linking to Deverell's (in Boyd 1998, p2) comment on A&D being seen as a "non-serious pastime".

When asked if A&D could help them towards their chosen career, 42.81% said yes. 14.29% were unsure while another 42.81% said no. 28.58% of the focus group said that the transferable skills that A&D teaches will be useful to them in the future, this means that around a third of the participants had prior knowledge of the benefits of studying A&D.

After the questionnaires had been completed, I asked the students to look at a poster I had designed. I created the poster in response to the student feedback I received in *Data Collection 1 – Surveys.* The purpose of the poster was to communicate the benefits of studying A&D to KS3 learners, particularly those about to choose their GCSE options. Consisting of two sections, one side of the poster focused on *The Creative Mind* whereas the other side focused on *a Creative Career* (appendix 1).

During the poster review, the students were asked to highlight the areas they felt were most useful and least useful to them, indicated by two different colours. 100% of the focus group highlighted 'The Creative Mind' and its properties as being useful to them, yet only 42.81% highlighted 'A Creative Career' as being useful. This was an interesting result due to a higher proportion of participants who spoke about career prospects rather than transferable skills before the poster review. The percentage of students who recognised the development of transferable skills as a benefit rose from 28.58% to 100%. One conclusion could be that students find transferable skills useful and motivating. Students appeared to be more aware of A&D's impact on the "personal development of an individual" (Visconti 2012, p47) after looking at the poster.

71.45% of the students highlighted A&D's ability to aid relaxation as something they find useful, with one student adding that A&D 'gives a calm feel to [the] school day', meaning that we are currently tending to the spiritual and emotional needs of this learner (DfE 2014b). However, another participant annotated this area with the fact that they 'don't care about this much'.

When looking at creative careers, some students highlighted specific careers as something that they did not find useful due to it being a 'less used job. Harder for career opportunities' and a 'far harder job to get'. This is an aspect of the attitudes towards A&D that I had not previously considered. Students may not be opting for A&D at GCSE as they feel there is less job security in creative industries. This would support the fact that students found the transferable skills that A&D offers as more useful than the career opportunities.

Overall I felt that the poster had made a positive difference to some students but the results were inconclusive. I decided to conduct an additional data collection in order to assess if the poster changed students understanding and opinion of the benefits of studying A&D.

Data Collection 3
The 24 participants in my third data collection were a Year 9 tutor group currently studying A&D in their A&D-music-drama rotation. The students had already chosen their GCSEs. I used the teaching strategy of comparison between the students prior knowledge, and knowledge gained after the intervention. Every participant was given a form with two boxes which they were asked to complete before looking at the poster and afterwards. The poster used was identical to the one given to the focus group in *Data Collection 2.*

Before	Frequency	Percentage

'Look forward to'	1	4.17%
Animation	1	4.17%
Artists	2	8.34%
Boring	1	4.17%
Career	1	4.17%
Communicate	1	4.17%
Creative	13	54.17%
Design	1	4.17%
Detail	1	4.17%
Develop	3	12.50%
Drawing	1	4.17%
Enjoyable/fun	11	45.83%
Express	2	8.34%
Focus	1	4.17%
Ideas	1	4.17%
Lessons	1	4.17%
Meditate	1	4.17%
Motor Skills: 'Stable Hand' or 'good practice for surgeons'	2	8.34%
NONE	3	12.50%
Painting	2	8.34%
Perfection	1	4.17%
Personal	1	4.17%
Personality	1	4.17%
Planning	1	4.17%
Projects	1	4.17%
Relaxing/Calm/Peaceful	11	45.83%
Safe Environment	1	4.17%
Skills	3	12.50%
Story	1	4.17%
Style	3	12.50%
Understanding	1	4.17%

Figure 3: Key words most commonly used by students before looking at the poster.

After	Frequency	Percentage
'Art itself won't get you a creative career?'	1	4.17%

'Don't agree with it being higher education'	1	4.17%
'DT is a better option'	1	4.17%
Careers / Jobs	13	54.17%
Creative	2	8.34%
Develop	1	4.17%
Future	1	4.17%
GCSE	1	4.17%
Impact	1	4.17%
Makeup Artist	2	8.34%
Out of school	1	4.17%
Relaxing	2	8.34%
Same/None/No change in opinion	4	16.67%
Skills	1	4.17%
Special Effects	1	4.17%
The Creative Mind	6	25%
Thoughts/Ideas/'Have your say'/'ideas through drawing'	6	25%

Figure 4: Key words most commonly used by students after looking at the poster.

Despite asking students to tell me what they thought the benefits of studying A&D were, many students chose to write about their opinions. This could be due to a lack of teaching about the transferable skills and career prospects that A&D promotes, making them less familiar to students. There was also an 8.33% increase in the number of students who spoke about expression, opinions and communication rising from 16.67% to 25%. I believe that this was encouraged by the 'Have Your Say' section of the poster, which encouraged the students to think about A&D conceptually rather than something that they find enjoyable (appendix 1).

Before looking at the poster, 54.17% of participants mentioned creativity as a key benefit (see figure 3). After looking at the poster, far fewer students mentioned creativity, however 25% mentioned 'The Creative Mind' (see figure 4). I believe that creativity is a word that is overused by staff and students, with little consideration of what it actually means. The vocabulary used by participants after looking at the poster could be grouped under *creativity,* but appears to be more considered and specific to what they feel creativity means on a personal level, rather than purely an "artistic/aesthetic phenomenon" (Cropley 2001, p5).

Before looking at the poster, only 4.17% of participants mentioned career prospects as a benefit of studying A&D, however after viewing the poster this became the most popular response, with 54.17% of students mentioning this (see figures 3 and 4). Makeup Artist and Special Effects were mentioned as specific careers that students had not previously considered.

One response suggested that we are not reaching the students with an interest in creative careers, as this participant was unaware of the qualifications that would help them to become a makeup artist. The student now needs to find an alternative route "outside of the school setting" (Visconti 2012, p47) after noting that she 'may look into taking an A&D GCSE scheme out of school'.

By analysing Data Collections 1 - 3, I can conclude that I was incorrect to assume that participants would prioritise jobs over transferable skills. I was also incorrect to assume that many students would discuss their feelings about the EBacc without being prompted. However, I feel that the

poster was successful as 83.33% of participants noted additional benefits after seeing the display whereas the rate of students who found no additional benefits after looking at the poster was 16.67%. I believe the poster has the potential to improve pupil progress, as students' subject knowledge will be better informed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research carried out was designed to gain further understanding of how A&D teachers could promote the benefits of studying A&D to KS3. The research was important, as A&D teachers may need to defend their subject's place within the curriculum in the future. Results from three data collections show that the poster method was a successful strategy for communicating the benefits. The study also showed that a small proportion of students feel as though the EBacc is forcing them to choose between two subjects they perceive to be of equal importance to their futures – however the number of participants who expressed this opinion was far lower than anticipated.

I would recommend that other teachers who feel they need to "promote the culture of being an artist" (Ofsted 2014, p2) to produce visual resources that are readily available to all learners. The use of this poster should be encouraged to: help A&D teachers answer the aforementioned 'How will this help me get a job?, guide individuals towards their chosen career path or remind learners of the transferable skills that A&D helps to refine. Due to the unexpected link between A&D and ICT (see figure 2) I will produce a digital version of the poster, as this may increase engagement. I also recommend writing lesson objectives that will motivate and engage all learners by incorporating transferable skills.

This study has furthered my professional development as a reflective practitioner as it allowed me to question what motivates students. I have started to incorporate the benefits of studying A&D when planning medium term schemes of work and individual lessons. Educating students about the benefits of studying A&D will decrease the stigmatisation of creative subjects in education, which is particularly important when faced with the pressures of the EBacc. It is vital that A&D practitioners continue to promote the academic nature of creative subjects in retaliation to their decreased profile within the curriculum.

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Appendix 1 – Intervention Poster