



CREATIVITY AND THE ARTS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Discussion Paper

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Chapter One

Creativity and the Arts in Education

Introduction

Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited while imagination embraces the whole world.

(Albert Einstein)

Since earliest times when humans drew images on the walls of the caves, the arts have been our means of recording our human experience and of making sense of our world. The arts give expression to our understanding, our imagination and our creativity. As the world we inhabit becomes smaller, faster and more competitive, these qualities are increasingly important. The arts are an integral part of a complete, successful and high-quality education. Study of the arts enhances young people's intellectual, personal and social development.

A comprehensive arts education provides a rich and engaging curriculum that develops pupils' abilities to think, reason and understand the world and its cultures. It offers pupils opportunities to respond, perform, and create in the arts. The arts instill in our pupils the habits of mind that last a lifetime: analytical skills, the ability to solve problems, perseverance and a drive for excellence. The creative skills children develop through the arts carry them toward new ideas, new experiences and new challenges, as well as offering personal satisfaction. This is the intrinsic value of the arts and it should not be underestimated.

Schools and society must develop our children to become happy, well-adjusted citizens, rather than pupils who can just pass a test and get through school. We must ensure that our children can think creatively, skillfully, and "outside the box". The arts are a vital part of doing this and of ensuring that every pupil can achieve his or her potential and contribute fully to our society.

Creativity

According to UNESCO, "the encouragement of creativity from an early age is one of the best guarantees of growth in a healthy environment of self-esteem and mutual respect - critical ingredients for building a culture of peace."

Creativity is an elusive and contested concept. There have been many attempts to define it. Creativity has been described as 'a state of mind in which all our intelligences are working together' (Lucas, 2001) and as 'the ability to solve problems and fashion products and to raise new questions' (Gardner, 1993). Few experts agree on a precise definition, but when we say the word 'creativity', everyone senses a similar feeling. When we are creative, we are aware of a special excitement.

Creativity can be understood as having the power or quality to express yourself in your own way. Children are naturally creative. They see the world through fresh, new eyes and then use what they see in original ways. One of the most rewarding aspects of working with children is the chance to watch them create.

Every child is born with creative potential, but this potential may be stifled if care is not taken to nurture and stimulate creativity. Young children are naturally curious. They wonder about people and the world. Even before they enter primary school, they already have a variety of learning skills acquired through questioning, inquiring, searching, manipulating, experimenting, and playing. Children need opportunities for a closer look; they need time for the creative encounter.

Creative learning is a natural human process that occurs when people become curious and excited. Children prefer to learn in creative ways rather than just memorising information provided by teachers or parents. They also learn better and sometimes faster.

The term "creativity," as it relates to the classroom, goes beyond art class and school projects. At its best, creativity in the classroom is about how a teacher captivates students and inspires them to learn. Teachers who are practised in the art of developing creativity are generally focused on creating a classroom culture that thrives on creativity. They build a repertoire of strategies designed to spark new ideas and bring out a spirit of creativity in students, and they adapt and create ideas for their own curriculum needs. What is needed is teaching that is innovative. Children need to experience the unpredictable and the uncertain. They need lessons that produce surprise. As Fisher argued, creative learners need creative teachers who provide both order and adventure, and who are willing to do the unexpected and take risks (Fisher, 2002).

Creativity is the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. According to Linda Naiman, founder of Creativity at Work, "Creativity involves two processes: thinking, then producing. Innovation is the production or implementation of an idea. If you have ideas, but don't act on them, you are imaginative but not creative." Naiman promotes the use of arts-based learning to develop creativity, innovation, and collaborative leadership in organizations. (What is Creativity? <http://www.creativityatwork.com>)

A creative curriculum offers children plenty of opportunities for creative behaviour. Such a curriculum will call for original work, independent learning, self-initiated projects, and experimentation. Using curriculum materials that provide progressive warm-up experiences, procedures that permit one thing to lead to another, and activities that recognise and reward creative thinking makes it easier for teachers to provide opportunities for creative learning.

Children have a seemingly endless supply of creative energy. It shows up in their quirky impromptu rhymes and songs, in their imaginative play, and in their innate ability to make something out of anything. However, research on creativity points to a so-called "fourth grade slump" across various cultures (Torrance, 1967). It appears that when children begin school, their level of creativity is evident and often flourishing but, by the time they reach the fourth grade, they have become more conforming, less likely to take risks, and less playful or spontaneous than in earlier years. Today's children must be given the chance to develop their creativity to the fullest extent possible; not only for the benefit of their own future but also for the communities we all inhabit.

The focus of education must be on creating people who are capable of thinking and doing new things, not simply repeating what past generations have done (Fisher, 1990). We cannot limit people to doing only what they have done in the past if they are to be equipped for a world of challenge and change. As Warren G. Bennis quoted "There are two ways of being

creative. One can sing and dance. Or one can create an environment in which singers and dancers flourish."

It is hoped that the Primary School Curriculum (1999) enables pupils in Irish primary schools to sing and dance but that it also creates an environment in which singers and dancers flourish. But also, the Primary School Curriculum should create an environment in which the talents of all our pupils flourish. The view put forward by Ashfaq Ishaq, FRSA Executive Director, of the International Child Art Foundation is that creativity can be encouraged in a variety of ways, and the arts are seen as a dynamic channel to foster a child's creativity. The Primary School Curriculum encourages creativity in many forms, though the particular focus of this discussion document is on the Arts.

The Arts in Education

The British National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), in its report *Curriculum and Progression in the Arts: An International Study*, (Taggart, Whitby and Sharpe, 2004) presents findings of ongoing research that compares twenty-one countries' arts curricula. Ireland participated in the research. The survey of content and organization of each country's arts curricula found that:

- Overall, courses for the arts were treated as either separate subjects, e.g. music or visual art, or as larger learning areas covering several subjects, e.g. Arts, Creative Arts (New South Wales, Australia) or as in Scotland, Expressive Arts. Queensland (Australia) includes a fifth arts discipline – media.
- All countries had well defined curricula for each of the disciplines of art and music as part of compulsory education.
- All countries included a cultural or national context for their arts curricula.
- All countries saw the arts as contributing to personal, social and cultural development, as well as purely artistic development.
- Dance and drama were studied in most countries.
- No country included literature within their arts curricula.

The term arts education has had various meanings throughout the years, and generally includes music, dance, drama and visual art. The visual arts and music have traditionally received the lion's share of attention in education. Since the advent of a common curriculum, arts educators have struggled to have the arts taken seriously. Over the years, the arts have assumed the role of promoter of good citizens, accessory to academic subjects, special programs for the gifted or extracurricular activity. In *Becoming Knowledge: The Evolution of Art Education Curriculum* (1992) Denny Palmer Wolf suggests that the arts in education are a particular form of knowledge requiring work, understanding and skill equal to but distinctive from those of other subjects.

The role of arts education in forming the competences for young people for life in the 21st century has been widely recognized at European level (European Commission, 2009, p.3). Arts education is valued in developing creativity. Cultural awareness and creativity are seen as central transversal key competences which are included in the EU strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training. In March 2009, the European Parliament passed a resolution on Artistic Studies in the European Union, which recommended that that artistic education should be compulsory at all school levels, that arts teaching should use the latest information and communication technologies, and that there should be a greater

oversight and coordination of arts education at European level (European Commission, 2009, p. 8). In 1999, UNESCO had called for the teaching of arts to have a special place in the education of every child, and later published its *Roadmap for Arts Education* in 2006, which advocated the strengthening of arts education. In 1995 the Council of Europe launched a project on *Culture, Creativity and the Young*, which examined the provision for arts education in the schools of member states. The Council later launched a Framework Convention (2005) and a White Paper on Intercultural dialogue in 2008. The European Commission produced a Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world in 2007 encouraging art education and active participation in cultural activities with a view to developing creativity and innovation.

The Eurydice Report on *Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe* (European Commission 2009), confirms that visual arts and music are given higher prominence than dance and drama in the arts curriculum in member states. The report also stated that arts education has less status than literacy and numeracy in that it is allocated fewer hours. However, in most member states the arts are allocated more hours than foreign languages and physical education at primary level. The number of hours spent on arts education at primary was between 50 and 100 hours per annum. Music, in particular was well represented among extra-curricular activities provided by schools. The aims for arts education was similar among all countries studied. Nearly all countries mentioned ‘artistic skills, knowledge and understanding’, ‘critical appreciation’, cultural heritage’, ‘individual expression/identity’, ‘cultural diversity’, and ‘creativity’ as objectives. Many arts curricula also mentioned cross-curricular links and the development of social and communication skills, and some countries include the acquisition of cultural and artistic competence as an overall educational objective of compulsory schooling. In some countries the various arts subjects are considered as separate subjects, while in others they are considered as an integrated area of study. The use of ICT in the teaching of arts is formally recommended in ten countries, including Ireland. In most countries initiatives are taken to organize visits to places of artistic and cultural interest for pupils or to establish partnerships with artists and some countries have specific organizations or networks to promote arts and cultural education. At primary level, the arts are mostly taught by generalist primary teachers. (European Commission, 2009, pp.15-16).

In 1995, The United States Department of Education reported in *Schools, Communities, and the Arts: A Research Compendium*, that researchers found that using arts education as a medium to teach academic subjects not only led to improvement in understanding of content but that student behaviour also improved in such areas as risk-taking, cooperation and problem-solving. The study also found that for students who struggle with curriculum and methodology based primarily on verbal proficiency, arts processes are extremely powerful. It was noted that through experiencing the arts they developed the capacity for sound judgment, attention to purpose and ability to follow through on tasks, and the ability to consider differing viewpoints and defer judgment.

It is now known from the research of such neuroscientists as Marion Diamond at Berkeley, that the human brain can undergo changes in structure and functionality as a result of learning and experience - for better or for worse. Neural connections that make it possible for us to learn and remember and problem-solve and create can continue to form throughout life, particularly when we are in environments that are positive, nurturing, stimulating and that encourage action and interaction. Well- designed arts programs provide just the kinds of environments that Diamond describes.

Not only can the brain be transformed, but it can itself be a transformer. For example, the experience of a magnificent sunrise might emerge in the form of a poem or a dance. Response to an exhibit of paintings might emerge in the form of music. Life experiences might find voice in the form of historical plays such as those written by Shakespeare. The arts provide the means for the human brain to function at its highest level.

It would be easier to achieve significant educational achievements if everyone learned in the same way, but not everyone does. In schools today there is a growing diversity of students with different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds that result in very different ways of thinking, learning, and behaving. Children with different kinds of abilities and disabilities are in the same classrooms. Children from disadvantaged families learn together with more economically privileged students. School systems that rely on teaching primarily through the spoken and written word simply do not reach all these kinds of students. Even students with similar backgrounds receive and process information differently.

Some students can learn effectively by listening, and they do very well in traditional classrooms where most of the information is presented orally. On the other hand, students with a visual learning style constitute about 40% of the population. It is important for them to have illustrations, charts, and diagrams along with words and numbers. For kinaesthetic students, who form around 45% of the population, abstractions presented in words and numbers may not be easily understood without concrete examples. The arts offer especially valuable tools to facilitate learning for those who are primarily visual and kinaesthetic, in addition to making it possible for all students to learn more effectively, retain what they have learned, know how to apply what they have learned in a variety of contexts, and feel more positive about learning.

Dr. Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences suggests that our school systems (which reflect our culture) teach and test primarily two kinds of intelligence - verbal and logical-mathematical. He suggests, however, that there are at least five other kinds of intelligence that are equally important. They include visual/spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. These intelligences provide the foundations for the visual arts, music, dance, and drama, and through these art forms most students will not only find the means for communication and self-expression, but the tools to construct meaning and learn almost any subject effectively. This is especially true when the arts are not only taught as separate subjects but also integrated throughout the curriculum at every level.

In *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (1999) seven teams of US researchers examined a variety of arts education programs using diverse methodologies which provided new and important findings on actual learning experiences involving the arts. The researchers found that learners can attain higher levels of achievement through their engagement with the arts. "When well taught, the arts provide young people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts and bodies. The learning experiences are real and meaningful for them. While learning in other disciplines may often focus on development of a single skill or talent, the arts engage multiple skills and abilities. Engagement in the arts nurtures the development of cognitive, social and personal competencies" (Exec Summary, p.IX).

Although the *Champions of Change* researchers conducted their investigations and presented their findings independently, a remarkable consensus exists among their findings:

- *The arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached.*
Young people who are disengaged from schools and other community institutions are at the greatest risk of failure or harm. The researchers found that the arts provided a reason for being engaged with school or other organisations.
- *The arts reach students in ways that they are not otherwise being reached.*
‘Problem’ students often became the high-achievers in arts learning settings. Success in the arts became a bridge to learning and eventual success in other areas of learning.
- *The arts connect students to themselves and each other.*
Creating an artwork is a personal experience. By engaging his or her whole person, the student feels invested in ways that are deeper than “knowing the answer.” The attitudes of young people toward one another are altered through their arts learning experiences.
- *The arts transform the environment for learning.*
When the arts become central to the learning environment, schools and other settings become places of discovery. School culture is changed, and the conditions for learning are improved.
- *The arts provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people.*
With adults participating in lifelong learning, young people gain an understanding that learning in any field is a never-ending process.
- *The arts provide new challenges for those students already considered successful.*
Boredom and complacency are barriers to success. For those young people who outgrow their established learning environments, the arts can offer a chance for unlimited challenge.
- *The arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work.*
Ideas are what matter, and the ability to generate ideas, to bring ideas to life and to communicate them is what matters to workplace success.

The Visual Arts

Children today are growing up in a highly visual world, surrounded by the images of television, videos, advertising displays, and other media. The human brain’s visual cortex is five times larger than the auditory cortex so it is hardly surprising that students respond positively to opportunities to learn through the visual arts. Children today do not have many opportunities to experience processes from beginning to end, and too often see only end products on television or on supermarket shelves. The visual arts not only provide these experiences, but also offer the means for helping students to understand and consolidate what they learn. There are also other skills involved: learning to use the tools of the visual arts, learning to observe carefully, learning to express one's ideas visually, and learning that discipline and perseverance are necessary for achievement.

Music

We are by nature musical, rhythmical people. We are surrounded by music every day, enjoy it for relaxation, and may dance to it, yet many of us have only experienced music in school during a weekly class lesson. Recent research suggests that music lessons, and even simply listening to music, can enhance spatial reasoning performance. The studies of Rauscher and Shaw confirm an unmistakable link between music and spatial intelligence. They note that

"well-developed spatial intelligence is the ability to perceive the visual world accurately, to form mental images of physical objects, and to recognize variations of objects" (Rauscher and Shaw, 1995, p.46).

Some researchers suggest that the fact that the universities of India graduate so many brilliant mathematicians and physicists has something to do with early listening to music with complex rhythmical and tonal patterns. A renowned Japanese master mathematics teacher, whose nearly two million students have demonstrated incredible maths ability beyond their years, was asked the following question. "What would you say is the most effective way of heightening children's mental ability at the earliest possible stages?" He answered, "The finest start for infants is to sing songs. This helps to elevate their powers of understanding, and they register astounding speed in learning math and languages."

In a survey of science achievement in senior primary students, Hungary ranked first out of 17 nations. Researchers believe that this outcome is linked to the fact that Hungary has one of the most intensive school music programs in the world with instruction starting at the kindergarten level. Their Singing Schools are based on the methods of Kodaly, and all children engage in singing every day. Both voice and instrument training twice a week are compulsory throughout the first eight years of schooling. Japan and Holland, the second and third highest achieving countries also incorporate music instruction throughout the school years.

The US National Child Welfare Association (1997) states, "Through music, a child enters a world of beauty, expresses his/her inmost self, tastes the joy of creating, widens his/her sympathies, develops the mind, soothes and refines the spirit, and adds grace to the body", cited in McKergow, (1999, p.16).

As educators, teachers' beliefs, desires and aspirations about what is important in music education are key factors in determining how the aims of a music curriculum are incorporated into their teaching.

Many studies have been performed to examine the effect of musical instruction on the brain. Curriculum areas most influenced by music education include language development, reading, mathematics, and science. Music itself is a form of language comprising patterns which can be used to form notes, chords, and rhythms. Experience of music helps a child to analyse the harmonic vowel sounds of language as well as to sequence words and ideas. Another curriculum area enhanced by music participation is reading. A child who participates in music activities experiences sensory integration, a crucial factor in reading readiness. Wilson's study (1989) reveals that music instruction enhances a student's ability to perform skills necessary for reading including listening, anticipating, forecasting, memory training, recall skills, and concentration techniques.

Mathematics is the academic subject most closely connected with music. Music helps students count, recognize geometric shapes, understand ratios and proportions, and the frameworks of time. Gordon Shaw (1993) found that piano instruction enhances the brain's ability to visualise and transform objects in space and time. This enhances a student's ability to understand fractions, geometric puzzles and maths problems. Armstrong (1988) reports that music educator, Grace Nash, found that by incorporating music into her maths lessons, her students were able to learn multiplication tables and maths formulae more easily.

At every age, experience of music affects academic performance. Susan Black (1997) reports that newborn babies have mechanisms in their brains devoted exclusively to music. These mechanisms help the newborns organise and develop their brains. Rauscher's study (1997) indicates that just fifteen minutes a week of keyboard instruction, along with group singing, dramatically improved the kind of intelligence that is needed for pre-school students to understand higher levels of maths and science.

Primary school music students also show increased learning in maths and reading. Studies have found that instrumental music students, with two or more years of study, scored significantly higher in tests of basic skills than did non-music students.

The scientific evidence is abundant, obvious, and compelling; there are strong connections between music instruction and greater student achievement. Regardless of age, exposure to music helps to develop and fine-tune the workings of the brain. Music training, whether instrumental, vocal, or music appreciation, helps develop a child's cognitive and communication skills.

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory

The groundbreaking theory of multiple intelligences, developed by Howard Gardner of Harvard University, broadens our view of how humans learn and realise their potential. It shows that the arts can play a crucial role in improving students' ability to learn because they draw on a range of intelligences and learning styles, not just the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences upon which most schools are based.

In a January 1997 article, "The Musical Mind," Gardner was quoted as saying that music might be a special intelligence which should be viewed differently from other intelligences. He stated that musical intelligence probably carries more emotional, spiritual, and cultural weight than the other intelligences. But perhaps most important, Gardner says, is that music helps some people organise the way they think and work by helping them develop in other areas, such as maths, language and spatial reasoning.

While it is understood that music education can have an important impact on musical intelligence, there is a significant amount of research supporting the impact of music education on all seven intelligences (as cited by Harvey, 1997).

Linguistic A study by Hall in 1952, reported that when examining eighth and ninth graders, the use of background music in study halls resulted in substantially more improvement of reading comprehension than those that studied without music. In a study by Ramey and Frances Campbell of the University of North Carolina (as reported in "You Can Raise Your Child's IQ" in *Reader's Digest* October 1996), preschool children taught with games and songs showed an IQ advantage over those without the songs, and at age 15 had higher reading and maths scores.

Logical-Mathematical A study in Rhode Island published in the May 23, 1996 issue of *Nature* reported that first- graders who participated in special music classes as part of an arts study saw their reading skills and math proficiency increase dramatically. Students who studied music appreciation scored higher on the maths portion of the SAT than those without music education.

Spatial In a study by Frances Rauscher and Gordon Shaw at the University of California, Irvine, that was presented in 1994 at the American Psychological Association, they reported that pre-schoolers who took daily 30 minute group singing lessons and a weekly 10-15 minute private keyboard lesson scored 80 percent higher in object-assembly skills than students who did not have the music lessons.

Bodily-Kinaesthetic In a report of the significance of singing in *MUSICA Research Notes* (1996), Weinberger cites research of Kalmar dealing with the positive effects of singing in normal children in a long-term study, as she studied the effects of the Kodály method of instruction, and found significant effects on motor development and cognitive development of those participating in the music programme.

Musical A report in *The New York Times International* in May 1996 indicated that in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and China music is a significant part of education and the children in those countries are far more likely to have what some regard as one of the most striking signals of a musical mind, absolute pitch. As reported in *The Musical Mind*, by Susan Black, neuromusical investigations are producing evidence that infants are born with neural mechanisms devoted exclusively to music. Perhaps, even more importantly, studies show that early and ongoing musical training helps organize and develop children's brains.

Interpersonal A study done in 1978 by McCarty, McElfresh, Risce, and Wilson, reported that a pattern of inappropriate student behaviour on a school bus was changed by playing music. Research at the Harvard Project Zero as reported by Colwell and Davidson, suggests that arts activities for all students on Fridays and Mondays reduces the absentee rate on those days.

Intrapersonal Martha Mead Giles found in a study reported in the *Journal of Music Therapy* that music and art instruction may be an important link to children's emotional well-being. In an *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* report, (1994), research was cited that in addition to an enhancement of self-concept as an outcome of music education, trust and cooperation, empathy, and social skills were also shown to be benefits of a music education.

The Mozart Effect

Historically, music educators and music therapy researchers have provided clear evidence that music and music education does have a measurable impact. However, it was the research of Frances Rauscher, Gordon Shaw and colleagues, at the Center for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory at the University of California, dealing with the relationship between music and spatial task performance that resulted in the creation of the term "The Mozart Effect" and the thesis that music can and does make one smarter.

In October 1993 a study done by Rauscher, Shaw, and Ky that found that listening to 10 minutes of Mozart's piano Sonata K.448 over a period of time increased spatial IQ scores in college students. A further study on spatial performance and music found that the spatial reasoning skills of preschool children who were given 8 months of music lessons far exceeded the spatial reasoning performance of children who had no musical training. Whereas the effect of listening to Mozart lasted only a short time (about 15 minutes), the results of the study with preschool children suggested to the researchers that music can improve intelligence for long periods of time, maybe even permanently.

In 1995, Rauscher et al replicated and extended their findings concerning the Mozart effect. In the most recent study, they used the same task as in their first experiment but extended the types of listening experienced. Seventy-nine college students were divided into three groups: silence, the same Mozart as used in the 1993 study, and a work by Philip Glass. Only the Mozart group showed a significant increase in spatial IQ score.

These findings hold new and profound implications for the importance of music in education, especially the education of young children. Spatial reasoning is essential to success in a variety of academic subjects, particularly maths, the sciences and engineering. Many problems common to these disciplines are not easily described in verbal form, and depend on abstract thinking and visualisation – skills that result from highly developed spatial reasoning ability. The notion that music is important to the development of a child's intellect is not new. Plato believed music was the first subject that children should learn, to create a sense of order and harmony in the mind. Until now, however, no one has been able to demonstrate a direct, causal link between music and the development of human intelligence early in life. Rauscher's research also indicates that music training may most benefit those children for whom achieving academic and career potential is critically important: the disadvantaged. Music programs in schools may enable the disadvantaged to learn on a more equal footing with children from more affluent backgrounds. Because it is nonverbal, music, unlike many traditional teaching methods, does not force disadvantaged children to struggle with language or cultural differences. Also, unlike children from higher-income families, who have access to private music lessons, school may offer many disadvantaged children their only opportunity for music instruction.

Concluding Comment

Music should be prized and emphasised as an invaluable way to boost human brainpower. The challenge is to identify and articulate the music education programme that can be most successful in achieving this goal.

As music educators teachers ought to be grateful for, and knowledgeable about major developments in recent years that have strengthened their position in promoting music as a significant discipline that ought to be at the core of the curriculum.

Music educators have always believed that a child's cognitive, motivational, and communication skills are more highly developed when exposed to music training. The positive effects of music education are finally being recognized by science, verifying what music teachers have always suspected.

The increased use of learning objectives or outcomes has dominated recent educational reforms. For teachers of the arts, this has been problematic. Prescribing the outcomes of an artistic activity runs the risk of removing the sense of discovery and creation.

A music education programme, like any other, should consist of sequentially organised learning experiences that lead to clearly defined skills and knowledge. The ultimate goal of music education is not great student performances, but musical learning that will allow young people to actively participate in their musical cultures for their entire lives. The programme should go beyond the performance of published music and also provide students with opportunities to experiment with musical improvisation and composition, thus building their creative skills. Music classes should encourage students to employ and develop their

problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills, in the form of musical decision-making, self-evaluation, and other activities involving increased student responsibility. The music education programme should also emphasise the interdisciplinary potential of the skills and knowledge being taught; that is, facets of musical understanding can be applied to other areas of the fine arts, as well as to social studies, language arts, and other fields of study. If these elements are missing from a school music programme, classes can become mere rehearsals and music education becomes mere music production.

Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything. It is the essence of order and lends to all that is good and just and beautiful. *Plato*

Dance

Practising and learning complex rhythmical patterns stimulates and energises the whole mind-body system. Many kinaesthetic students, who literally need to move to learn, find opportunities to do so through dance. Dance creates strong, coordinated, well-disciplined bodies that can move with grace and individual style. Preparing to give a dance performance by memorising the choreography, rehearsing, and collaborating with other dancers exercises and develops critical thinking skills along with persistence and perseverance.

Drama

In a creative drama lesson, students listen to or read a story or poem, or hear a piece of music, or see a painting and plan how to interpret it dramatically. They review and if necessary develop a plot, choose characters, create an imaginary setting, then improvise dialogue and action. Clearly this process is a highly collaborative one. Making a piece of theatre with students encourages cooperation, compromise and commitment. Numbers of studies support the value of integrating drama in the curriculum. Patricia Pinciotti in her report *Creative Drama and Young Children* states:

The creative drama process integrates mental and physical activity, engaging the whole child in improvisational and process-oriented experiences. These dramatic learning activities nurture and develop both individual and group skills and enhance the participants' abilities to communicate their ideas, images, and feelings in concert with others through dramatic action.

(Pinciotti, 1993) p.24)

The highlight of many students' lives may be the opportunity to take part in a play, experiencing the process of rehearsing until the desired outcome is achieved, and often reliving the moment in memory throughout life.

Dorothy Heathcote's innovative approach to education, *Mantle of the Expert*, uses drama as an impetus for productive learning across the curriculum. It is learning through drama. She describes it as taking on an enterprise with the class functioning as people sharing the work of the enterprise or running a project, which can take place over a period of a few weeks. Topics are chosen according to children's interest, for example, life in a medieval monastery¹. When

¹ Chapter 5 in *Drama for Learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education* by Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton deals with the teaching of life in a Medieval Monastery. The topic is

the students are in role in a fictional context they bring a sense of responsibility to their learning. They engage with the knowledge. According to Heathcote², this is” an *active, urgent, purposeful* view of learning, in which knowledge is to be *operated on*, not merely to be taken.” (p.32) Other areas of the curriculum can be integrated into the drama – language, art, maths, science, history, geography to name but a few. For example, in building a Norman House, the pupils can become Norman architects, builders and carpenters, or in a soup kitchen, issues such as health and safety, volunteers and resources, routines and rotas, making recipes, ordering vegetables, chopping vegetables, sorting leftovers and rubbish into correct bins can be addressed.

Arts for Arts Sake

In *The Arts and the Creation of Mind, What the Arts Teach and How It Shows* (2002) Elliot Eisner outlines ‘Ten Lessons the Arts Teach’.

1. The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships.
2. The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution
3. The arts celebrate multiple perspectives.
4. The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity.
5. The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know.
6. The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects.
7. The arts teach students to think through and within a material.
8. The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said.
9. The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source
10. The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolises to the young what adults believe is important.

Claims that education in the arts leads to achievement in other academic subjects have been used to justify arts education in schools. However, a note of caution is voiced in Harvard's Project Zero's "*Reviewing Education and the Arts Project*" (REAP) (2000) which

introduced with a letter from Bishop Anselm, requesting a book of rules to assist the founding of a house of nuns. The teacher, in role as the Abbott, will read out the letter to the class, inviting the children to take on the roles of monks. In their roles they take on the enterprise of running a medieval monastery in order to write a book of rules. In doing this they grow in expertise in the various roles they play. This can be done in groups – the kitchen, the farm, the scriptorium etc.

² Dorothy Heathcote's archives have been donated, recently, to Trinity College Library to be housed and managed.

investigated the validity of such claims through a statistical examination of prior studies that met scientific criteria, including experimental designs with control or comparison groups. It warns: “Instrumental claims for the arts are a double-edged sword.... If the arts are given a role in our schools because people believe the arts cause academic improvement, then the arts will quickly lose their position if academic improvement does not result” (REAP, 2000, Executive Summary, p.1).

The report *Beyond the Soundbite: What the Research Actually Shows About Arts Education and Academic Outcomes* (2002) looked at a synthesis of existing studies on the relationship between teaching and learning in the arts and measures of academic achievement. In four out of seven studies, REAP's Mia Keinanen, Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner found a small relationship between dance education and improved reading in 5- to 12-year-olds. The other three studies showed that dance education improved achievement in nonverbal reasoning (visual-spatial skills, both moving and visualising in space). Based on twenty-five music studies, REAP found evidence that listening to music leads to temporary improvement in spatial-temporal reasoning. In nineteen of the music studies, the evidence suggested that learning to make music improves spatial-temporal reasoning, and six studies indicated that further music training improves math and enhances reading. REAP also found evidence in eighty studies that classroom drama training led to achievement in a variety of verbal areas such as understanding of enacted stories, reading readiness and achievement, verbal language and writing.

However, arts educators must not allow the arts to be justified in terms of what the arts can do for academic achievement. The arts must be justified in terms of what the arts can teach that no other subject can teach. The arts offer a way of thinking unavailable in other disciplines. The arts are good for our children, irrespective of any non-arts benefits that the arts may in some cases have.

The arts are a fundamentally important part of culture, and an education without them is an impoverished education leading to an impoverished society. Studying the arts should not have to be justified in terms of anything else. The arts are as important as the sciences: they are time-honoured ways of learning, knowing, and expressing.

(REAP, 2000, Executive Summary, p. 6)

Concluding Comment

A life without the arts is a life without insight into what it means to be human. In *Art as Experience* (1934), John Dewey suggests that when we begin to create and respond to the arts ourselves, we kindle the fires of emotion, perception and appreciation. We look underneath the surface realities of the world. We release our imagination.

The arts have existed since the beginning of recorded time. From ancient drawings on caves in the Pyrenees Mountains to graffiti on urban walls in inner cities; from the theatres of ancient Greece to the great concert halls of the world, the arts are powerful carriers of cultural meaning. In *Releasing the Imagination* (1995), Maxine Greene writes that once we begin to imagine other possibilities, we cultivate a lively and authentic curiosity for the world. The development of curiosity and wonder creates a personal and social consciousness that is necessary for living in our culturally diverse world. By setting students on a lifelong journey

with the arts, we encourage ongoing, informed perception, appreciation and relationship with the people of the world.

If students are to fully embrace the rich and diverse cultures of the world; if they are to live up to their full cognitive potential; if they are to be prepared for living and working in a technologically driven world; and if they are to live a life alive and wide-awake to the possibilities yet to come, the promise of the arts as basic education must be realised.

Chapter Two

Creativity and the Arts in Education in Ireland

The Development of the Arts in Education in Ireland

At various periods of our history, the arts and arts education have played a significant part in Irish society. From our earliest Celtic tradition we have the legacy of monuments such as Newgrange as well as the magnificent heritage of richly-ornamented bronze and gold artifacts. The Bardic schools played a key role in ensuring provision and continuity in educating future generations in the artistic traditions of the time. In the Monastic period, Ireland produced the illuminated manuscripts, religious objects of great beauty and remarkable stone sculpture. Once again, education in these arts played a pivotal role in the society of the time.

The subsequent decline of the monasteries and of royal patronage together with centuries of colonisation resulted in the downgrading of the social status of native Irish art and culture with a consequent decline in artistic and cultural education.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Dublin, in particular, gained in cultural status and a strong tradition of urban architecture and design emerged. During this time also, native traditions of oral poetry, music and dance survived albeit surreptitiously for the most part. The early twentieth century brought the Gaelic Revival when Irish poets, dramatists and novelists began to gain in national and international stature and significance.

Until the latter years of the twentieth century, the arts did not play a central role in the Irish school curriculum. Earlier education policy was focused more on national structures than on the content of the curriculum, which was almost exclusively focused around reading, writing and arithmetic. The challenge to ensure attendance in school also overshadowed the development of the curriculum.

In the nineteenth century, the curricular policy of the national school system concentrated on the provision of a basic minimum education for everybody. The main aim was the development of literacy in the English language and the attainment of a level of numeracy. A broader and more child-centred approach was introduced in 1900. This made singing, drawing and physical education compulsory in national schools. The establishment of the Irish Free State brought further change with the emphasis on the restoration of the Irish language.

The curriculum for national schools as devised in the early years of the Irish Free State remained in being, with only minor alterations, until the new curriculum of 1971 was introduced. The prescribed programme tended to be narrow, with Irish, English, arithmetic and singing forming the main core, while some history, geography and algebra was taught in senior classes. The introduction of the compulsory primary certificate in 1943 led, once again, to narrowing of the focus of the curriculum to Irish, English and arithmetic.

By the time free secondary education for all was established in the 1960s, significant progress had been made since the dark days of the turn of the century, when the chief concerns were

children's physical wellbeing and improvements in buildings and the school environment. It is not surprising that the arts did not figure as a major priority given the preoccupation with basic issues such as literacy, school attendance and physical health. Arts were seen as more of a luxury than a basic right.

However, the post war period from the 1950s onwards saw renewed interest in the arts in education when ideas influenced by progressive educators (in the tradition of Rousseau, Froebel, Pestalozzi, Montessori) which had been developing since the turn of the century, began to gain in popularity.

The pivotal landmark in the post war period in the UK was the Plowden Report (1967). This is often criticised as the key text which promoted excesses of child centred, progressive education ideas (Peters, 1969). The report is enthusiastic in its rationale for the teaching of the arts but is concerned with practicalities. Visual art is "both a form of communication and a means of expression of feelings which ought to permeate the whole curriculum and the whole life of the school. A society which neglects or despises it is dangerously sick" (p.247). The section on music has little on aims but is more concerned with practicalities to do with teacher training. It does place emphasis on musical appreciation as well as suggesting that this practice "has lately fallen a little into disrepute" (p.254) and asserting that 'there is a place for listening to good music whether played by the teacher or a visitor or heard by means of recorded sound' (p.254). The report saw a place for drama primarily within English and took a reasonably balanced view on the question of performance, "though some primary school children enjoy having an audience of other children or their parents, formal presentation of plays on a stage is usually out of place" (p.218). Dance is acknowledged and promoted within the section on physical education.

Much of the thinking which influenced the Plowden Report is also evident in *An Curaclam Nua* (1971) for Irish primary schools. This brought radical change in the philosophy, approach and pedagogy of primary education. The inclusion of imaginative programmes in music, art and craft, drama and mime activities, physical education and dance, as integral parts of the curriculum, was seen as a new era in Irish primary education. However, much of the promised change was unrealised. Inadequate funding of resources, unsuitable school buildings, lack of sustainable professional development for teachers and the continuing spectre of exam pressures ensured that arts education remained the Cinderella of the education system.

In 1979, the Benson Report on The Place of the Arts in Irish Education stated: "The Irish people have much to be proud of in their past. But the neglect of the arts in Irish education has meant that whole generations have lost the opportunity both of learning about their own artistic history and of acquiring the skills necessary to build upon it" (Benson, 1979, p.16). Martin Drury, Education Officer at the Arts Council, reiterated that statement in 1985, when he stated: "The acknowledged neglect of the arts in education continues". Also in 1985, the Curriculum and Examinations Board spoke of "the indefensible neglect of arts education" in its discussion paper *The Arts in Education*. In 1992, the Green Paper *Education for a Changing World*, did not envisage a role of any significance for the arts. Culture was prescribed in terms of enterprise, education in terms of working for life as a European citizen.

The 1985 Report from on the Arts Council on the provision of music education in Irish schools, *Deaf Ears?*, stated that the young Irish person had the worst of all European musical "worlds" and that by any standards the state of music education was not a happy one in

Ireland (Herron, 1995, p50). This report was written prior to the review of the primary curriculum (1990) and the subsequent revision of the curriculum. The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) responded to the Arts Council report in the form of the MUSIC EDUCATION NATIONAL DEBATE (MEND) initiative. MEND was a comprehensive initiative involving conferences, seminars and the preparation of documentation pertaining to music education, culminating in a final report, which all work of the initiative together in *MEND A Review of Music Education in Ireland* (Henaghan, 2004). Henaghan acknowledged the developments in curriculum which led to the revised Primary School Curriculum in 1999 but highlighted the unequal access across the country to music outside the curriculum and the need for teacher education across the continuum of initial, induction and incareer professional development. Issues addressed by MEND included the continuum of music education provision, performance (to which only a minority have access), assessment, national culture and the place of traditional music, multi-culturalism, third-level music education and a forum for music education. The process of MEND involved much debate on the philosophy of music education and the place of performance within music education. It also discussed the role of the specialist teacher versus the generalist teacher at primary level, with Professor Richard Colwell of Boston arguing the need for both, with the role of the specialist, who is first an educator, as supplementing the role of the class teacher and engaging in professional development of the class teacher (p.199). However, within MEND, there wasn't consensus on the issue, though there were strong views expressed that the child-centred approach to education at primary level was not good for music education, due to the lack of capability among teachers and a lack of professional development. MEND recommended the establishment of a National Forum for Music Education on a permanent basis, for the processing of issue related to music education in Ireland.

At the National Education Convention (1994) various agencies sought recognition of the centrality of education in the arts. The Minister for Education acknowledged this in her closing address: "the widespread concern we have heard for the place of the arts in education provides us with an agenda for action in this area". The White Paper, *Charting our Education Future*, marked a significant improvement in the standing of the arts. In relation to the primary curriculum, it stated "the Government affirms the centrality of the arts within educational policy and provision, particularly during compulsory schooling" (Government of Ireland, 1995, p.20).

The Primary School Curriculum (1999) sought to implement the recommendations of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (1990). It encompassed the philosophical thrust of *Curaclam na Bunscoile 1971* while reflecting the aspirations of the National Convention on Education, the White Paper on Education, *Charting our Education Future* (1995) which stated that "A good arts education develops the imagination, as a central source of human creativity" (1995, p.20) and the Education Act 1998 which specifically refers to promoting the development of the arts and other cultural matters as a particular function for schools(Education Act, 1998, Section 9 (f)).

Today, it is fair to say that the arts are generally alive and well in Irish schools, and there have been many innovative arts initiatives. One need only enter schools with their bright murals, student-created sculptures and enthusiastic dramatic and musical performances to know that something special is alive in primary arts education. Hopefully, progress has been made from the "stereotype of the arts in many Irish schools" as outlined by Benson (1979, p. 20) who contends that the arts "are often judged to be more interesting than useful, and their most significant contribution is frequently conceived of as a pleasant means of passing time.

It is no accident that Friday afternoon is such a popular time for art and craft in the primary school. A set of subjects regarded and treated as unimportant will become peripheral in the curriculum” (Benson, 1979, p.20).

Music Network published a report in 2003 on *A National System of Local Music Education Services*, which led to the Department of Education and Science establishing Music Education Partnerships (MEPs) on a pilot basis in Dublin and Donegal under the auspices of the VECs. These partnerships provided support to primary schools in implementing the music curriculum and provided individual and group tuition in music. The MEPS succeeded in enabling more children to engage with music closer to home, and were considered successful projects (Thompson) but additional funding would be required to extend MEPS to other areas and this was not forthcoming. It is of note that the School Completion Programme offers support in music to schools participating in the programme.

The Special Committee on the Arts and Education was established in 2006 by the Minister for the Arts, Sport and Tourism, in conjunction with the Minister for Education and Science. The Report of the Committee, *Points of Alignment* (2007), has been the subject of detailed discussions between the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the Department of Education and Science and the Arts Council. While acknowledging that the Department of Education and Science is increasingly open to the enrichment of the curriculum and of the wider educational agenda by artists and arts’ organisations external to the school and that limited support is provided through teacher education and professional development, research, and social inclusion, the report views the lack of a dedicated budget for the provision of arts-in-education programmes as a significant constraint: “Arts provision for children and young people both in and out of school is arguably the single greatest fault line in our cultural provision.” (Arts Council, 2007, Summary, p.2). The Report makes several recommendations including the establishment of a National Arts-in-Education Development Unit to enable partnership, mutual understanding and joint actions by the arts and education sectors.

The report concludes with an essay by Dr. John Coolahan, Emeritus Professor of Education at NUI Maynooth in which he locates the arts within recent developments in the wider education scene in Ireland and within other relevant developments affecting provision for children and young people. He acknowledges that many valuable developments have taken place albeit in the absence of a coordinated or comprehensive plan of action. Thousands of young people have benefited from arts experiences, in and out of school and many productive partnerships have been established between arts organisations and schools. However, he concludes that “one of the great deficiencies has been the lack of a coherent vision or cohesive national plan” (Arts Council, 2007, p.45). Among other things, this has led to much fragmentation, and lack of co-ordination. The full potential of what is currently available is not being realised, and there is a lack of a cohesive development plan to expand provision. He advises that a number of significant attitudinal, structural and resourcing changes need to take place and states that “incorporation of the arts as an integral part of a holistic education would also be very much in keeping with Ireland’s image internationally as a country which has been blessed with artists of world renown, in a variety of artistic fields” (Arts Council, 2007, p.44).

The Primary School Curriculum 1999

The Primary School Curriculum (PSC) (1999) celebrates the uniqueness of the child and is designed to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life, including the aesthetic. It

seeks to enrich the child's life as a child and to lay the foundations for happiness and fulfillment in later education and in adult life. The curriculum recognizes the importance of developing the full potential of the child, to develop children's capacity for creative expression and response, to think critically and to learn how to learn. The rationale for arts education is outlined in the introduction to the curriculum as follows:

The curriculum enables the child to perceive the aesthetic dimension in every area. This enriches the learning experiences for the child and the different aspects of conceptual development. The uniqueness of the child is perhaps most apparent in the innate creativity of each individual, while valuing the child's creative response and expression of perceptions, insights, interpretations and knowledge is an important principle of the curriculum.

(PSC, 1999, Introduction, p.15)

The PCS outlines three general aims for primary education, which are supported by specific curriculum aims, incorporating a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to children of different ages and stages of development. Referring to the arts and creativity, it is envisaged that in engaging with the curriculum, the child should be enabled to:

- Develop an appreciation and enjoyment of aesthetic activities, including music, visual arts, dance, drama and language
- Develop the skills and knowledge necessary to express himself or herself through various aesthetic activities, including music, visual arts, dance, drama and language

(PSC, 1999, Introduction, pp 34-36)

The human experience is expressed creatively and imaginatively through the arts. Arts education involves both the cognitive and affective domains and "deals with a dimension of experience that contributes uniquely to the child's conceptual development and to the expansion and refinement of their view of the world" (PCS, 1999, Introduction, p.52). The arts education curriculum comprises the visual arts, music and drama and dance is developed through physical education curriculum. The strands and strand units pertaining to these areas of the primary curriculum are summarized below. The PCS also recognizes the contribution of literature to arts education, which is experienced by pupils through the language curriculum.

The Visual Arts

The visual arts curriculum provides a menu of a wide range of activities that enable the child to develop sensory awareness, enhance sensibilities and allow the child a particular way to explore and create.

To develop the ability to communicate visually the child should be provided with the opportunity to 'make' art in two and three dimensional areas as well as to look at and respond to art works. An understanding of the visual elements of line, shape, form, colour and tone, pattern and rhythm, texture and spatial organisation and the associated vocabulary are essential to understanding compositions.

The structure of the content of the programme should be based on the children's own experience, imagination and observations and on their particular stage of development

The 6 strands of the curriculum are

- Drawing which allows for creation, expression, clarifying thought and communication;
- Paint and colour which provides for an appreciation and understanding of colour leading to expression of experience, interest and imaginative ideas as well as an awareness of colour in their own work and crafted and designed objects;
- Print which encourages a focus on inventive and functional graphic processes;
- Work with Clay gives opportunities to form and change a material imaginatively and to design and make objects;
- Construction activities provide opportunities to explore the media of 3D, balance and an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of particular structures; and
- Fabric and Fibre which encourages the child to explore some of the design processes in craft and to appraise various craft materials.

While the development of ideas through imagery provides a balance to other subject areas in the curriculum, the visual arts curriculum must provide challenge and motivation. The six strands of the visual arts curriculum include the two strand units: making art and responding to art.

An adequate supply of resources - materials and tools - is essential to encourage enthusiasm and interest. Community resources – parents, artists in the community, galleries, craft centres and TV and DVD programmes - can make valuable contributions to a rich visual arts curriculum. ICT can provide ready access to the work of artists abroad and the widely available computer programmes allow children to merge technology and the creative process.

Assessment is an integral part of the revised curriculum and teachers need to develop criteria based on objective artistic values and identify both potential and progress. A checklist of such criteria would make for easy recording as well as a portfolio of examples of the work. Self assessment through responding to one's own work is another useful assessment tool.

A written plan of work decided by the whole staff but guided perhaps by those who may have particular expertise or interest will provide a clear sense of purpose for the visual arts programme. As a starting point, the exemplars in the Teachers Guidelines book demonstrate many ways of realising content objectives. Continuous evaluation and reflection ensure the development of these objectives and further quality teaching and learning experiences.

Music

Music is so much part of everyday life that its nature and purpose are rarely questioned. It is a diverse and lifelong activity, enjoyed by people of all ages. As a universal part of all cultures, music exists in a great many forms, for a great many purposes and at many levels of complexity.

(PCS, Teacher Guidelines, Music, 1999, p.2)

The aims of the music curriculum are:

- to enable the child to enjoy and understand music and to appreciate it critically
- to develop the child's openness to, awareness of and response to a wide range of musical genres, including Irish music
- to develop the child's capacity to express ideas, feelings and experiences through music as an individual and in collaboration with others
- to enable the child to develop his/her musical potential and to experience the excitement and satisfaction of being actively engaged in musical creativity
- to nurture the child's self-esteem and self-confidence through participation in musical performance
- to foster higher-order thinking and lifelong learning through the acquisition of musical knowledge, skills, concepts and values
- to enhance the quality of the child's life through aesthetic musical experience.

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As educators, our beliefs, desires and aspirations about what is important in music education are key factors in determining how we seek to fulfil those aims.

Music provides children with opportunities to engage with a wide range of musical styles and traditions, to become involved in moving, dancing, illustrating, story telling and making drama. The music curriculum introduces children to music reading and writing, to song singing and to playing classroom instruments.

The music curriculum has three strands:

- Listening and Responding
- Performing
- Composing.

The strands are interrelated and activity in one is dependent upon and supportive of understanding in another.

Listening and responding

This strand focuses on the importance of active listening leading to meaningful responses. The child should be provided with opportunities to listen to and experience a range of musical pieces and sound sources and should be challenged to respond imaginatively.

Performing

This strand emphasises the importance of using the voice both for the sheer enjoyment of performance and as a means through which musical skills may be expanded. Song singing is a vital aspect of the child's early musical development. The development of musical literacy is closely linked with song singing and is expanded through playing simple melodic instruments. In the music curriculum, literacy is explored through its two main components, rhythm and pitch. Opportunities to demonstrate growing confidence and understanding in making music using other music sources are afforded in the strand unit 'Playing instruments'. At first the child performs on tuned and untuned percussion instruments and later experiences melodic instruments (for example tin whistle or recorder).

Composing

This strand seeks to develop the child's creativity by providing an avenue for self-expression. The child selects and sequences material from a range of available sound sources. This involves listening and deciding what best suits the essence of what he/she wants to communicate or portray. Finally, the child is given an opportunity to evaluate the composing process and to record his/her work.

The Musical Elements

Musical activities are suggested within each strand unit that enable the child to develop an awareness of and sensitivity to the inter-related elements of music (pulse, duration, tempo, pitch, dynamics, structure, timbre, texture and style) and to grow in musical understanding.

The school plan will outline the nature and extent of music in the school, acknowledging the social and cultural environment, the varying needs of the children and the available resources. The curriculum recognises that the class teacher is the most appropriate person to teach the music programme while allowing for additional support from colleagues, parents, local music groups and audiovisual resources where these are appropriate.

Assessment, as in other areas of the curriculum, is an integral part of teaching and learning in music. The section on assessment outlines how a range of assessment techniques can enrich the learning experience of the child and provide useful information for teachers, parents and others.

Integration is an important principle of the curriculum - links within music itself are referred to as linkage while connections that occur between music and other subject areas are described as integration.

Many of the expressive and imaginative aspects of the other arts areas can be supplemented by creative work in music. Music can convey different images to different children, and opportunities should be provided to illustrate responses to music through visual arts. Themes in music may be explored through dance, drama and gymnastics. Integrated themes can be

highly motivating and satisfying for the children and are particularly useful in multi-class situations in small schools.

The music curriculum provides opportunities for the development and application of musical concepts and skills through the use of ICT. Children can have opportunities to see and hear various instruments, especially those which may not be readily accessible for them. They can explore sound through electronic media, record their improvisations and compositions and review their work. Performances can be received and transmitted and themes and topics can be prepared and presented in a variety of electronic media and communicated to a wider audience.

The curriculum emphasises active responses and music-making at all levels. This enables the child to gain first-hand experience of what it means to be a listener, performer and composer in the world of music.

Drama

As envisaged in the Primary School Curriculum, educational drama is a creative process that allows children to explore the full potential of drama as a learning experience (PCS, Teacher Guidelines, Drama, p.2). As stated in the Teacher Guidelines, relating to the drama curriculum, “the essence of drama is the making of story through enactment” (p.2). It is envisaged that “successful drama will reflect life in a realistic or metaphorical way” (p.2). The drama curriculum comprises interrelated activities which enable children to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding (PCS, drama curriculum, p.3).

Drama in the primary school, according to the Primary School Curriculum, should be process drama or classroom drama. Drama is taught through exploring life through the creation of plot, theme, fiction and make-believe. The curriculum does not wish to dwell on the display element of drama, and teachers are advised that educational drama should not be confused with what may be termed performance drama. However, the curriculum recognizes that performance or display drama has benefits for the pupil but only represents a part of the rich learning and developmental experience that drama has to offer. The highlight of many students' lives may be the opportunity to take part in a play, experiencing the process of rehearsing until the desired outcome is achieved, and often reliving the moment in memory throughout life.

Educational drama is based on life and encompasses the entire range of a child's experience and every facet of his/her personality. Educational drama constitutes a unique way of learning and therefore, should be an indispensable part of the child's experience in school (PCS, Drama, Teacher Guidelines, p.5). The Primary School Curriculum contains nine aims and sixteen Broad objectives. The first aim is to enable children to become drama literate. The first broad objective is to develop the ability to enter physically, mentally and emotionally into the fictional drama context and discover its possibilities through cooperation with others. (PCS, Drama, p.9). All class groupings have the same **Strand**, ‘Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding’ and the same three **Strand Units**, ‘Exploring and making drama; Reflecting on drama and Co-operating and communicating in making drama’. The prerequisites for making drama are ‘content, the fictional lens and creating a safe environment. Content is translated into story through the fictional lens. This process enables issues to be distanced making it safe for participants to handle them while they are presented in such a way that the essential elements become clear. The fictional lens through which the

content of classroom drama is mediated is focussed differently at the various class levels. By sixth class children may have a sense of how different genres like, the tragic, the comic, the absurd can act as distinctive lenses on reality. The teacher has a crucial role in choosing, focussing and mediating the fictional lens for the children.

The elements of the drama curriculum are: Belief; Role and character; Action; Place; Time; Tension; and Significance and Genre.

As stated in the Teacher Guidelines, the drama process involves story making and not merely the acting out of stories (p.42). The Teacher Guidelines deal extensively approaches and methodologies for drama, school planning and classroom planning. Issues addressed include, the importance of drama, the continuity of drama, integration, An Ghaeilge, time allocation, special needs, organisational planning, developing staff involvement, sound levels, involving parents, integration of drama with other subject areas and teaching drama to multi-class groups. Assessment in drama is also addressed. The tools for assessment appear to be largely similar to all the other curriculum areas and include teacher observation, teacher designed tasks and tests, work samples, portfolios and projects and curriculum profiles.

Story making through process or classroom drama, viewed through a fictional lens, with appropriate content, and in a safe environment for the child are essential elements of the drama curriculum. Performance drama has benefits for the child but the curriculum advocates process drama as being the most beneficial way for children to experience drama

Dance

Dance is one of the strand units in the Primary School Physical Education Curriculum. It consists of folk and creative dance where the emphasis should be on the enjoyment of dance. As stated in the Primary School Curriculum; “In exploring, creating and performing dances children come to understand that dance is a medium for the expression of ideas, thoughts and feelings” (PCS, Physical Education, 1999, p.9).

An important aspect of folk dancing is being part of a harmonious group where children are fully involved. The spirit of caring and looking after others in a dance is more important than the mechanical movements involved. Children should learn to dance some Irish dances and some folk dances from other countries. The curriculum recommends that folk dance should be taught in a series of lessons, with sections of the dance developed in each lesson. The curriculum also states that steps or movement patterns which may be explored to develop co-ordination should be selected and an appropriate musical accompaniment chosen. It is envisaged that the curriculum will develop an understanding and appreciation of folk dance.

In creative dance children should be given opportunities to develop movements which express and communicate ideas and feelings. They should be given time to practice, discuss and refine their movements. There are four principles of body movement:

- What *the body can do (body action)*
- How *the body moves (dynamics)*
- Where *the body moves (space)*
- With whom or with what *the movement is taking place*

(PCS, Physical Education, 1999, p.66)

Lessons can be based on any of these principles enabling the children to develop a vocabulary of movement which they can then call upon when creating, performing and appreciating dance. Each dance being taught should be structured with a clear beginning, middle and end. Dance can be performed alone, in pairs or in groups. The importance of choosing an idea or theme and selecting a variety of warm-up routines, when planning a unit of work, is stressed. Teachers consider a broad outline of how the dance might develop, decide on the stimulus to be used – auditory, visual, tactile or kinaesthetic – and decide how to develop the theme into a series of lessons.

Participation and enjoyment are key aspects of the dance curriculum.

Assessment of the arts in the primary school curriculum

Assessment is an essential element of the teaching and learning process. One of its principal purposes is to provide the teacher with continuous detailed information about children's development, their knowledge, their grasp of concepts and their mastery of skills. This in turn leads to a greater understanding of the children and their needs and can help the teacher to design appropriate learning activities that will enable them to gain maximum benefit from the curriculum. This cyclic process of learning, assessment, identifying individual needs, evaluating teaching strategies, and planning future learning experiences is central to effective teaching and learning.

The Primary School Curriculum (1999) outlines **why** assessment is important in supporting children's learning, while the NCCA Assessment Guidelines(2008) describe **how** teachers can use assessment to make learning more interesting and motivating for children. They contain:

- a variety of assessment methods for gathering information about children's learning, ranging from child-led methods such as self-assessment and conferencing, to teacher-led methods such as teacher-designed tasks and tests, and standardised testing.
- advice to schools on developing, implementing and reviewing their policy on assessment.
- advice on the legislative requirements for schools in communicating information about children's progress and achievement.

Drama: What to assess

Assessment in drama is concerned with monitoring the development of the children's drama skills and concepts and the success with which they learn through an engagement with the three strand units of the curriculum. This entails a consideration of both the drama objectives and the learning objectives inherent in the content.

Exploring and making drama

In this strand the teacher assess how successfully the child has preserved the impulse for make-believe play and is able to bring belief and spontaneity to the drama. This will manifest itself in the extent to which he/she enters into a role or a character and develops it in the context of the action

Reflecting on drama

The success of the children's reflection will be seen in the extent to which they use it to create alternative courses for the action that reflect the issues bring examined and in their ability to recognise the relationship between story, theme and life experience.

Co-operating and communicating in making drama

This will be seen in his/her ability to contribute to the shaping of the drama, both in discussion about it and as the action takes place. It will also be seen in the success with which the child develops fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters as the drama progresses.

Visual Arts: What to assess

Assessment in the visual arts takes place as the child engages in the creative process of making art, when a piece of art work is completed and while making a personal response to art works. Although much of what can be achieved in visual arts education is observable, assessment should not be confined to skills and techniques. It should also identify the understandings, the attitudes and levels of commitment and the responses the child develops in the process of making art and of developing critical and aesthetic awareness.

Assessment should be concerned with:

- the child's ability to make art
- the child's ability to look with understanding at and respond to art works
- the quality of the child's engagement with art.

All three are interrelated and are assessed on the basis of

- perceptual awareness
- expressive abilities and skills
- critical and aesthetic awareness
- disposition towards art activities.

Music: What to assess

The first aspect of assessment will be concerned with the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes within the strands—

- *Listening and responding*
- *Performing*
- *Composing.*

In the Listening and responding strand, assessment will link the two strand units 'Exploring sounds' and 'Listening and responding to music' by addressing the range of responses the child makes to music.

Assessment in the Composing strand will examine the process, i.e. the efforts of the child to illustrate new musical ideas by improvising, composing and arranging sounds, alone or with others, in ways that involve imagination, originality and risk-taking and that demonstrate control of musical materials and use of musical elements.

In the performing strand the extent to which children exhibit the skills and commitment required to demonstrate a sense of pulse, imitate simple rhythms and sing or play simple melodies will be assessed. In first to sixth classes the child's emerging understanding of invented or standard musical notation may also be noted.

The musical elements

The development of understanding of musical elements (pulse, duration, tempo, pitch, dynamics, structure, timbre, texture and style) should form an equally important aspect of assessment, interwoven as they are with the strand units, as outlined in the content statement.

Assessment tools: how to assess

The following assessment tools are recommended in all areas of the curriculum, including the arts:

Teacher observation: Most teacher observation is unrecorded. However, it can be useful to make brief notes from time to time about particular learning achievements or requirements of individual children so that you have something concrete to report to parents or other teachers who may be involved with the child.

Teacher designed tasks and tests: This approach to assessment is more structured than teacher observation and involves planning an activity designed specifically to indicate the child's ability to handle particular skills and concepts.

Work samples, portfolios and projects: This dimension of assessment is basically a collection of children's work. It can be a collection of graphic/pictorial scores in music, a written or visual art response to a piece of drama or music, photographs of children's engagement with the process of making art, for example. Children's work in music can also be recorded on an MP3 player or on free downloadable software such as Audacity, while their engagement with drama can be videoed. This approach can involve an element of self assessment by the children if they are given some input/choice as to what they want to include in their portfolio. (see 2 stars and a wish below under self assessment)

Curriculum profiles: Curriculum profiles comprise short descriptive statements about the child's achievement in the particular curricular area. Levels of achievement would be linked to curricular objectives and would be measured against a set of indicators scaled in order of complexity, similar to The Drumcondra Profiles in English.

Self assessment by pupils: Both the Primary School Curriculum and the NCCA Assessment Guidelines for schools encourage teachers to involve children in assessing their own learning from an early stage. There are several strategies that can be used effectively including:

- KWL; The children identify K, what they already know about a particular subject/topic, W, what they want to know and finally after studying the topic they identify L, what they learned.
- 2 stars and a wish; This strategy can be used in conjunction with work samples/portfolios (see above). The child can use this when choosing a piece of work to put into their portfolio. Children identify 2 things that they were pleased with or that worked well for them and 1 thing that they could have done better. This strategy could also be used to respond to a piece of visual art, music or drama.
- Success criteria; The teacher provides clear success criteria to the children before allowing them work on a task. The children must check that they have fulfilled the criteria before submitting the finished product. When others, including the teacher, are reflecting on the task they use the success criteria to direct their comments. For example, in improvisational drama, success criteria might include:

- Good use of space
 - Not turning your back to the audience
 - Clear diction
 - End the drama with the statement provided
- PMI; This strategy is similar to 2 stars and a wish. The children choose a **Plus**, a **Minus** and something **Interesting** about, for example, a painting (Responding to Art) or a piece of music (Listening and Responding).

Evaluation of the arts in the primary school curriculum

To date, evaluations and reviews of the arts curriculum in primary schools has been confined to the visual arts curriculum. However, whole school evaluations in individual schools have considered the arts curriculum as a holistic endeavour, and most WSE reports, other than those which were thematic or focused evaluations, have commented on the arts to some extent. Both the NCCA and the DES carried out comprehensive reviews and evaluations of the visual arts, and their main findings are summarized below. It is encouraging to note that the findings were largely positive.

Primary Curriculum Review: Phase 1: Visual Arts

The Primary Curriculum Review Phase 1 (2005) conducted by NCCA focussed on only one element of the arts education curriculum, namely visual arts. It is encouraging to note that the findings were largely positive. Providing a breadth of visual arts experience for children (using all six strands) was the greatest success reported by teachers, followed by children's enjoyment of visual arts and children's self-expression through visual arts. There was some concern that many teachers continue to focus mainly on the two-dimensional aspects of the curriculum i.e. Paint and Colour and Drawing. It was recommended that further support and ideas for using the 3-D visual arts strands (clay, construction, fabric and fibre) should be offered to teachers to enable them to implement the full visual arts curriculum.

The Primary School Curriculum encourages schools and teachers to provide a broad and balanced education for the child by integrating process-based arts education in many aspects of the child's learning. A total of three principals reported using visual arts in other subjects to provide an integrated learning experience for children in their schools. A number of teachers reported integration of visual arts with other subjects as a key success. Three principals described the success of projects to create integrated learning experiences for children, one of whom explained that there is a sound rationale for engaging with project work that integrates the arts with other areas of the curriculum. Almost half of teachers questioned reported providing opportunities for children to experience the visual arts through theme-based activities which integrate the visual arts curriculum with other subjects *at least a few times a week* while almost another half reported providing these opportunities *once/twice a month*. These figures suggest that teachers have made progress in using thematic or interdisciplinary approaches to learning.

Teachers identified the breadth of children's visual arts experience as their greatest success with the visual arts curriculum. Most teachers attributed children's enjoyment in visual arts to the breadth of their experience with a variety of strands, media and activities. Children's choice of materials and techniques was also used to explain their enjoyment of the subject. A third reason reported by teachers for children's enjoyment focused on the inclusive nature of the visual arts. Teachers noted that the visual arts curriculum offers children with learning

difficulties or special needs a chance to be included. The second element of children's self-expression reported on by teachers focused on valuing diversity of children's expression. Almost a fifth of teachers identified children's growing appreciation of art as a success of the visual arts curriculum. Children's increased self-confidence was identified by 16.4% of teachers as a success of the visual arts curriculum. Teachers cited the emphasis on process in the visual arts curriculum, as an important element of children's enjoyment.

Children in the six case study schools identified visual arts as one of their favourite subjects and then explained what they liked most about it. Children's enthusiasm for the four newer strands of the visual arts curriculum (print, construction, clay, fabric and fibre), contrasts to some extent with teachers' low ratings of usefulness for (and perhaps use of) these strands.

Colour was the most frequently cited visual element mentioned by teachers, followed by line, shape, texture, pattern & rhythm, form and spatial organization. A third of teachers reported that children in their classes have opportunities to see how artists, craftspeople and designers work with(in), and in response to, their environments.

Individual work is the most frequently reported organizational setting used by teachers. These findings suggest that children have limited opportunities to develop socially and personally though groupwork and pairwork, including an appreciation of the benefits to be gained from co-operative effort. Despite this finding a majority of teachers reported that children in their class(es) have opportunities to discuss and talk about their own and others' work in visual arts.

Teachers reported an increased status of visual arts in their schools. Class size, classroom space, classroom organization, time, classroom planning and lack of resources were the most frequently cited challenges faced by the teachers.

Visual Arts: An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation (DES 2005)

The implementation of the visual arts curriculum was found to be generally successful. In most classrooms a significant profile was given to the subject and pupils were encouraged to explore, interpret and enjoy art activities. The majority of teachers were found to have comprehensively embraced the principles of the curriculum and displayed a willingness to experiment with different approaches in order to foster creativity. However, in a few classrooms it was found that activities were almost entirely teacher-directed, with an overemphasis on copying and the production of "template" or formulaic art, at the expense of creativity.

In the majority of classes teachers' individual long-term planning was found by the inspectors to be good. It was related to the school plan and to the content and structure of the Primary School Curriculum (1999). In these classrooms a balanced approach to the exploration of the six strands and two strand units were outlined in their school plans with equal emphasis given to the *looking and responding* and *making art* strand. The development of an appropriate visual vocabulary and activities in two-dimensional and three-dimensional media were well planned for, also.

Teachers' short-term planning was found to be good in a little less than half the classrooms visited. Specific reference to the content objectives of the curriculum and to the development

of concepts and skills linked to the age, ability and interest of pupils was commended here. In more than half the classrooms, however, planning weaknesses were found in the lack of detail in the teachers' written preparation, an over-reliance on lists and topics, inadequate reference to the *looking and responding* strand unit and limited work in three-dimensional media. In many of these schools the emphasis was on the generation of a plan rather than on the collaborative and co-operative nature of the planning process. Dates for review and prioritized action plans were not included. In a third of schools there were difficulties with regard to planning for continuity and progression in the programme offered to pupils. An overemphasis on "template" or replica art was found in teachers' individual planning in a minority of schools. While the majority of teachers did not plan for individual differences in visual arts, the inspectors commented favourably on the positive elements of practice observed.

The six strands *drawing, paint and colour, print, clay, construction* and *fabric and fibre* were being implemented effectively in the majority of schools visited. Good features included creativity, the use of a wide range of media, materials and tools, an understanding and appreciation of colour from the observation of natural and manufactured objects, talk and discussion and the development of techniques and skills. Good practice in engagement with the *clay* strand was found in the majority of classrooms observed. However, there was little reference to this strand in teachers' planning. There was little evidence of the inclusion of *construction* in teachers' planning or practice in two-fifths of the classrooms visited. Weak practice was observed in the strands *print* and *fabric and fibre* in a number of classrooms. Personnel from artists-in-residence schemes and from arts centers had been invited to many schools. Several schools afforded pupils the opportunity to visit museums, galleries and craft centers.

The inspectors found that the *looking and responding* strand unit was explored in slightly more than two-thirds of classrooms. However, while particular emphasis was placed on pupils' looking at and responding to their own work and to the work of their peers, little or no emphasis was placed on *looking and responding* to the work of artists in all six strands. In almost a third of classrooms an overemphasis was placed on the *making art* strand unit to the exclusion of the *looking and responding* strand unit.

One of the most significant omissions in whole-school policies was the lack of reference to a systematic and coherent approach to the assessment of pupils in the visual arts. Recommendations were made that whole-school policies should include reference to a systematic approach to the assessment of pupils, that teachers require specific advice and guidance on how to assess pupils' progress and achievement in this area of the curriculum and that the NCCA should provide teachers with guidance on appropriate assessment strategies in visual arts.

The potential of ICT to broaden pupils' experience and understanding of the visual arts was not exploited in most primary schools. It was recommended that additional guidance should be provided to teachers that would facilitate the use of these resources.

The majority of teachers acknowledged positively the assistance and guidance received from the support services, School Development Planning Support (SDPS) initiative and the Regional Curriculum Support Service, in making possible the continuous development of school planning.

Parents' involvement in supporting the visual arts in schools appears to be limited. Parents were found to be involved only occasionally in policy formation or in contributing to and organising learning resources for the school in this curriculum area.

It was recommended that all six strands and the two strand units should be implemented in a consistent manner, and that each pupil should have a balance of art activities and experiences in each strand. An equal emphasis should be placed on the strand units *making art* and *looking and responding to art*.

Arts Education in Northern Ireland Primary Schools

In 1989, the Arts, that is 'Music' and 'Art', became statutory subjects under the Northern Ireland (Common) Curriculum. In essence these areas, like all subjects, mirrored the post primary provision. That is each subject was presented as a discrete set of requirements which were intended to be taught in separate, timetabled lessons. Each subject under this arrangement contained a great deal of content and indeed it was rare in practice for teachers to be able to teach all that was in the syllabi or "Programmes of Study" in any subject area apart from those tested in the '11plus' examination.

For this and many other reasons the curriculum was generally regarded as unsatisfactory and a process of revision was undertaken. The aim of this process was not only to reduce the content to manageable proportions but to return to the first principles of primary education by applying the most up to date research findings on how children learn and by giving more freedom and autonomy to teachers. Most significantly, a complete break was intended with the discrete subject model and also a return to best practice in the cross-curricular approach underlay the model.

The primary phase of the curriculum comprises three stages: the Foundation Stage (years 1 and 2), Key Stage 1 (years 3 and 4), and Key Stage 2 (years 5, 6 and 7). The curriculum is set out in six Areas of Learning of which 'The Arts' is one, comprising Art & Design, Drama and Music. However, although the Areas of Learning are set out separately, the curriculum states that teachers should, where appropriate, integrate learning across the six areas to make relevant connections for children. This connectedness underpins the curriculum and has great significance for the Arts. If this philosophy is followed to its conclusion then the Arts will cease to be 'Cinderella' subjects and will achieve equal weight and status with other areas.

The NI Curriculum lays great emphasis on freedom and creativity. The document states, " Art and Design, Drama and Music provide rich opportunities for developing creativity, allowing children to express their ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world in diverse ways, through pictures, sound, drama and dance" (p. 69). It is further stated that "the greater the encouragement children receive to express themselves freely through Art and Design, Drama and Music, the greater likelihood there is that children's individuality, imagination and creativity will blossom" (p.69).

There are many signs that schools are making great efforts to implement this approach to teaching the arts. To take one example the "Musical Pathways to Learning" programme is currently attracting increasing interest and it is likely that similar programmes will emerge as schools seek more sophisticated and effective methods of meeting very challenging expectations. It is intended that the revised curriculum will be fully operational in all

Northern Ireland primary schools by 2012 and the schools' Inspectorate is currently acting on that premise.

Regarding support for the Arts in Northern Ireland's primary schools, provision for instrumental music is considered systematic and quite good. Music tuition is provided by peripatetic tutors from each of the five Education and Library Boards. Two of those in particular the Belfast Board and the Western Board (covering Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh) place great emphasis on a very high standard of instrumental achievement. In Derry, schools also set great store on success in 'Feiseanna' and a high musical profile is regarded as a sign of a "good" school. Whether these forms of provision will continue and be highly valued is open to question. In particular, the abolition of the Education and Library Boards and their replacement by a single Education and Skills Authority (ESA) covering all six counties may challenge existing local pride in high musical standards.

The position regarding visual arts activities is much more diverse. All provision tends to be 'in house' and is dependent for success on individual teachers with particular expertise or a love for the subject although from time to time additional resources can be provided in the form of a 'tie-in' with community based projects. Unfortunately in the present economic climate funding for these is likely to be very scarce in future. Drama, apart from the seasonal 'school show', follows a largely similar path to that of visual arts but can benefit from associations with music through dance and musical theatre.

In the Catholic maintained sector the Arts have benefited from the need to publicly mark events in the liturgical calendar and in all sectors assemblies and similar activities also create a demand for pupils who can express themselves through music, drama or the visual arts.

In conclusion therefore, the arts in Northern Ireland's primary schools are entering a period of great change, challenging certainly in many ways but also providing abundant opportunities for greater engagement with the majority of our children as well as continuing to encourage high standards among the most talented individuals.

Chapter Three

Supports for Arts in the Primary School

Introduction

This chapter describes a number of supports available to primary schools to support the arts curriculum. As described in the previous chapter, the primary arts curriculum is aimed at providing pupils with a broad experience of the arts during their primary school years. The revised curriculum for the arts has been welcomed by teachers, though it provides challenges, as teachers seek to ensure that all strands and strand units of the arts curriculum are experienced by their pupils. The Department of Education and Science, which has overall responsibility for curriculum matters, as advised by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, has provided some support to schools to enrich the curriculum in the arts through their support of arts organizations and the provision of professional development opportunities for teachers, though minimal. However, as outlined in The Report of the Special Committee on The Arts and Education, *Points of Alignment*, the Department has no dedicated budget for arts-in-education, which is seen as a significant constraint (Arts Council, 2007).

The Arts Council and the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism have a different but complementary remit of promoting the arts for all citizens, including citizens of school-going age. Both government departments and the Arts Council share a common concern for best practice in the domain of arts-in-education work. Many of the supports for schools that are described in this chapter are funded either directly or indirectly by the Arts Council.

The Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS)

The Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) subsumes and develops the work of the former Primary Curriculum Support Service (PCSP) and School Development Planning Support (SDPS). It provides professional development support to primary schools and is funded by the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Science.

The core work of PPDS advisors is located in schools where they support individual teachers, groups of teachers and whole staffs in implementation of the Primary School Curriculum and in organisational and development planning.

- *In-class modelling*

In-class modelling, which may be a single lesson or a series of lessons, is an integral feature of the in-class support offered by the PPDS. Modelling comprises a series of stages that include dialogue with teachers before and after the modelled session. The PPDS advisor meets with the teacher to identify his or her needs. For example, in music the teacher may want support in the ‘composing’ strand. The advisor discusses why this strand is posing difficulty and what experience of music the class have had to date so that he or she can plan a lesson or series of lessons based on this information. During the post-modelling dialogue the

teacher has an opportunity to discuss how he or she might develop the lesson himself or herself or how he or she might integrate it with other areas of the curriculum.

- *facilitating the school planning day /staff meeting/post-holders meeting*

Advisors can assist schools in facilitating, structuring and managing the planning day so that the development planning process is used to address the school's priorities.

A school may wish to review drama in the school, for example. This review will help identify strengths as well as weaknesses in relation to the implementation of the music curriculum in the school. From this review decisions can be made as to how the strengths can be best utilised and how identified weaknesses will be addressed. This may result in some teachers deciding that they would benefit from in-class modelling to develop their own confidence or attend a music course in the local education centre. This will all inform the school plan in drama.

As schools may only close for one day for the purposes of school development planning, and an advisor may not be available to facilitate a school on their chosen day, advisors may also be available to facilitate a staff or in-school management meeting.

- *School clusters*

Schools within a region may cluster to access the support of an advisor. This is particularly useful for smaller schools that have similar needs. It allows for dialogue and sharing of expertise and ideas between teachers. The focus of support is agreed between the participating schools and the PPDS advisors in advance.

- *After school workshops and courses*

After schools workshops and courses can be provided either in a school or in an Education Centre, in collaboration and co-operation with the Education Centre.

- *Teacher Professional Communities (TPCs)*

The PPDS works in conjunction with Dublin West Education Centre (DWEC) to create, develop and support communities of learners among primary teachers called Teacher Professional Communities (TPCs). The purpose of the TPC is to “enable the collective development of new knowledge, skills and competencies, new resources and new shared identities and motivation to work together for change” (Fullan).

A TPC may be initiated by a group of teachers who share an interest in a particular curricular area or who share a common challenge, for instance teaching in the infant classroom, language support teaching or teaching in the multi-class context.

- *PPDS website*

There are many materials and resources available on the PPDS website at www.pfds.ie covering all curricular and organisational areas. In addition, materials from the EAL and Child Protection seminars are available in addition to many publications.

The Arts Council

The Arts Council is both a funder of organisations which provide services such as theatre-in-education or recitals in schools, and a direct service provider itself. For many years, the Council operated schemes that it had initiated such as Writers-in-Schools and Artists-in-Residence-in-Schools, as well as a School Exhibitions programme. Lately, the Council has become more strategic, delegating some of its own school services to appropriate organisations and funding directly (or indirectly through its support of local authority arts programmes) an increasing range of arts-in-education projects.

The Arts Council supports the arts among young people in non-formal settings also. The term ‘children and young people’ is not synonymous with ‘pupils and students’. Children and young people are seen as citizens with cultural needs and entitlements, as individuals, as members of families and in communities. Therefore, the Arts Council supports youth arts in the community in addition to its central role in supporting the arts in the formal education sector.

Schools Exhibition Linkage Programme

In 1986, the Arts Council wrote to 20 Irish artists asking them to contribute to an exhibition on the theme of school. The Schools Show was followed by seven other touring exhibitions. These exhibitions are now part of a Schools’ Exhibition Linkage Programme, a project involving Education Centres and the Arts Council. The Education Centres provide a programme of arts activities to enable young people, teachers and the wider school community to engage with the artwork. They actively encourage visits by school groups and establish links with schools interested in hosting an exhibition.

Case Study - The Tokens Project

In January 2007, the Arts Council announced it was seeking applications from the ten Education Centres currently housing one of the Schools’ Exhibitions to develop a programme around their exhibition in collaboration with an Artist and school groups. The **Donegal Education Centre** applied for the funding with **Joanna Parkes** (Drama Facilitator) and **Joe Brennan** (Story Teller) to run a five week Arts Programme introducing the *Tokens* exhibition to 6th class pupils in Donegal, through a combined programme of drama and storytelling, with a view to enhancing access to the arts for pupils in isolated rural schools. The Arts Council awarded €7,940 in funding to Donegal Education Centre under its *Schools’ Exhibition Project Scheme* fund. This pilot scheme was open to the ten Education Centres hosting the Arts Council’s specially commissioned Schools’ Exhibitions. The scheme provides opportunities for schools to interact with contemporary Irish art in collaboration with one or more artists. The funding is aimed at developing a project that focuses on the exhibition.

The aims of the five week projects were to give the pupils an opportunity to

- Engage critically and creatively with the work of professional, contemporary artists
- Engage as witnesses and as practitioners in a multi-disciplinary arts process
- Experience the life-enhancing pleasure to be derived from high-quality arts experiences which stimulate their natural sense of wonder and curiosity
- Make connections between art, school, learning and their own lives and experiences.

The objectives of the project were for the pupils to

- Engage in a series of imaginative, explorative workshops with a focus on drama, story and creative writing
- Respond to and reflect on the sculptures in their own individual way and to participate in the whole group responses and interactions
- Reflect on their time in primary school and prepare to transfer to secondary school.

The Artists worked with four different groups of 6th class pupils - aged 11 to 12. There were approximately 80 pupils involved from 7 schools. All of the pupils came from small rural schools. Due to low numbers in some schools two of the groups consisted of pupils from several schools who came together to participate in the project. The pupils headed to the same secondary schools in September so an additional benefit of the project was that they had already made connections with each other before starting in their new schools.

This project was supported by the **Rural School's Support programme**, under the **DEIS programme**. Schools were located around **Carrick, Kilcar, Dunkineely and Glencolmille**. The School's Support co-ordinator, John Gillespie, was the link between the schools, the Education Centre and the artists on this particular project.

The Artists visited the schools for four weeks, bringing a different sculpture out to the schools each week. The sculptures were designed so that they could be easily transported and therefore be moved relatively easily from school to school. Each week the Artists designed a programme that included some drama activities, a storytelling activity and exercises which build up concentration skills through focusing on the senses. The classes were encouraged to work in a range of small groups and on a variety of activities each week. On the fifth and final week all the classes were invited to the Education Centre in Donegal town to view all eight sculptures and to find connections between themselves, the sculptures and the artists' philosophy and ideas about their piece. They were also encouraged to think about different types of intelligences and to explore different ways of being clever.

The Ark

The Ark, Europe's first custom-built Children's Cultural Centre, programmes, promotes and hosts high quality cultural work which is by children, for children and about children. It is a charitable organisation, founded on the principle that all children, as citizens, have the same cultural entitlements as adults.

The Ark manifests this belief by presenting programmes across the arts of the highest quality, in association with leading professionals. From classical to popular and traditional to cutting edge, The Ark is both setting standards and exploring new dimensions in children's arts provisioning.

The Ark's social policy is to be as inclusive as possible while working within available financial resources. The Ark has organized a number of projects for children who are particularly disadvantaged socio-economically.

The Ark has also undertaken large outreach initiatives, where staff members work intimately with children from disadvantaged communities as well as children in a variety of health care environments.

Artist in Schools Scheme (Local Authorities)

The Artist in Schools Scheme facilitates a professional artist to make a series of visits to a school in his/her local county, to work with students on a specific project. Projects can range across all art forms. Most local authorities run this scheme.

Writers in Schools Scheme (Poetry Ireland)

To empower the participant by facilitating a magical and memorable experience through the imaginative, emotional and intellectual energy and belief in language that the writer brings to the classroom.

Mission statement

Writers in Schools Scheme

The Writers in Schools Scheme part-funds visits by writers and storytellers to schools throughout the Republic of Ireland. There are over 250 writers and storytellers for schools to choose from on the Writers in Schools Web-Directory of Writers. It is one of the longest running arts-in-education programmes in Ireland. 2007 marked the 30th anniversary of the Scheme, run by Poetry Ireland and funded by the Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

There are two types of visits. The duration of the **A type** visit is 120 - 150 minutes. The **B type** visit consists of a writer or storyteller spending 300 minutes in a school. Visits can be divided into separate group sessions. An **A type** visit, for example, could consist of three 45 minute sessions with different class groups/ age levels. When a school selects a writer or storyteller they would like to invite from the WIS Web-Directory of Writers, contact is made to see if they are available. Once a date has been agreed between the school and the writer, the school completes an application form and sends it to the Writers in Schools office for funding approval.

INTO Professional Development Unit (PDU)

Getting to Grips with Drama is a series of 6 workshops to support teachers in using drama in the primary school classroom, exploring its use as a tool for expression, curriculum delivery and development, which was organized by the INTO Professional Development Unit (PDU) during the Autumn of 2009. The series was designed as a practical hands-on series of workshops allowing participants time and space to develop their own confidence in the area.

In addition, the PDU also organise a number of summer courses that deal with the Arts in Primary Schools – for example:

- Play to Learn: Story, Drama and Interaction across the Curriculum
- Visual Arts: Fun and Learning through Looking and Responding- in collaboration with Colaiste Mhuire, Marino

Ceol Ireland – Stage One Programme is run co-operatively by the PDU and Ceol Ireland, and consists of a 2 hour training session to train teachers in the activities, songs and games that appear in the *Ceol Stage One Programme* www.ceolireland.ie.

Music

Music has been very well supported by both funded and private outreach programmes in the last number of years.

One of the most renowned music programmes for Primary schools is the **National Children's Choir**. It has its roots in the European Year of Music (1985) when Sean Creamer, a music inspector in the Department of Education and Science decided to celebrate the event in a unique way. With the support of a number of teachers, a large group of 4th, 5th and 6th class children learned and performed a repertoire of songs in public. Since then more than 85,000 children have enjoyed the experience of singing with the National Children's Choir. The choir is now organised by a committee who compile and provide a repertoire in vocal score format and on teaching CDs, organise summer courses for teachers interested in learning the repertoire and organise local rehearsal schedules for clusters of schools around the country. An average of 8,000 children participate bi-annually. The repertoire is taught as part of the normal school music programme.

Music in the Classroom is another very successful national initiative. It was started in 1989 when RTE and the Irish Times joined with keen musical enthusiast Gearóid Grant, a musician and music teacher. Their vision was to introduce orchestral music to primary school children. The initial resource of 5 audio tapes and teacher's manual grew to encompass a series of concerts performed by the RTE National Symphony and Concert Orchestra. Today, 40,000 children aged 6 to 12 years from primary schools around the country attend these concerts every year. The release of an updated version of the teaching resource in CD format generated funds that allowed for the production of Music in the Classroom Magazine, which is now published twice yearly.

Heritage in the Schools is a Heritage Ireland's scheme administered by the INTO. This is a nationwide programme which offers a panel of heritage specialists to visit primary schools and work directly with the children. Schools in Galway can avail of a music programme called Archaeology and Traditional Music, Dance and Song. Simon O'Dwyer, the facilitator is Ireland's only specialist in the musical instruments of prehistory. The presentation begins with the earliest habitation and progresses through the ages with a series of stories and tunes that are played on appropriate instruments at given times. The instruments include stone and bone whistles, stone percussion, musical bow, animal horns, bodhrán, bronze horns, Celtic trumpas and Early Medieval horns. The story ends with the coming of St. Patrick and the beginning of history. Children are encouraged to participate and answer questions throughout. The number of children who attend a presentation may vary depending on the space available (approximately 50, preferably less). The presentation normally runs for an hour and a half. Since 2002, Ancient Music Ireland has visited more than a 1000 schools. The combination of story, music and imagery is an effective way to bring the ancient past to life and gives the children a sense of the passing of time and the evolution of people. This is particularly relevant with the emphasis placed on linkage and integration in the Primary School Curriculum.

The Arts Council fund many music initiatives for schools and local music groups through their Young People and Children Education (YPCE) scheme. The scheme tries to ensure that music is available to all irrespective of means, ability, geography, age or experience. Some of the funded musical programmes are:

Baboró: Leading annual International multi-arts festival, which programmes performances, outreach and workshops in theatre, dance, music, literature, opera, visual arts and puppetry, specifically for children and families. Baboró takes place every October in Galway city and county.

National Youth Orchestra of Ireland: NYOI aims to provide leadership and inspiration to the most talented young Irish musicians, enabling them to expand and extend their classical music education training and experience through national and international performance at the highest professional standards. Through management of the National Youth Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland, NYOI Camerata and the National Youth String Training Orchestra, through annual national auditions and developmental programmes as well as through nationwide performances and radio broadcasts NYOI aims to build up awareness, access and participation in its performing ensembles by talented young musicians across the island of Ireland.

The Irish Association of Youth Orchestras (IAYO) was set up in Ennis in April 1994. It was incorporated as IAYO Ltd. in 1998, and became a registered charity in 2001. Membership of the Association is open to all Youth Orchestras in Ireland, whether linked to a school, a school of music, a college or university, or to an independent or community-based organisation.

The Irish Association of Youth Orchestras is a voluntary, non-profit-making Association, and a registered charity, supported by members fees and the generous donations of friends. IAYO is grant-aided by the Arts Council. IAYO is a member of the European Association of Youth Orchestras, The National Association of Youth Orchestras (UK), The Forum for Music in Ireland, Jeunesses Musicales Ireland, and Feis Ceoil. One of the main aims of IAYO is to campaign at national level for improvements in access to music training and participation for all young people.

The Liffey Valley Orchestra is a member of IAWO. It was founded originally by Claire Condrón in her own home as a Recorder Group and is self funded by members' fees and some local fundraising. West Dublin is its catchment area and it caters for musicians from 8 year old to 60 year old. The group provides access to instruments through the Instrument Bank and this promotes the creation of a well balanced orchestra. They have a tutoring system where musicians (grade 7/8 standard) who have progressed through the orchestra tutor new members. The orchestra performs publicly at Christmas and in the summer at the Aula Maxima, NUI, Maynooth. They also participate in the Fiddlers Green Festival in Rostrevor where, as part of their performance, they invite local musicians to join with them.

Simply Music is a Percussion Performance Workshop, which incorporates Interactive Technology and Live Music Performance. It has been specifically designed to support the music curriculum for primary level for both students and teachers and is supported by The Arts Council of Ireland. Simply Music has designed a series of 15 x 2 day workshops within each school, which incorporates a professional musician working within the school context alongside the workshop groups.

Simply Drums: a Percussion Performance Workshop, which incorporates Interactive Technology and Live Music Performance. Workshop models include: arts-in-education workshops (in school), outreach programmes (arts organisations) and professional

development programmes for teachers approved by the Department of Education & Science and The National Concert Hall. The workshops are developed in line with the stages of cognitive development of children within the primary curriculum. They are broken into the learning stages outlined in the primary music curriculum. The cognitive content, both in terms of the performance aspects of the workshop and the level of interactivity is suited to the abilities of the relevant age group.

The workshops use a combination of technology and performance with a range of percussion instrumentation (including Boomwhackers, on and off screen) and also development of vocal and rhythmic development elements (e.g. action songs). Additionally, within the sessions, Simply Music introduces different forms of musical notation and rhythmic structures as per the music curriculum and which again are suited to the specific age range participating in the workshop.

The workshop uses technology to allow the students to gain confidence in their performance and to learn how to hold and play each instrument correctly. They learn to work independently with their instrument and are supported by the technology, which plays their melodic or rhythmic line in the background to support them and maintain continuity in the performance.

The musicians work with the students to develop their confidence and skills and each child retains through rote a series of rhythmic/melodic patterns which in turn develop into a musical piece which is performed live within the school on the final day of the workshop. The musicians continue to support and create innovative material as the workshop progresses and encourage musical innovation from the children to be incorporated into the final performance.

The outcomes of the workshop provide the students with an increased knowledge of percussion instrumentation, rhythmic and vocal development and musical experience through participation in live performance with teachers and other class groups.

Aspiro (Formerly Carlow Young Artists Choir) offers a musical education of the highest standards through the medium of choral music. Carlow native Mary Amond O'Brien formed Aspiro in September 1997 with the aim of facilitating young people to discover, nurture and experience the artist 'within'. As a world class choral organisation, Aspiro promotes, develops and achieves self-growth and self-enjoyment in young people by educating a musicianship that lasts throughout and beyond their schooling. Believing in the innate musical potential of all young people, no auditions are required for membership – a unique feature of this hugely successful young choir. Aspiro currently has four ensembles - Junior, Intermediate (girls), Male Voice Squad and Senior. They are currently supported by The Arts Council and Carlow Local Authorities. Music Network, in association with the Arts Council also supported the choir through the Music Capital Scheme 2008.

Other local authorities also offer support in the music area. **Kildare County Council's Arts Service** with Herbert Lodge Arts Centre coordinate a music outreach programme. The programme provides quality arts experience for children in their school environment, while also promoting professional musicians living locally. The County Arts Service has established an Instrument Bank which offers instruments on loan to schools involved in the programme. Many of the children participating in this programme live in rural areas where there may be few opportunities to perform. Providing children with the opportunity to

perform publicly is an important strand of the music outreach programme. To this end the Tzipora Children's Music Festival was established. Over 800 children from as many as 23 schools encompassing a broad range of music and song – chamber, percussion, woodwind, traditional and choral – showcase their work annually in Goff's Sales Arena.

Mayo County Council in conjunction with the Arts Council and the National Concert Hall's Learn and Explore Programme provides workshops for primary schools working with the Whistleblast Quartet.

The National Concert Hall provides a variety of musical events throughout the academic year for primary school pupils as well as family music programmes. They also provide professional development courses for teachers during the summer months. Their "Learn and Explore" section of their website invites schools to put their name on their mailing list. **Their main school project is "Up the Tempo"**. Sponsored by Ulster Bank, the project is aimed at bringing music to primary school children around the country. Each residency benefits from a series of music workshops facilitated by musicians from the National Concert Hall Learn & Explore Programme. Children take part in a series of fun and interactive workshops during each residency. This project partners with the Ulster Orchestra who run the 'Up the Tempo' project in Northern Ireland.

Another NCH music initiative for children is the annual staging of Howard Blake's quintessentially Christmas masterpiece '**The Snowman Movie – Live Concert**'. The Family Christmas special features the animated movie on big screen accompanied by live orchestra. Primary schools are encouraged to participate in the accompanying Art Competition the winning entry of which will be used as the front cover design of the concert programme for the Christmas show.

Music in the Docklands provides unique opportunities for school pupils to celebrate in music and song. It is sponsored by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority and the Education and Outreach Programme at the National Concert Hall. The project gives children an opportunity to work with music, musical instruments and professional musicians of the highest international standards. The musicians work closely with the children and teachers to help them compose their own music over a four week interactive music composition project. Each year four schools within the Docklands area participate. The project culminates in a 40 minute performance in NCH in front of families and friends.

Most **Education Centres** have been active in promoting the arts through the administration of courses for teachers. The Athlone Education centre was the first centre to get involved with the Samba drumming kits, and now many centres have purchased these kits and will lend them to schools for a few weeks. The plan is to provide a little training through workshops at the centres.

Exchange House Travellers Service operates an After School Programme for 8 – 12 year olds. The programme has been running in Labre Park, Ballyfermot since 2001 and supports the children in their primary education by providing homework assistance, literacy support, computer skills and curriculum appropriate activities balanced with personal development activities such as art and craft, music and dance, games and projects and trips. The music programme has been run by CEOL and the children learn to read music, understand rhythm and sing together. The introduction of musical instruments proved so popular that a CEOL programme for learning the tin whistle was started.

Drama

An Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta

The Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta is an annual weeklong drama competition run by An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta. Founded in 1934 with the aim of promoting dramaíocht trí mhéan na Gaeilge, and participation therein, amongst school children of all ages, An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta oversees the running and organisation of the various local and regional drama festivals which precede the weeklong All Ireland festival. The local festivals are open to all Primary and Secondary Schools as well as Youth Clubs and Organisations. The competition is divided into various categories (Comórtas 1 right up to Comórtas18) based on age levels and school sizes. For instance, Comórtas 1 caters for children up to and including 2nd class from Primary Schools with 3 teachers or less. Comórtas 6 caters for 5th or 6th class pupils from a Primary School with between 4 and 7 teachers. Comórtas 10, 11 and 12 are for Second Level schools while Comórtas 13, 14, 15 and 16 are for Ceoldramaí (Musicals). Prizes are presented in each Comórtas but the true emphasis is on participation and enjoyment. The Cumann is continually seeking to improve and expand and have in recent years added a new competition, Comórtas 18, especially for children from Infant Classes. The rules are few and simple. A drama must not run longer than 30 minutes. It must be in Irish. Any number of children can participate and the trend in recent years, given the emphasis on participation, seems to be that whole class groups are performing. Competitions start at the local (usually County) level with one or two day festivals depending on the number of entries. These are usually held in late February or early March.

Dramas which reach a sufficiently high standard at the local festivals are then nominated to progress to the regional (Provincial) finals. The Provincial Finals are also usually no longer than two day events. Each Province then nominates a number of dramas (usually about 10 or 11) to progress to the All Ireland Finals or "An Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta". These were for many years held in Saint Patrick's College of Education in Drumcondra but the venue in recent times has been "An tIonad Ealaíne, an Muileann gCearr". These are usually run over a period of 5 days with the results being announced on the evening of the Final Day. Prizes are given in all 18 competitions as well as such special prizes as, "Best Primary School", "Best Secondary School", "Best Production of a newly written play" and the coveted "Best overall performance" or "Scothléiriú na Féile". The adjudicator is also free to award a selection of "Adjudicator's Awards" in such areas as costume, music, set etc.

Taking part in an Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta does, however, entail a fair amount of work for the teacher (or group of teachers) involved. The first problem to be overcome is finding a suitable drama for the class (or group) to perform. This can be a difficult enough task especially if a "whole class" play is chosen. An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta has sought to address this problem in recent years and have a link on their website (www.scoildramaiocht.ie) entitled "Foinsí Drámaí do Pháistí". Many teachers, however, choose to write new plays for their classes to perform, a decision which adds considerably to the workload involved. With the start of rehearsals come other considerations, such as the timing of rehearsal which can take up considerable amounts of time. Many schools choose to involve parents in the process, perhaps with costume preparation or set construction. Another consideration is the organisation and cost of transport to and from the various festivals. However, participation in an Féile Náisiúnta Scoildrámaíochta is without a doubt a rewarding experience for any child and a highpoint in their school years which many fondly recall long after they have left school, and is deemed by teachers to be well worth the effort.

Cork Arts Circle - A 'School for Teacher' in the Arts

Cork Education Support Centre hosts the Cork Arts Circle which is an arts learning community, facilitated by Helen Hallissey, for primary teachers. The focus of the work is to enhance the child's learning in the classroom. Monthly evening workshops - *Meitheal* - are organised for a community of primary school teachers who seek to revitalise their teaching in and through the integrated arts. Each *Meitheal* has music, drama, visual arts and IT inputs based on a specific theme for the workshop. Themes, to date, have included Spring, Snakes, The Potato, Africa, The Celts, Puppets, Winnie the Witch. Fun and social enjoyment are key elements in the *Meitheal*.

The *Meitheal* is based on the notion of the Celtic gathering of revered artists, storytellers and teachers. This creative capacity, they believe, is deep inside the psyche of the Irish teacher and student. Those attending the *Meitheal* seek to develop their own creativity by pooling their own practical ideas and upskilling in Drama. Teachers are provided with resources and skills to realise the 1999 Drama Curriculum objectives. It is an integrated arts approach with Three Circle participants, Mary Manning, Marian O'Callaghan and Helen Hallissey, who were honoured by being accepted to speak and present a *Meitheal* based on "The Fields of Athenry" at an international Drama Conference in Sydney, Australia in July 2009.

Concluding Comment

This chapter has included a number of programmes and projects that aim to support schools with the arts curriculum. Some are state-funded programmes, while others are sponsored programmes offering support to schools either free of charge or at minimal cost. Others operate on a more commercial basis. There are many other organisations not included here that offer support, either directly to schools or for pupils outside school hours, such as Walton's School of Music, Ostinato and The Wicklow School of Music and Drama. Teachers welcome support from a variety of organizations in enhancing children's experience of and exposure to the arts. However, no matter how valuable such external support can be for teachers, it is still necessary to ensure that sufficient materials and resources are provided directly to schools to support the arts curriculum. In addition, professional development opportunities need to be available to teachers to enable them to enhance their own knowledge and skills in the area of the arts in education.

Chapter Five

Creativity and the Arts in the Primary School

Results of INTO Survey - 2009

Introduction

In order to obtain a current picture of the views and practices of teachers in relation to *Arts in the Primary School*, the Education Committee of the INTO designed and circulated a questionnaire to 1,000 primary teachers selected on a random basis. A total of 209 questionnaires, a response rate of 21%, were returned. The questionnaire included a section on the visual arts, music and drama, in addition to some general questions about arts policy and practice within schools. Responses have been rounded to the nearest percentage.

Profile of Respondents

The overall majority of respondents (93%) were female; 7% of respondents were male. Over a quarter of all respondents had less than 10 years teaching experience; 17% had over 30 years teaching experience (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: *Length of experience of respondents*

<i>Number of Years Teaching</i>	<i>Percentage of respondents</i>
<= 10	47%
11-20	16%
21-30	21%
31+	17%
Total	100.0

In relation to the location of the schools, 16% of respondents taught in city schools, 22% taught in suburban schools, 27% taught in town schools and 35% taught in rural schools. The vast majority of schools (76%) were mixed. In total, 28% of schools were designated disadvantaged with 12% in DEIS Band 1, 10% in DEIS Band 2 and 6% designated as rural DEIS schools. Of the schools surveyed, 3% taught through the medium of Irish.

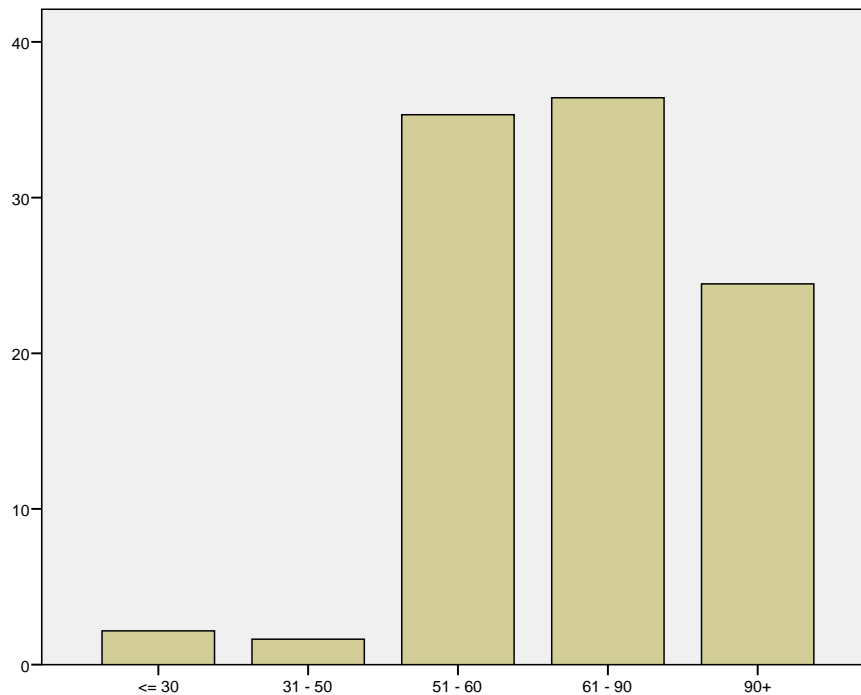
The average class size of respondents in the survey was 24 pupils per class. However, the number of pupils in each class ranged from less than 10 up to 36, with 18% of respondents having 30 pupils or more in their class. Almost 40% of respondents stated that they had an SNA working with their class.

VISUAL ARTS

Time Allocation

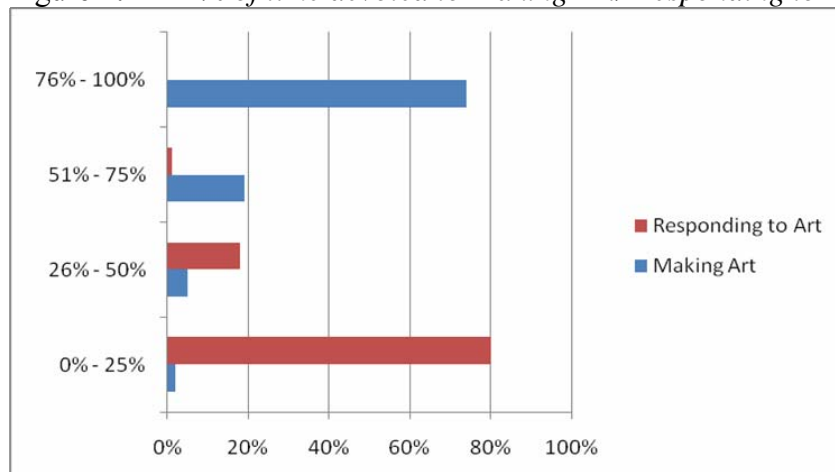
A little over a third of class teachers who responded allocated an hour to Visual Arts per week while about the same number allocate between an hour and an hour and a half. Significantly, about a quarter of respondents cited spending in excess of an hour and a half per week with the visual arts.

Figure 1: *Time allocated to visual arts per week (minutes)*



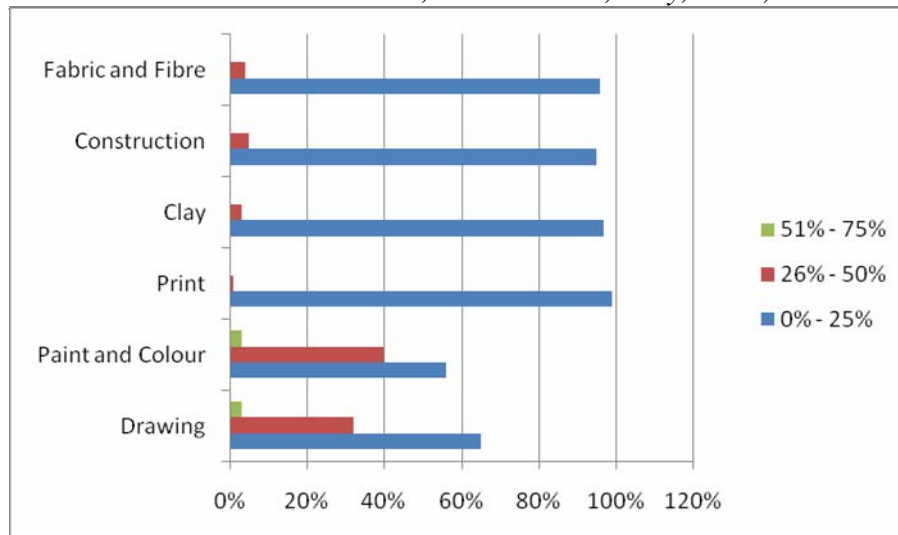
Teachers appear to spend far more time on *Making Art* rather than on *Responding to Art*. Almost all of the respondents devoted more than half of their time to *Making Art* with three quarters of them devoting all of their time to it. As many as 99% allocate less than half their time to *Responding to Art* with 80% of them claiming to spend 25% or less of their time allocation on *Responding to Art*.

Figure 2: *% of time devoted to Making Art/ Responding to Art*



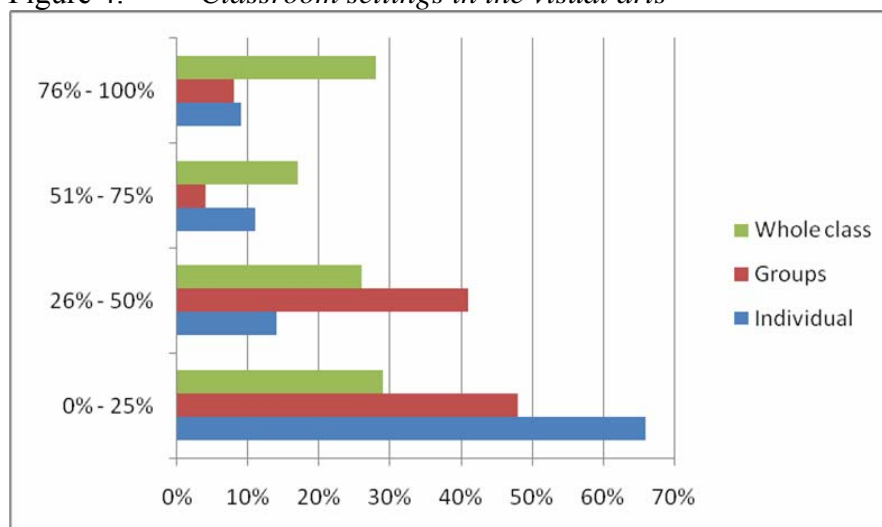
The strand units *Paint and Colour* and *Drawing* seemed to dominate the visual arts programme. A third of respondents spend more than a fifth of their allocated in the visual arts to these two strands, with a further 3% spending up to three quarters of their time on these two strand units. This contrasts with the fact that most respondents claim to devote less than a quarter of their time to *Fabric and Fibre*, *Construction*, *Clay* and *Print*. Three quarters of respondents (77%) indicated that they managed to teach all strands of the visual arts programme over the course of a school year.

Figure 3: % of Visual Arts programme (making & responding) devoted to: *Fabric and Fibre*, *Construction*, *Clay*, *Print*, *Paint and Colour* and *Drawing*



Whole class teaching seemed to be the most popular setting in the visual arts with nearly 50% of the respondents spending more than half of their time in this setting. More time was spent in *group* settings than in *individual* settings. About 48% of respondents spent up to a quarter of their time and 41% between a quarter and a half of their time in group settings. Whereas as many as 66% of respondents spend up to a quarter of their time and only 14% between a quarter and a half of their time in *individual* settings.

Figure 4: Classroom settings in the visual arts

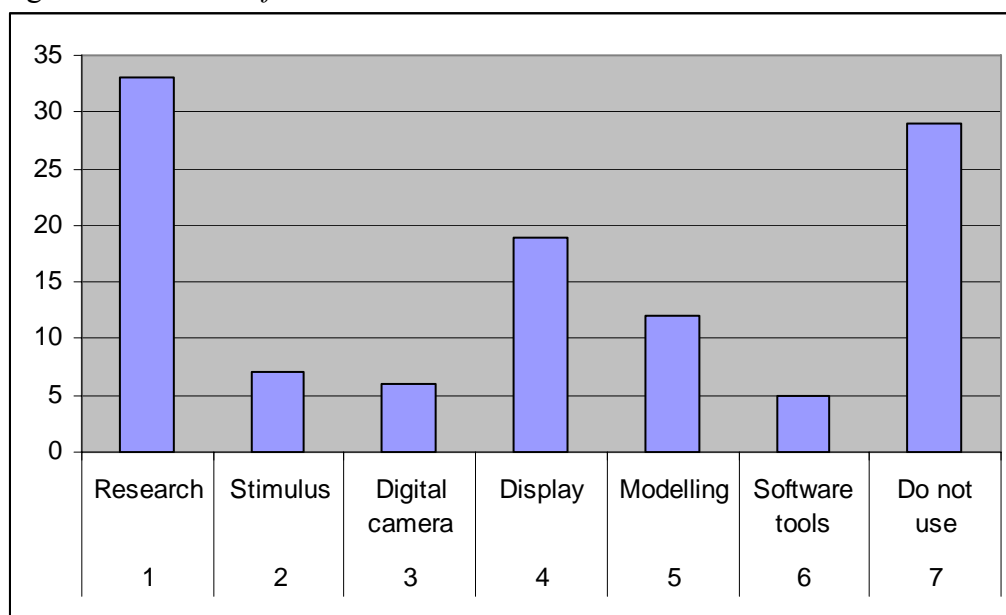


ICT in Visual Arts

In relation to ICT, nearly 65% of those who responded to this question used ICT primarily for researching and presenting works to be used as a stimulus in lessons. However, somewhat over 20% indicated that they made no use of ICT (sometimes quoting inadequate facilities) and if this figure was added to the just over 10% who did not respond to the question, we might conclude that almost one third did not use ICT either at all or else to an insignificant degree. Also significant is the very small number of respondents who indicated that they used ICT to actually produce work in the classroom. In their comments, teachers stated that little information was available to help teachers select suitable software for classroom use; that there was a shortage of suitable visual arts software for the primary sector and that the varied types of ICT hardware available in schools tended to generate an equally varied selection of software.

When questioned about the obstacles to using ICT, just over 46% of respondents quoted lack of suitable equipment and /or software as the main obstacle. Approximately 14% mentioned class size, either on its own or in conjunction with poorly resourced classrooms. These concerns may be reinforced by the 15% who mentioned lack of time as a factor. Approximately 19% referred to their own lack of expertise as a major impediment to progress. However, very significantly only 2% of respondents stated a belief that ICT was not valuable at their level suggesting that the overwhelming majority would use ICT if properly resourced and trained.

Figure 5: *Use of ICT in the visual arts*



How do you use IT in the teaching of Visual Arts

Most respondents to the survey do not use IT at all in their teaching of visual arts. The limited IT facilities in schools were mentioned as a reason for this. One teacher who did use IT actually downloaded the material at home for school use. The following comments illustrate the real situation in schools in relation to the provision of ICT:

We have only one very slow computer.

We have no internet access in the classroom.

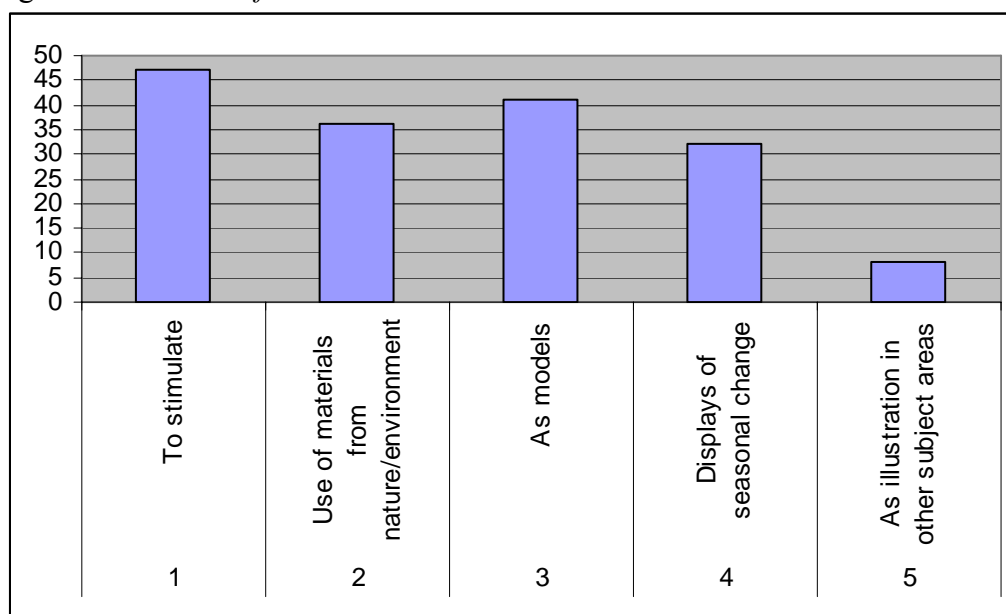
Some respondents were support teachers who do not teach visual arts. The majority of teachers questioned gave no reason for non-involvement of IT and the visual arts. Many teachers used the Internet to research information on artists, painting genres, different periods of art, works of art, crafts and lesson plans. UTube and Online galleries were mentioned as providing worthwhile access to Art Galleries and exhibitions. Use of the interactive whiteboard allowed teachers to model skills and techniques and this seemed to be particularly valuable in large classes. In addition, powerpoint, scanners, E beams and data projectors were used to make presentations but also to keep copies of the children’s work. The reasons for scanning student work was not explained but perhaps it was for portfolio/assessment; or it might be related to the fact that many competitions allow large pieces of work to be scanned and forwarded in digital format. Software programmes such as ‘Paint it@’, ‘Paint’, ‘I am an Artist’ and ‘Art Pad’ were all mentioned as suitable programmes. ‘Sparkle Box’ and ‘GFOogle Images’ were also mentioned as an online resource for displays (labelling and framing) and for accessing pictures for collage.

Visual Arts and the Environment

The environment is used extensively by respondents in the teaching of visual arts. Nature and seasonal change along with leaves, flowers, animals and birds were the most popular, including leaf rubbings, still life and friezes of the outside world. One teacher uses a viewfinder through the window. Many teachers use objects from the environment for printing or recycle them for construction. A number of respondents mentioned perspective, lines, colour, shadows, texture, shapes and patterns in relation to the environment. Buildings and bridges and the immediate classroom environment are used in the visual arts.

There was widespread acceptance that the natural local environment – school garden and hinterland, local amenities such as buildings, rivers, trees and shore - provided valuable opportunities back for pupils to handle objects and study shape, form, shade, colour, line and texture. Using items brought from either school excursions or children’s own travels (shells, twigs, bark) provided a wide selection of materials for construction, printing and other art projects (weaving grasses, collage).

Figure 6: *Use of the environment in visual arts*



Use of the Environment in teaching visual art

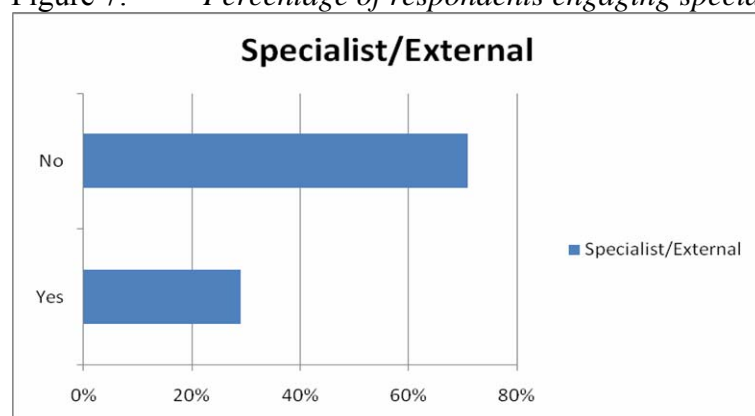
Many art classes availed of scenes, landscapes, children’s experiences and stories as models for drawing and sketching – many teachers mentioned use of a ‘viewfinder’ to isolate and focus on views. Images of ‘Still Life’ were also painted or drawn. Photography was another medium used to capture images from the environment. Seasonal changes and celebrations (Confirmation, First Communion, Christmas) provided opportunities for art in school to be displayed for the wider community (Parish Church, posters in shop windows, notices in school yard).

Some schools used an ‘Art Board’ or an ‘Art Corner’ in a prominent area of the school to display collections for Look and Respond. One teacher mentioned work left following ‘Artist in Residence’ programme and how it enhanced the environment.

Specialist Teachers

Slightly over a quarter of respondents (28%) cited engaging the services of specialists/external teachers for the visual arts. Specialists or external teachers were most often sought for *Clay*, followed by *Fabric and Fibre*, *Construction*, *Paint and Colour*, *Print*, *Drawing*, in that order. A few respondents mentioned *all strands*. External personnel are funded by County Councils, schools, parent associations, grants and a number of other different schemes. Only three respondents cited that the children pay and there is no charge for a small number of them. In the majority of cases teachers are involved in deciding which aspects are taught by specialists with a small number involving parents. While 9% of respondents stated that they did not know if the specialist teachers refer to the Whole School Plan/Primary Curriculum in planning their teaching 16% of them stated that they do and a small number of them stated that they do not.

Figure 7: *Percentage of respondents engaging specialist/external teachers*

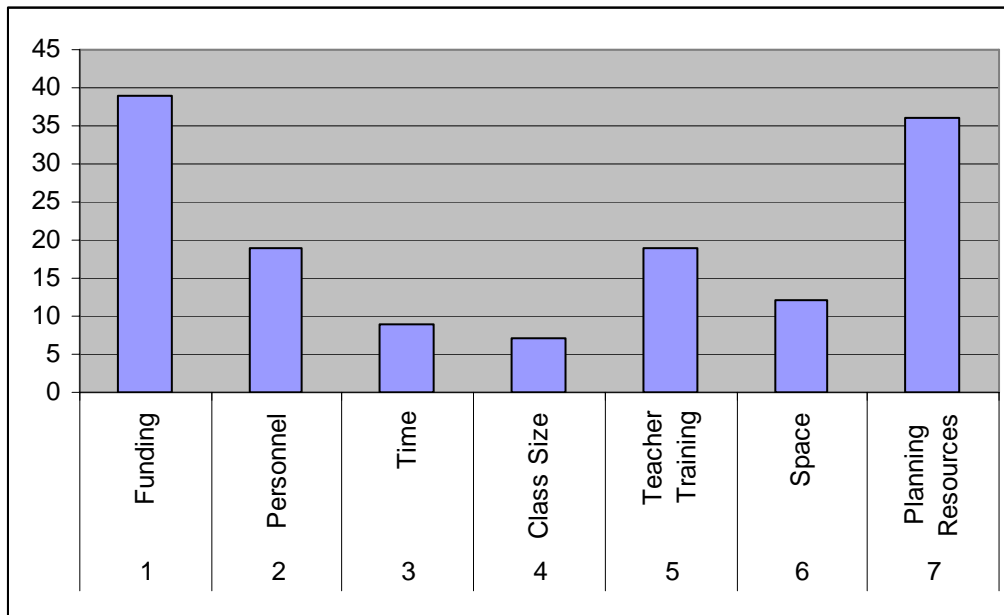


Engagement of the services of specialists/external teachers

Supporting the teaching of the visual arts

Respondents indicated a number of supports required to support the teaching of the visual arts in their schools, as illustrated in figure 8 below.

Figure 8: *Required supports to facilitate the teaching of visual arts*



Undoubtedly, the biggest barrier perceived by teachers to the delivery of a good visual arts programme was funding. Many children were provided with substandard materials, as illustrated in the following comments:

We use marla for pottery.

Air drying clay is too expensive.

I'm often unsure of the safety aspect of cheap materials we use.

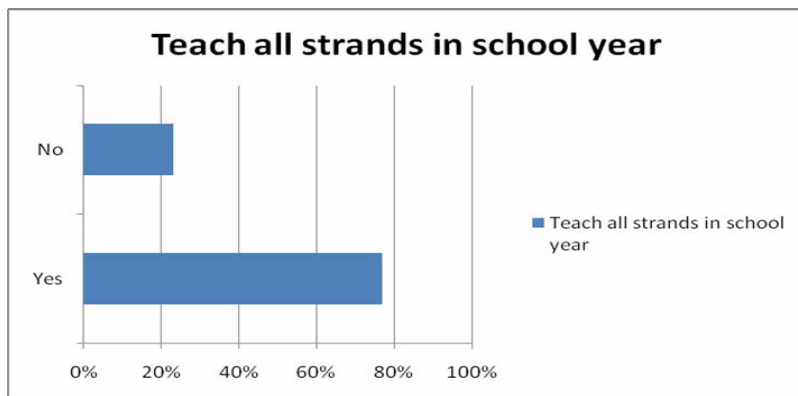
You cannot use IT if there is no IT equipment.

I have no sink in my class room.

Teachers in general were very enthusiastic about the teaching of visual arts and requested support in the forms of in-service, demonstration videos, assistance from personnel with particular expertise, in-class support from PPDS, more articles in Intouch and clearer Curriculum Guidelines. Teachers also mentioned the advantages of having a centralised 'Art Room' where equipment could be stored, materials could be prepared in advance and cleaning up could be left till later. Size of class and the need for 'extra hands' (especially in the infant rooms) impinged on the delivery of a good visual arts programme. This could certainly be linked to lack of funding in education in general.

A little over one fifth of those who responded claimed that they do not manage to teach all strands of visual arts in the course of the school year.

Figure 9: *Strands of visual arts*

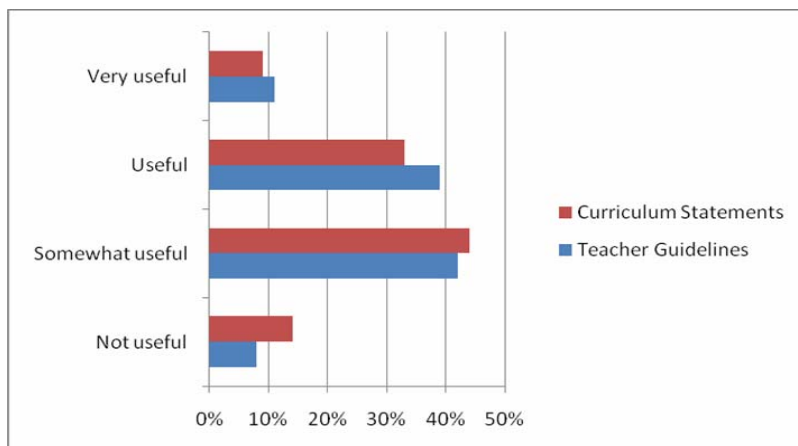


Teach all strands of Visual Arts in the course of the school year

Construction, Fabric and Fibre, Clay and Print were cited as the strands most difficult to teach. Among the reasons given were lack of ideas, resources, materials, time, space, expertise and competence. A number of respondents felt that these strands took a lot of time in preparation. Others described them as “very messy”. Many infant teachers claimed that they were difficult to organise with very young children.

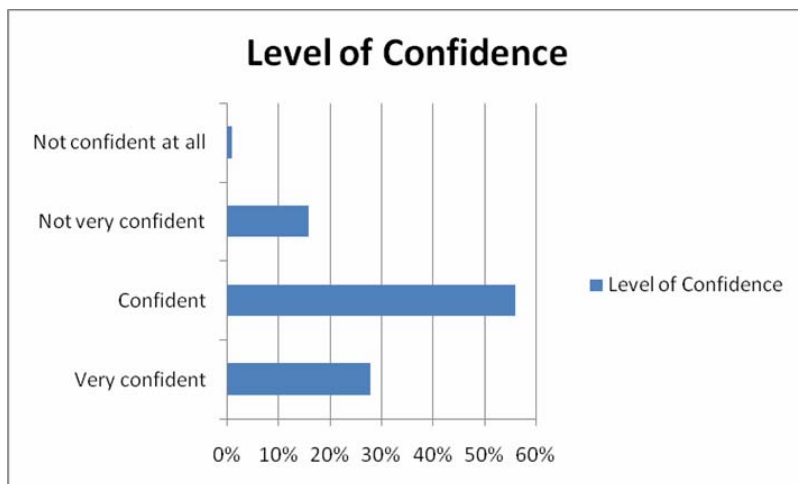
More than 75% of respondents rated the *Curriculum Statements* and *Teacher Guidelines* to be *useful/somewhat useful* with the remaining rating them either *very useful* or *not useful*.

Figure 10: *Usefulness of the content of the curriculum statements and teacher guidelines in supporting teaching?*



Nearly a fifth of respondents claimed that they were *not very confident* or *not confident at all* in teaching visual arts.

Figure 11: *Level of confidence in teaching visual arts.*



MUSIC

More than half the class teachers (53%) allocated an hour to music each week. Just under one quarter (22%) allocated less than an hour, while the remainder allocated more than an hour per week to music.

Figure 12: *Time allocated to the teaching of music per week*

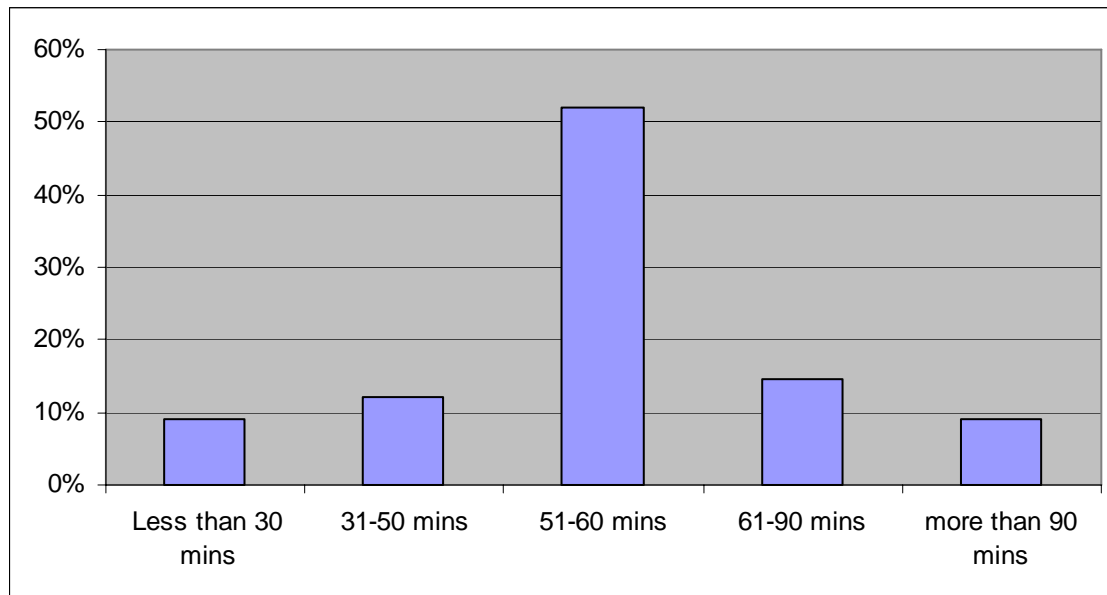
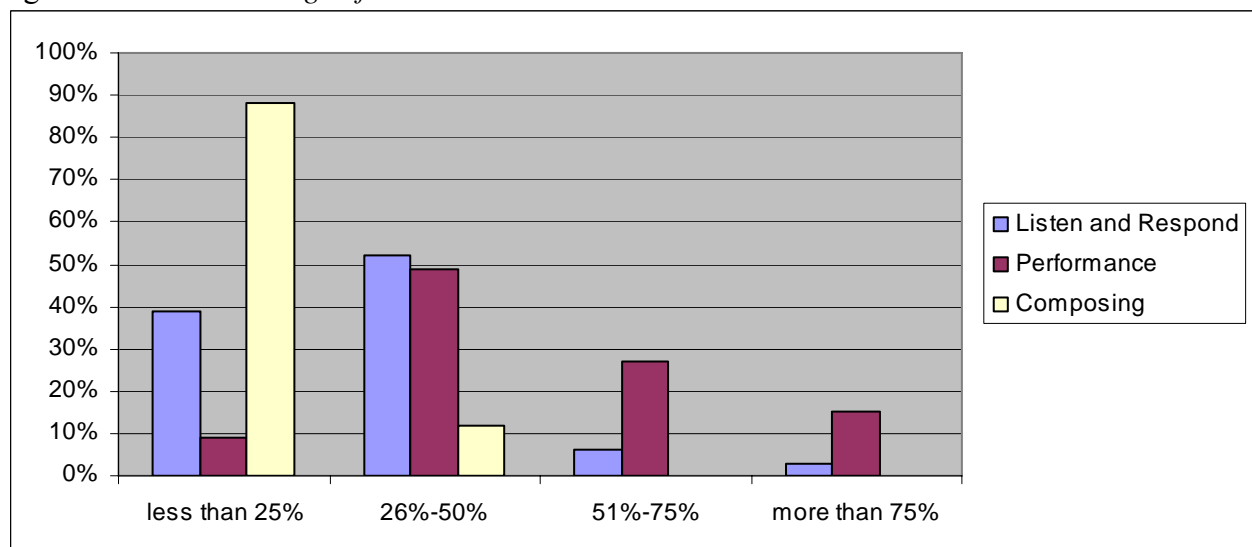


Figure 13: *Percentage of time allocated to the various strands*

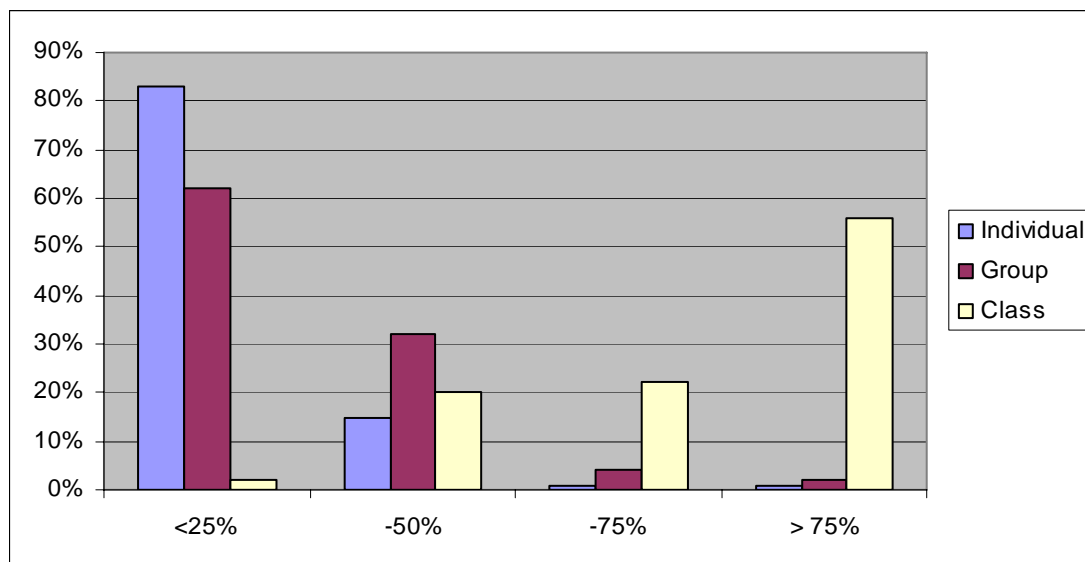


5.2 Allocation of time to various strands of the music curriculum

Composing was certainly perceived by the majority of teachers to be the most difficult aspect of the music curriculum. Most time was devoted to performance: performance (choral and instrumental) has always been part of the curriculum and resources are available in most school to support teachers who may not be skilled musicians/singers e.g. CD players with a

wide range of CDs of suitable material for each class. The revised curriculum may have introduced new aspects of music teaching but not all teachers are taking it on board.

Figure 14: *Class settings for the teaching of music*



Another aspect of the revised curriculum was explored in questioning the teachers on classroom settings. Most teachers taught the whole class rather than groups or individuals. However, because there was no query about differentiation, it is impossible to ascertain if the large numbers taught in ‘whole class’ settings have music lessons differentiated. ‘Whole class’ teaching is therefore no reflection on the suitability of the approach.

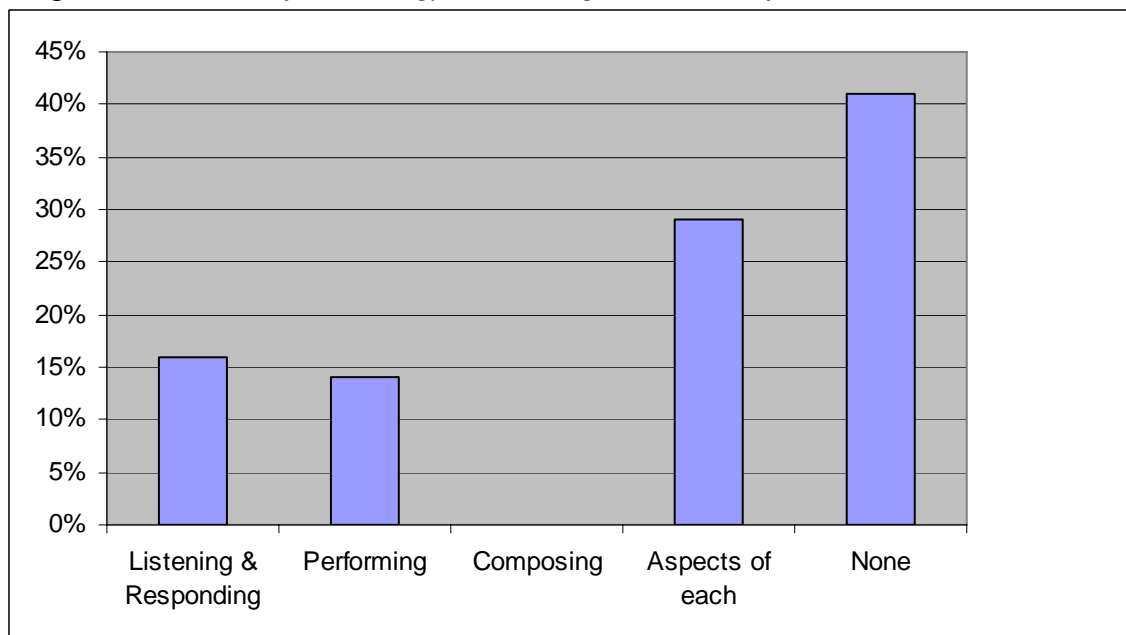
ICT in the teaching of Music

A majority of respondents answered positively on their use of ICT in the teaching of the music curriculum. Teachers used technology for a variety of purposes:

- to download lyrics and music of songs;
- to record performances (software);
- to provide experiences of using musical instruments (interactive whiteboard software);
- to access information on the history of music and various composers;
- to access lesson plans or ideas for lessons;
-

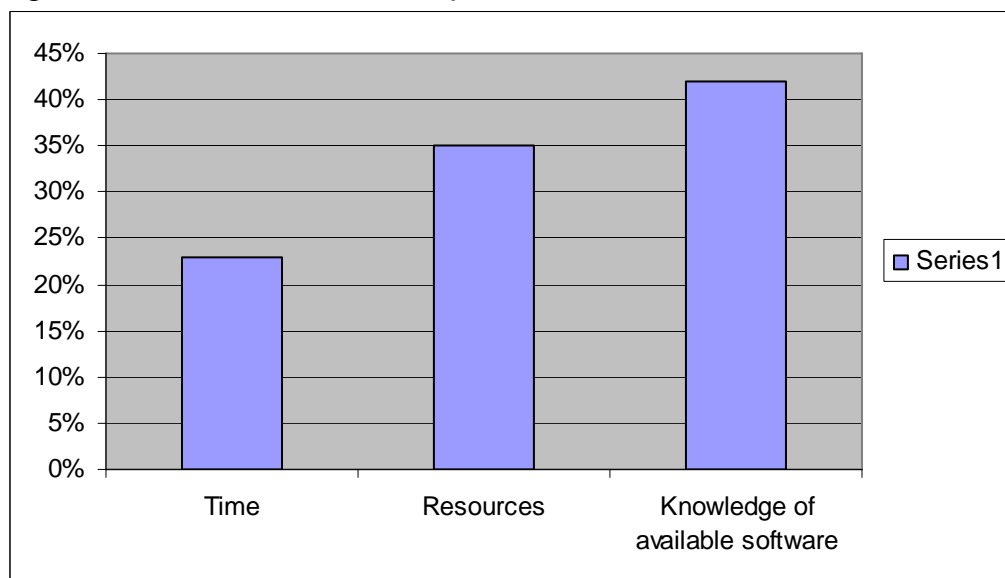
However nobody specifically mentioned its use in the area of Composing. A range of software was named as being compatible with the music programme: Van Basco, Musician, Thinking Things, Smart Board software and Audacity. However the Internet featured as the most used resource.

Figure 15: *Use of technology in teaching the strands of the music curriculum*



For those who did not use ICT in the teaching of music, the greatest barrier was accessing information on available and relevant software. Suitable hardware also caused problems. Schools have very few computers; many are old and not compatible with modern software. One teacher mentioned that their computer had no sound card; another reported that there were no speakers.

Figure 16: *Barriers to the use of ICT*



Music and the Environment

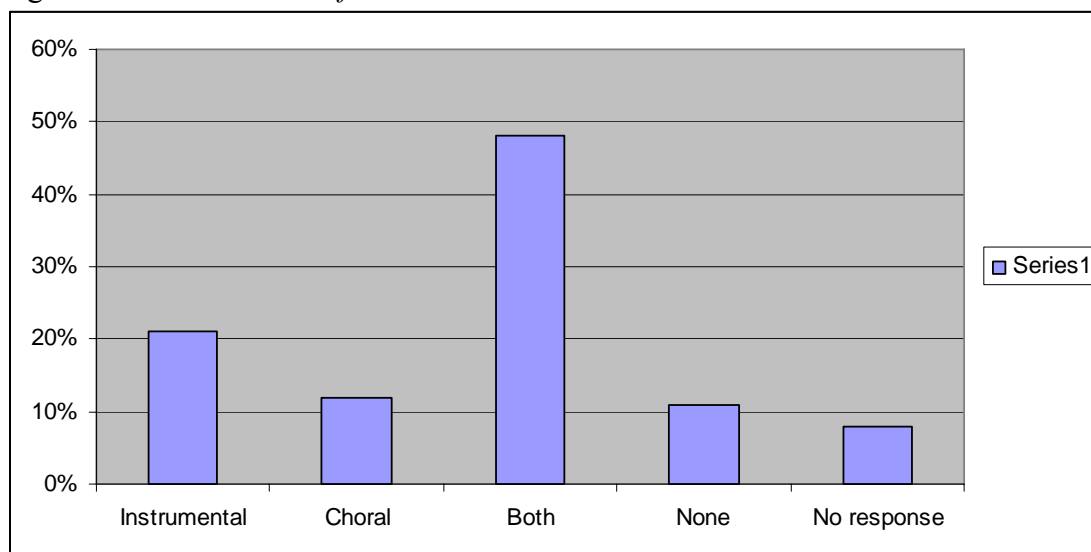
There was a varied understanding of using the environment in the teaching of music. Some teachers understood ‘using the environment’ to mean providing music for local or national events such as Concerts, Sacraments and Seachtain na Gaeilge. Most, however, used sounds

from nature – birds, weather, wind - and sounds of the indoor environment – clocks, taps - to provide stimulus to compose music or provide models to be replicated.

Specialist Teachers

A large number of schools (49%) engaged the services of a specialist to teach some aspect of music. Most of these teachers referred to the Whole School Plan (51%) however, a large number (15%) were not influenced at all by the school planning documents. The fact that in 35% of cases no one knew whether the specialist referred to the plan or not would be a cause of concern.

Figure 17: *Provision of instrumental/choral tuition*



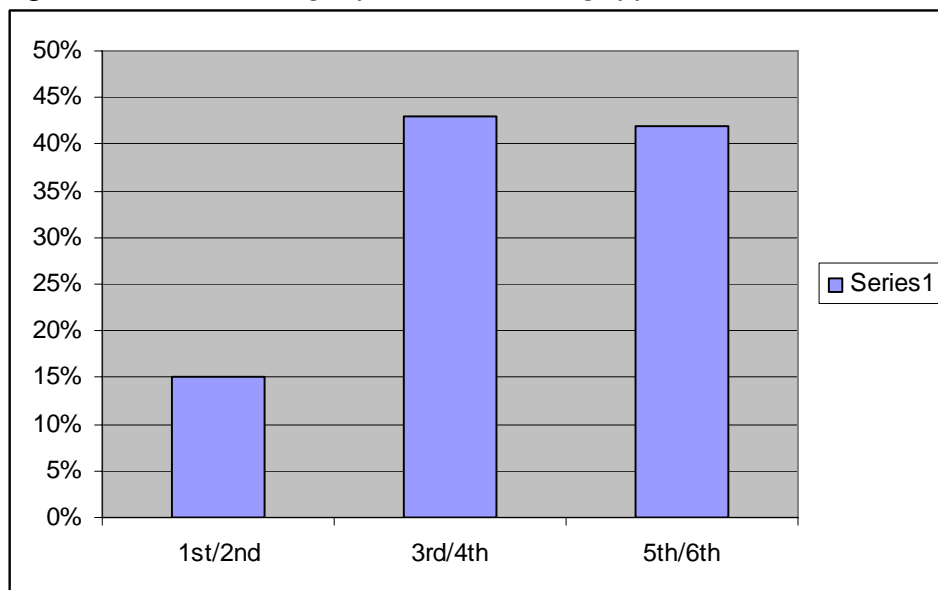
The provision of instrumental and/or choral tuition in the respondents' schools was high (81%), most of it taking place within school hours (65%). A further 31% of respondents indicated that instrumental and/or choral tuition took place both during and after school hours. Only 4% indicated that such tuition took place after school hours only.

In 77% of the respondents' schools tuition during school hours was provided by staff. Fewer staff was involved with the delivery of tuition outside school hours (55%). External personnel are involved in providing in-school tuition according to 23% of respondents and in after-school tuition according to 45% of respondents.

In the case of tuition during school hours, such tuition is paid for in 29% of cases. In the cases where there is payment, school funds are used to pay 20% of the time with parents wholly or partially paying for the remainder. In the case of tuition after school hours, 50% of such tuition was paid for. There was no information on where funding came from to support tuition after school hours or whether it was provided voluntarily. In the cases where payment was expected it was almost all paid for parents.

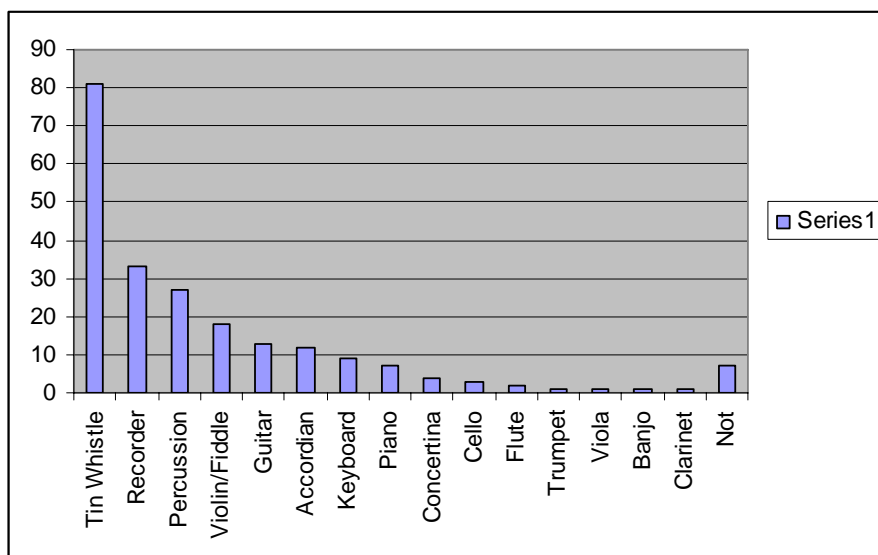
In 55% of cases all children participate in tuition during school hours, whereas only in 2% of cases do all children participate in tuition outside school hours. If all children are not involved it is because in some cases the tuition is focussed on particular class groups, with the majority of involvement in 3rd – 6th classes.

Figure 18: *Percentage of children availing of free tuition*



While very rare, there were occasions of children’s involvement being based on their talent and children were auditioned before allowing participation. Usually, however, involvement was based on children’s interest and their involvement was voluntary. In the case of tuition outside school hours, involvement was based on ‘interest’ and choice as might be expected with any out of school activities

Figure 19: *Types of instruments that children learn to play (in-school tuition)*



Tuition in a wide range of instruments was reported, with Tin Whistles, Recorders and Percussion being most popular. However it was interesting that there was tuition available in quite specialised instruments and most schools offered tuition in more than one instrument. In the case of tuition outside school hours, the range of instruments was almost the same; although drums accounted for most of the percussion and there was a slight increase in the number of more specialised instruments.

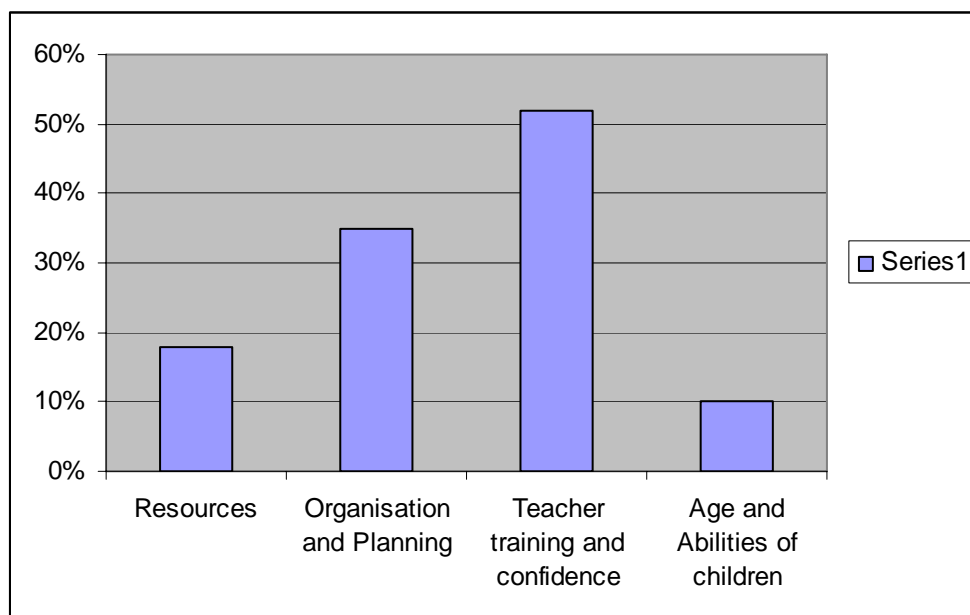
Instruments in School

The vast majority of the schools surveyed (93%) had instruments for the children to use. Almost every school had percussion instruments, many of them listing a wide selection – shakers, triangles, tambourines, a variety of bells and chimes. Some schools referred to the recommended list of percussion instruments in the curriculum. There was also an availability of recorders and tin whistles (‘for those who forget their own instrument’). An interest in traditional music was evident with some schools having a range of traditional instruments – accordion, concertinas, fiddles, flutes, bodhráns and button accordions. Pianos, keyboard and guitars also featured in many schools.

Supporting the teaching of Music

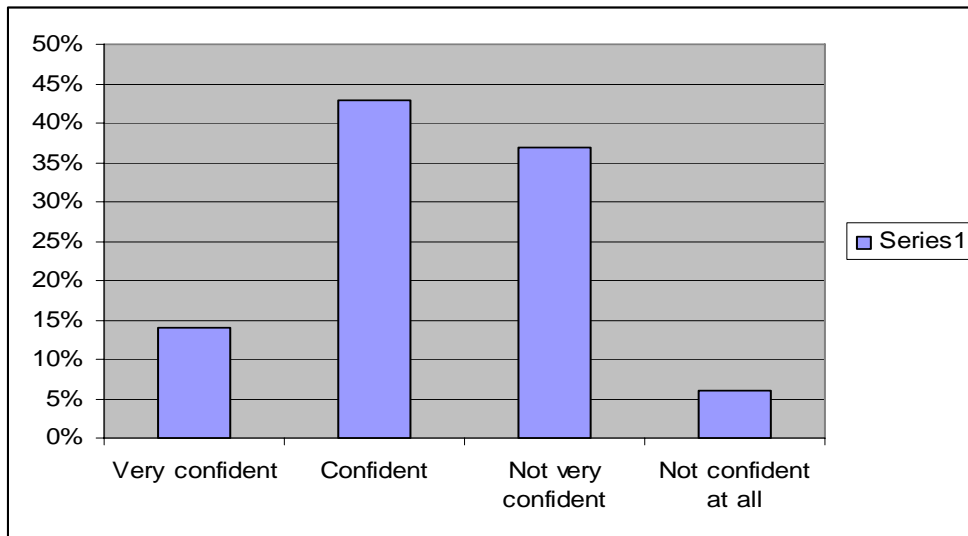
Class size, space in classrooms and time constraints were mentioned as contributing to difficulties with planning and organization for the music curriculum. Shortage of resources, particularly instruments, books and knowledgeable personnel also interfered with the teaching of the music programme. The age and abilities of the children could be linked to the other factors – without adequate resources and confident teachers, the curriculum could be seen to be too broad and demanding. Teachers particularly required focussed resources – CDs, song books, more age focussed guidelines, flexibility of timetable to allow skilled teachers to share/contribute expertise, were all seen as requirements to improve delivery of a wide music curriculum.

Figure 20: *Issues in teaching music*



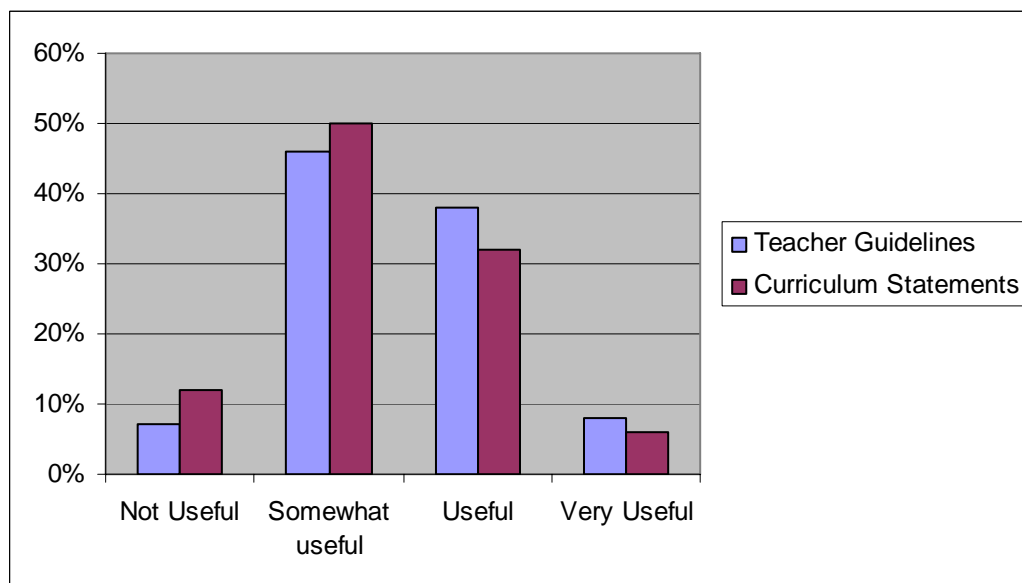
Many of the teachers perceived their own lack of musical ability and/or training as barriers to delivering the music curriculum. This may have contributed to organisation difficulties. Inservice was considered a high priority particularly in the area of music literacy. It was suggested that the Cuiditheoir service should timetable visits to every school to support teachers and that InTouch should provide more articles on music in the curriculum. The survey indicated that although there are considerable differences between schools, a wide range of musical experiences was being delivered. Further support vis-à-vis provision of resources and teacher training needs to be delivered. The figure below illustrates teachers’ opinions of their own confidence in relation to teaching the music curriculum.

Figure 21: *Teachers' confidence in teaching music*



In general, teachers found the curriculum statements and the teacher guidelines useful to support them in their teaching of music.

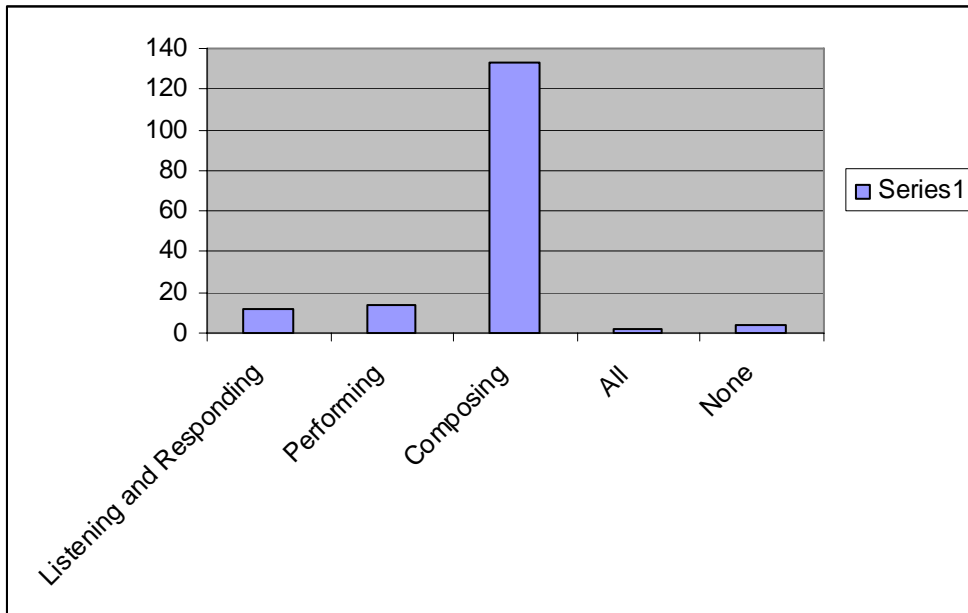
Figure 22: *Usefulness of curriculum documents in supporting the teaching of music*



Curriculum Strands

A positive response to the teaching of music was received with 75% managing to teach all strands in the course of the school year. However, many teachers experienced difficulties in particular areas, despite teaching all the strands every year. In their comments, only 4 teachers reported having no difficulty. One respondent praised the 'Ceol Programme'. Another respondent stated that she had a professional teach the class. Only two teachers reported that the teaching of all the strands caused difficulties. Twelve teachers reported difficulties with Listening and Responding and fourteen teachers listed problems with Performance, some of them specifying music literacy, sight reading and intervals. School Choirs and Bands/Banna Cheoil definitely required teachers with expertise to direct them. Composing was a hugely problematic area and, in the survey results, many of the difficulties with teaching music pertained to this strand.

Figure 23: *Strand that teachers find most difficult to teach*



DRAMA

Time allocation for Drama

Respondents were first asked how much time per week they devoted to teaching drama. Responses from the class teachers varied from 10 minutes to 150 minutes per week, with 34% of respondents allocating 30 minutes and 38% allocating 60 minutes per week.

Table 2: *Time allocation to drama per week*

<i>How much time do you allocate to drama each week?</i>	<i>Percentage of respondents</i>
30 minutes or less per week	43%
31- 50 minutes	17%
51-60 minutes	37%
61-90 minutes	2%
More than 90 minutes	1%

In relation to *Exploring and making* drama, 26% of respondents reported that 50% of their drama time was concerned with Exploring and Making Drama. Only one respondent reported not engaging with this strand unit at all. Just under a third of respondents (30%) reported that 10% of their drama time was concerned with *Reflecting on Drama*, with 22% reporting that 20% of their time was spent Reflecting on Drama and 3 respondents reported not engaging with the Reflecting on drama strand unit at all. The responses also showed that 21% of respondents reported that 40% of their time was concerned with *Co-operating and communicating* in making drama, while 33% reported that between 25%-33% of their drama time was concerned with this strand unit. See table below.

Table 3: *Time allocated to strand units*

<i>What % of time is allocated to the various strand units?</i>	<i>25% of time or less</i>	<i>30 – 50% of time</i>	<i>55-75% of time</i>	<i>More than 75% of time</i>
Exploring and making drama	6%	58%	22%	14%
Reflecting on drama	42%	53%		
Co-operating and communicating in making drama	41%	54%	4%	1%

Class settings

Respondents were then asked which settings were used to teach drama. The highest percentage (33%) reported spending 10% of their time teaching drama in individual settings. The remaining respondents were spread widely from 1%-100% of their time spent in individual setting with one respondent reporting that he or she spent 100% of time teaching drama in an individual setting. Regarding group settings, 23% of respondents spent 50% of their time teaching in group settings, while the remaining respondents were widely spread from 1%-100%, with two respondents reporting that they never taught drama in a group setting and five respondents reporting spending 100% of their time teaching in group settings.

A whole Class setting was used by 19% of respondents for 50% of their time teaching while 15% of respondents reported spending 100% of their time teaching drama in a whole class setting.

Table 4: *Percentage of time teaching drama in various class settings*

<i>What percentage of your time is spent in the following settings?</i>	10% of time or less	15 – 30% of time	33 – 50%	More than 50%
Individual	51%	35%	13%	1%
Group	4%	22%	45%	28%
Whole class	6%	19%	40%	36%

ICT

Only half of the respondents responded to the question on the use of ICT in drama. The majority of these 62% reported not using IT in the teaching of Drama at all or that it was not applicable. Only 8% of respondents reported using websites and using IT for finding Drama resources. Two respondents reported using IT to record/watch their own drama. One used music CDs in drama with one reporting only using IT for their own planning.

When questioned as to the perceived barriers to using ICT, those that offered responses referred to the fact that they felt drama was a ‘Hands-on’ subject and so did not see how IT would be useful or needed (12 respondents). Eleven respondents reported that there was no suitable software/sites available or if there was they were not aware of them. Eight respondents reported that they didn’t know how to use IT in drama and eight other respondents reported lack of resources as a barrier to using IT in teaching drama. Three respondents reported that they were not competent in the use of IT.

Environment

Respondents were asked in what ways did they use the environment (indoor and out) to support pupil learning in drama. A wide list was given, with the most popular being spaces and locations other than the classroom, using the environment for props and themes, seasonal factor and as a stimulus for imagination.

Specialist Teachers

In total, 68% of respondents reported not using the services of a specialist/external teacher while 32% reported that they did engage a specialist or external teacher to teach some aspect of drama. Of those who did engage a specialist/external teacher, 18% reported that the specialist taught all the strands, 5% reported that they taught the Exploring and Making strand and just one respondent reporting that they taught performing.

Respondents were then questioned as to how funding was provided to pay for the specialist teacher. In the majority of cases funding for the external teacher came from parents. In other cases the funding came from the board of management, DEIS grants, school completion programmes or local authorities.

Respondents that stated that their schools retained specialist teachers to teach drama were then asked who decided which aspects of the curriculum were taught by the specialist teacher. If those that responded 31% stated that the specialist or external teacher decided, 25% responded that the decision was made jointly by the specialist teacher and the staff or

principal teacher, a further 25% stated that the decision was made by the principal teacher or post-holder and 18% stated that class teachers or the staff as a whole decided.

Of those whose schools did engage the services of a specialist/external teacher, 50% of the respondents reported that the specialist teacher did refer to the Whole School Plan/Primary Curriculum when planning what to teach. A further 10% of respondents reported that they didn't and 40% reported that they didn't know.

Supporting the teaching of dram

In relation to teaching the curriculum, 70% of respondents stated that they did teach all strand units of drama in the course of the school year with 30% reporting that they did not. The strand unit *Reflecting on Drama* presented a difficulty for 26% of respondents. The strand unit *Co-operating and communicating* caused difficulty of 5% of respondents, and the strand unit on *Exploring and Making* drama was difficult to teach for 4% of respondents. A total of 10% of respondents found all strand units difficult while only 8% had no difficulty with any strand unit. Reasons posited by respondents for why they found some strand units difficult to teach, included the age of the pupils (infants), time, difficulty for children expressing themselves or reflecting, lack of pupils ability in oral language, space, class size, lack of confidence (teachers), lack or resources and lack of ideas.

Teachers were asked to suggest ways in which it could be made easier to teach the strand units with which they had difficulty. The most popular suggestions included the provision of practical ideas, courses, inservice and books. This was followed by 'more time' given that respondents noted curriculum overload as a barrier to covering all aspects of the strands. A number suggested support from a specialist drama teacher or a teacher to model lessons. Other recommendations included more space and fewer children in the class.

In relation to performance events, 89% of respondents reported that the school drama / Nativity / Christmas performance was a part of their drama curriculum, with 11% reporting that was not. It was also noted that 92% of respondents reported that all children had an opportunity to take part in a performance event with 8% stating that they did not.

In relation to the usefulness of the Teacher Guidelines and Curriculum Statements in teaching drama, 11% reported that the Teacher Guidelines were not useful, while 43% found them somewhat useful and 46% found them either useful or 'very useful'. Similarly, 17% of respondents reported the Curriculum Statements to be 'not useful' with 46% finding them 'somewhat useful' and 37% finding them either 'useful' or 'very useful'. See table below.

Table 5: *Usefulness of curriculum statement and teacher guidelines*

<i>How would rate the usefulness of the content of the following:</i>	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very Useful
Teacher Guidelines: Drama	11%	43%	40%	6%
Curriculum statements: Drama	17%	46%	32%	5%

Finally, respondents were asked to rate their level of confidence in teaching drama. Only 13% reported that they were 'very confident' in teaching drama and 38% felt 'confident'. Almost half the respondents (49%) stated that they were 'not very confident' or 'not confident at all' in teaching drama.

General Issues concerning the Arts Curriculum

This section of the questionnaire offered an opportunity to respondents to comment on some general issues pertaining to teaching the arts curriculum as a whole.

Arts and the Community

The arts curriculum recommends that pupils should be given opportunities to engage with artists in the community. Only 3% of respondents stated that their pupils never have an opportunity to see people from the arts community. For a further 18% of respondents, such opportunities occur every few years. Only 2% of respondents stated that their pupils have such opportunities once a month or more often, 37% stated that their pupils have such opportunities once a term and a further 38% stated that their pupils have such opportunities once a year.

Some schools have opportunities to partake in the arts by visiting outside agencies, though only 1% have such an opportunity once a month or more often. According to respondents, 36% provide such opportunities once a term, 34% once a year and 21% every few years. Only 8% of respondents stated that their pupils never had such opportunities. More than half the respondents' schools (57%) had been involved with local or national arts initiatives or projects. However, only a little over a quarter (29%) had received funding from a local arts council or local authority. Half (49%) received no funding whereas 22% of respondents didn't know.

School Organisation for the Arts

Posts of responsibility enable schools to allocate responsibility for the development and/or coordination of the arts curriculum in a school to one or more teachers. In one quarter of respondents' schools (25%) one teacher has a post of responsibility for all the arts. In more than half of the respondents' schools (54%) one teacher has a post of responsibility for the visual arts and another teacher had a responsibility for music. In one third of respondents' schools, (34%) one teacher had a post of responsibility for drama.

More than half the respondents (53%) stated that they availed of support for the arts from the PPDS (or PCSP). Of those that did, 81% found it very useful or useful. Only 8% didn't find it useful at all.

Respondents were generally satisfied with the amount of time recommended for the arts in the Primary School Curriculum. A small percentage (19%) recommended that more time should be spent on the visual arts and only 1% stated that less time should be spent on the visual arts. Regarding music, 14% of respondents that more time should be allocated, while 83% stated that the amount of time suggested was sufficient. The time allocated to drama was considered sufficient by 75% of respondents, while 12% stated that less time should be allocated to drama. More than three quarters of respondents (78%) use discretionary time for teaching the arts. A significant majority (84%) use blocks of time to support the implementation of the arts curriculum.

Resources

Respondents were very clear in their requirements for delivering the Arts Curriculum. Funding and personnel were at the top of the list, followed closely by resources and time. Designated spaces to work and to store equipment were also requisites especially when dealing with large numbers in classes. The importance of regular audits and inventories of stock was also important especially when resources are limited and many need to share them. Specific resource packs for particular strands were necessary to help with planning. Regular professional development for teachers was desirable. More specifically, banks of instruments, audio and visual DVDs were recommended for supporting music, materials and kits of artistic works were suggested for the visual arts and lesson plans, props and costumes, and drama books were requested to support drama teaching.

Storage and Maintenance of Equipment

In many schools there seemed to be an ad hoc approach to the purchase of equipment. For visual arts, teachers were given individual budgets (generally from fund collections from children) and they decided to buy their own requisites. Resources for drama were collected by the teacher from second hand shops or donated by parents. Funding for purchase of musical instruments was usually provided by the board of management or the parents' association – this might be due to the fact that there is greater funding required in this area and that the resources are more specialized. One school had instruments which were purchased by the curriculum grant when the revised music programme was being introduced. Storing of equipment and resources was usually in an art press, a cupboard in the staff room, in the post holder's room, or on a trolley in the office. Some smaller schools reported that teachers knew where everything was and when it needed to be replenished. A different form of organisation would be required in a larger school.

Satisfaction

Despite the pressures of under-funding, time and space constraints and large classes, teachers derived a great deal of satisfaction from teaching the arts. The following quotations illustrate the satisfaction and joy experienced by teachers in teaching the arts:

Children's positive response – enthusiasm, engagement, satisfaction, fun.

Children's improved skill level – repertoire of songs, piece of art work, drama performance for parents.

The quiet, contemplative vibe in a room full of budding artists.

Development of improved social skill: hearing children compliment each other.

Personal feeling of success in teaching a lesson that will impact on the future life of children.

The feel good factor of giving all children a chance to shine

Positive feedback from parents

The impact of the Arts on other subjects in the curriculum – as the children illustrate/interpret other concepts across the curriculum.

It is evident that teachers' satisfaction in teaching the arts derives substantially from the children's own enjoyment and pleasure in engaging in the arts.

Relevance of the Arts Curriculum

According to the respondents to the survey, teachers have very positive views about the impact of the teaching of the arts on children's development and learning. Almost all respondents (98%) consider the arts a relevant or very relevant part of the primary curriculum. The arts encourage alternative thinking, enhance learning across the curriculum and nurture creativity and imagination. The arts build self-esteem, foster self-worth and allow children to experience success. In addition, opportunities are provided for experiential learning, and problem solving through cooperation and collaboration is encouraged. Teachers can explore Multiple Intelligences Theory. Children develop their skills, understanding and dexterity and school is more enjoyable. The arts also provide links with the home as children love taking home artistic endeavours, singing songs, and reciting poems. As some respondents stated:

Art enriches all aspects of learning.

Art broadens horizons.... and opens up the scope of the world in a class room.

Art affords children the opportunity to express themselves in different ways that were traditionally allowed

Respondents expressed numerous views in relation to the relevance of the arts on today's world. According to one respondent, the arts curriculum is more important than ever for children's social development given the huge growth in technology. Another respondent stated that the arts cater for children of all abilities and talents and allows them to build self esteem and develop non-academic skills. Some respondents described the arts as an "essential part of the Primary school curriculum", a "stepping stone for subjects that the children will meet in Secondary", an opportunity for "life long learning" through the development of self esteem and skills. "An appreciation of the arts is the mark of a civilised nation" and "our arts curriculum allows children to be unique but also part of the culture and heritage from which they come". Some more down-to-earth comments describe the arts as an escape from 'heavy learning' and a break from academics for both teacher and pupil. There was also a concern that the enjoyment of arts shouldn't be allowed to detract from the 'importance of the core subjects ... the three Rs'.

Future development in the arts

Respondents raised a number of issues where change and development was need in relation to the arts curriculum. As expected, the provision of adequate funding for the Arts was mentioned by most teachers as the area needing most attention in relation to teaching the arts curriculum. Respondents also highlighted the need for ongoing and regular professional development for teachers. The employment of specialist teachers was also suggested. A reduction in class size and more freedom with timetabling were other priorities mentioned. Some teachers felt that strands such as 'Look and respond' or 'Listen and respond' placed an emphasis on language rather than creativity and were less likely to be attractive to children with communication difficulties or specific learning disabilities. Many teachers requested help with planning. One respondent recommended a review of the curriculum with less ambiguous objectives.

There were requests for specific changes to each of the subject areas of the arts curriculum. 'Composition' was seen as a problem area for many teachers in music. One teacher stated: "I'm at sea here". Other teachers questioned the relevance of this strand especially if it was

not taught by a specialist or teacher with expertise. Teaching instruments, notation and harmony were felt to be outside the remit of the 'novice'. 'Fabric and Fibre' and 'Print' were the difficult areas in the visual arts curriculum, with teachers citing lack of confidence/expertise as the reasons. The lack of availability of materials and implements also posed a difficulty. Access to artists in the community needed improvement especially for schools situated a distance from art centres. In addition, it was felt that age appropriate lesson plans or even a specific drama programme for each class would make for a more successful teaching of the drama curriculum.

In addition to funding, which was repeatedly mentioned by teachers, lack of space, time constraints of an overloaded curriculum, the differentiation requirements of the multi-grade class and the need for an extra pair of hands (especially in visual arts in the infant room), were also frequently mentioned by teachers as issues impacting on the teaching of the arts curriculum. There was also a comment that parents might always appreciate the value of the arts in their children's education. In some schools the board of management or the principal might value the product more than the process. For example, it's good public relations to see the children performing in the NCH or the RDS, and it's great to see well decorated corridors. There is also a fear that the other subjects might suffer if a teacher is overly enthusiastic about the arts. However, the arts curriculum is appreciated, teachers are most enthusiastic about teaching a holistic programme, but without a massive intervention by the Department of Education and Science the arts curriculum could well flounder.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusion

Arts education makes an important contribution to the wider goal of developing creativity in our society and economy. This is recognised in the curriculum handbook, where it is stated: ‘A purposeful arts education... is life-enhancing and is invaluable in stimulating creative thinking and in promoting capability and adaptability’. Thus, it is clear that a quality arts education is a key objective within the wider twin goals of education, as defined in the current *Statement of Strategy 2005-2007* of the Department of Education and Science: ‘(i) enabling all individuals to reach their full potential and (ii) contributing to our current and future economic success’. The nature of the Irish economy and the ever-quickenening rate of change it is experiencing underline the need for economic and social policies that are underpinned by an education system that fosters creativity. Creativity is not a skill or a stand-alone intellectual process. It is more akin to an aptitude whose presence (or absence) has profound implications for both personal well-being and for enterprise, wherever applied, but especially in an economy characterised by knowledge, services and high-level manufacturing (Arts Council, 2007).

When it comes to encouraging creativity in our classrooms, we need to do more than simply generate activities. Pupils’ creativity is directly impacted by the culture and climate that surrounds them. Before we can help our pupils develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions they need in order to be more creative, we first need to make sure we are providing a culture and climate that is conducive to this learning.

First of all, we must ensure that we have a positive classroom and school climate in place – one that is constructive, non-threatening and is founded on the belief that all pupils can, and have a right to, learn.

We can help create this climate through the following means:

- First, we can set open-ended and varied challenges or tasks. Pupils should feel excited and challenged in the classroom, not restricted and directed. An open-ended task has no single correct answer or a single way of getting a correct answer. Therefore, open-ended tasks allow pupils to engage with and apply subject knowledge and skills in an imaginative and creative way – for example through experimentation, role-play, problem-finding and problem-solving.
- We can also build a positive climate by ensuring that the contributions of all our pupils are valued.
- We can encourage risk-taking in order to get pupils to come up with new ideas and approaches. This ties in with the previous point. In order for pupils to contribute novel ideas, they need to know that their contributions are encouraged and that getting things wrong is part of the learning experience. For example, in our classrooms, how do we respond to a wrong answer? Is everyone’s opinion valued by ourselves? By others?

- Encouraging genuine, open communication is also important. One way to do this is through discussion and debate. A climate with open communication promotes trust, is one where pupils feel they can speak their mind and support ideas, and is one where opinions are taken seriously.
- We should also work to challenge assumptions and stereotypes and ensure that our pupils appreciate differences and diversity in others.
- Finally, remember that learning and discovery can and should be fun. Pupils enjoy trying things out without knowing exactly what will happen next. This is why pupils seem to have fun while learning at primary but not so much at post-primary.

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