

Key Dimensions of a National Strategic Commitment to the Arts for Social Inclusion, involving Afterschool Services for Marginalised Groups: The Case for a National Strategy for the Arts and Social Inclusion in Education?

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Discussion Document Submission to Minister Catherine Martin, Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (July 2021)

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Executive Summary

A commitment to a new multidimensional national strategy for the arts and social inclusion is needed as part of a post-Covid pandemic response to the revitalisation of Irish society and engagement of socio-economically and socio-culturally marginalised children and young people. There is no overarching national strategy for the arts and social inclusion in education. The Arts in Education Charter is insufficient, the DEIS 2005 and 2017 Action Plans render the arts peripheral, while the Wellbeing Framework for Education 2018 makes no mention of the arts. The Creative Ireland/Schools initiative is insufficient in range and scope to meet the needs of students across all DEIS schools and local communities experiencing socioeconomic exclusion. €130 million in funding was allocated for the Arts Council in 2021. This is the highest budget ever allocated to the Arts Council and an increase of over €50 million on the 2020 budget of €75 million. It is essential that this budget is poverty proofed and that it offers a strong focus on poverty and social inclusion in relation to the arts.

Our Coalition of key stakeholders proposes that a National Strategic commitment to the Arts and Social Inclusion in Education needs to encompass the following key principles:

- A lifelong learning vision for the Arts from early years to older citizens
- A whole school approach
- A community arts vision
- A therapeutic dimension such as art, music therapy
- Integrating creativity with science
- Integrating arts with social and emotional education, including outdoor education
- A children's rights commitment to children and young people's voices Art 12, right to play and leisure Art 31 and right to participate
- Active participation of parents in school, including marginalised parents
- Building on strengths and celebration of diversity
- Promoting dialogue and conflict resolution processes through the Arts

The key benefits of the arts for early school leaving prevention, to overcome fear of failure, for students' voices, empowerment, social and emotional development, building on their strengths and individual capacities for self-expression, meaning making and leadership are radically underdeveloped at national strategic policy level. This glaring gap and missed opportunity must be addressed in our national vision of a post-Covid society based on an inclusive society.

A national community arts strategic dimension needs to build on models of good practice for local communities such as Familibase, Ballyfermot. The Joint Oireachtas Education Committee report in response to Covid (Jan 2021) gives this key recommendation: 'Emotional counselling and therapeutic supports should be provided in all primary and secondary schools as an urgent priority' (p.12). This invites a key role for the Arts in such therapeutic roles, whether as for example, art, play or music therapy. The concerning retreat from the arts in the National School Completion Programme in recent years brings a further major gap in this area. An acceleration of focus on the arts in initial teacher education, and for prison education is also required.

This discussion document also sets out a rights based argument for the arts in terms of Ireland's international commitments, involving the right to participation in culture, and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity. A rights-based framework of progressive realisation needs to be developed, whereby measurable progress over a 5 year period can be identified through verifiable landmarks and indicators.

1. Introduction

A commitment to a new multidimensional national strategy for the arts and social inclusion is needed as part of a post-Covid pandemic response to the revitalisation of Irish society and engagement of socio-economically and socio-culturally marginalised children and young people. Social inclusion here includes a central focus on poverty, both current and persistent poverty, as well as ethnic minorities, migrants, children in temporary accommodation and children in care of the Irish State, and prisoners. This national strategic commitment needs to build on the Programme for Government (June 2020) statement which affirms that:

‘The arts are essential to the wellbeing of our society and in bringing communities together. We want to make the arts even more accessible and inclusive to everyone.

We recognise the diversity of artistic and creative activities in Ireland and the significant economic and social value of our creative culture both nationally and internationally.

The COVID-19 crisis has had a very severe impact on the arts sector and we are committed to assisting this sector as we plan our country’s economic recovery (p.101).

2. National Policy Gaps in this Area

There is currently no Arts and Social Inclusion in Education strategy at national level (IMPACT DEIS Review submission 2015). The EU Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving (2011) recognises

‘2.2 INTERVENTION POLICIES aim to avoid early school leaving...

(5) Extra-curricular activities after and outside school and artistic, cultural and sport activities, which can raise the self-esteem of pupils at risk and increase their resilience against difficulties in their learning’.

Within Ireland, the Arts are categorized with play, recreation and sports in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (DCYA, 2014). In poverty and social inclusion policy, they are very rarely mentioned. The Arts are discussed once in the current DEIS Plan (DES, 2017) within the section relating to STEM and with a view to developing entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation. The current DEIS Plan (DES, 2017), unlike its predecessor from 2005, at least explicitly mentions the Arts and acknowledges that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds often have limited experience of accessing the Arts (p.43). However, responsibility for the arts and social inclusion in education is not a central focus of DEIS 2017 which gives emphasis to the Arts in Education Charter (DAHG, 2013) and to the roll out of the Creative Ireland programme (see appendix A).

Although the Arts in Education Charter (DAHG, 2013) does focus on forging partnerships between outside art agencies and schools, it does not specifically address the issue of unequal access within the document itself – or emphasise the distinctive importance of the Arts for engaging marginalised communities. However, the Creative Ireland Programme does reference marginalised young people.

The Arts are only mentioned once in the current DEIS Plan (DES, 2017) and DEIS schools that are currently providing afterschool arts activities are mainly funding them through the School Completion Programme (Smyth, 2016). The School Completion Programme has itself experienced a serious and concerning retreat in recent years from commitment to the Arts for early school leaving prevention. Recent restructuring of the methods of targeting measures would need to be reviewed by School Completion Programme in order to ensure equality of access to quality arts education and afterschool provision.

The DES (2019) *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023*, revised October 2019 makes no mention of the Arts. A national strategic response to the Arts and social inclusion requires *a sustained, whole school and whole community arts initiative across a diversity of domains of the Arts*, involving afterschool and summer projects. The Creative Ireland/Schools initiative is insufficient in range and scope to meet these needs across all DEIS schools. There needs to be less emphasis on paperwork and reflective exercises for the school staff, and more emphasis on taking action and engaging the children. The Creative Ireland programme offers funding of €2-4,000 per school and is not in practice a sustained whole school approach to the Arts, though with access to a Creative Associate.

€130 million in funding was allocated for the Arts Council in 2021. This is the highest budget ever allocated to the Arts Council and an increase of over €50 million on the 2020 budget of €75 million. It is essential that this budget is poverty proofed and that it offers a strong focus on poverty and social inclusion in relation to the arts.

3.Key Principles Underpinning a National Strategy

A National Strategic commitment to the Arts and Social Inclusion in Education needs to encompass the following key principles:

- **A lifelong learning vision for the Arts from early years to older citizens**
- **A whole school approach**
- **A community arts vision**
- **A therapeutic dimension such as art, music therapy**
- **Integrating creativity with science**
- **Integrating arts with social and emotional education, including outdoor education**
- **A children’s rights commitment to children and young people’s voices Art 12, right to play and leisure Art 31 and right to participate**
- **Active participation of parents in school, including marginalised parents**
- **Building on strengths and celebration of diversity**
- **Promoting dialogue and conflict resolution processes through the Arts**

4. Benefits of the Arts for Social Inclusion in Education

Research highlights the multiple and intersecting benefits of the arts in education:

- **Overcoming fear of failure going beyond ‘one right answer’**
 - **Promoting students’ voices and personal and social expression**
 - **Fostering empathy and perspective taking capacities**
 - **Offering a diversity of opportunities to build on strengths and capacities**
 - **Promoting active learning and meaning making**
 - **Supporting students’ motivation to engage in education and prevent early school leaving**
 - **Building bridges between different groups to celebrate diversity**
 - **Promoting a positive school climate**
- Catterall (2009) found correlation between family income and education levels and whether children had high or low levels of involvement in the Arts. They found the

probability of being highly involved was almost twice as high for students from economically advantaged families and similarly students from economically marginalised families were twice as likely to have low levels of involvement in the Arts (p.9). Catterall (2009) attributes this to unequal access to arts experiences depending on family income. In the Irish context, Smyth (2016) found that similar differences occurred with regard to access to the Arts, levels of engagement with cultural activities and socioeconomic status. A key contribution of the Arts is that it overcomes fear of failure as there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer (Ivers, McLoughlin & Downes 2010).

- Students engaged in quality arts education have been shown to develop significantly in terms of: emotional awareness, self-confidence, effort, adjustment, motivation, imagination, creativity, concentration, collaboration, self-regulation, reflection, empathy, and communication (Theodotou, 2019; Ros-Morente et al., 2019; Borovica, 2020; Mellor, 2013; Catterall, 2009; Bamford, 2009). Aside from the individualised benefits, the Arts also promote a sense of community through shared goals (Murphy, 2007), joint effort (Ros-Morente et al, 2019), creating a sense of belonging (Mellor, 2013) and by the relationships that are built through the creative process (Bamford, 2009).
- Being highly involved in the Arts has also shown to have substantial benefits, in particular for students deemed to be economically marginalised, by increasing levels of achievement, improving attitudes towards learning and decreasing anti-social behaviours (Catterall, 2009).
- In creating a different entry point to thinking, learning and knowing, the Arts can have the potential to connect with more students in more meaningful ways (Gardner 1983). The Arts can engage a wide cohort of students who are otherwise disaffected from the school system through going beyond diametric oppositions of success/failure culture (Downes 2020).
- In their study of young people who participated in group music-making activities, Ros-Morente et al. (2019) found that musicians scored significantly higher than non-musicians in emotional awareness. Similarly, Bamford (2009) argues that “the Arts directly contribute to positive self-perceptions and identity” (p.20) which correlates with the increase in self-awareness, self-reflection and meta-cognition that Mellor (2013) found in their research with members of singing groups. Ros-Morente et al. (2019) also saw a strengthening in areas of self-perception, self-confidence and self-management in their musician participants.
- The Arts in afterschool settings needs to be part of a community strategy for overcoming prejudice through a) intergroup contact on b) structured cooperative tasks, as well as through sports and engagement with nature. Stronger investment in afterschool arts’ services is a key strategic limb to help inclusion of, for example, Travellers and Roma.
- Traditionally in classrooms, methods of instruction are language heavy and thus Catterall (2009) argues for education through the Arts as they ‘provide children with access to subject matter and ways of thinking, children who otherwise may be short-changed in a classroom dominated by language centered or didactic methods of instruction’ (p.36). In their research, Theodotou (2019) noted improvement in the children’s communication skills following involvement in child-led arts projects, which they attributed to regular discussions and opportunities for interaction at every step of the artistic process.
- Arts education is particularly important for students who may be marginalized, in the education system or socially. Downes, Nairz-Wirth & Rusinaite (2017) highlight the

potential of the Arts to engage such marginalized students as they employ different ways of thinking; they offer an alternative form of communication; the issues explored may be seen as more relevant; students often gain a sense of accomplishment they do not experience in other subject areas (p.40). It is clear that an acknowledgement of the benefits of arts education and a commitment to raising its value within national policy is needed from policy makers with regard to social inclusion in education.

- Internationally there is an increasing emphasis on creativity in education, and the importance of building young people's capabilities in terms of creative thinking, innovation and resilience (OECD 2019). There is a clear link between creative education and equipping students with the skills needed for life and for the workplace (OECD 2019).
- Recent research in Ireland on how creativity is fostered within Participatory Arts initiatives, the beneficial outcomes that emerge from such practices suggest that the Participatory Arts are a powerful agent for creativity and that promoting creativity brings much wider benefits beyond achieving the immediate desired effect of fostering creativity (White 2020). The research provides a strong rationale for the inclusion of Participatory Arts not alone as a means of promoting creativity but also for the purposes of community building, enhancing personal development and engendering a sense of wellbeing.
- Research on the Fighting Words Ireland creative engagement programme in schools found evidence of increased confidence, empowerment and self-efficacy among learners; benefits for students who are shy, difficult or with poor language skills; children having a voice; increased resilience and perseverance among students; students more likely to take leadership roles (Lorenzi and White 2013).

While recognising these wider benefits of the Arts for particular areas of children and young people's development, it is important also to recognise the value of the Arts not simply in instrumental terms but as an end of itself, as part of life experience for children and young people.

5. Community Arts: The role of Youth and Community Organisations

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the Arts and to share in the scientific advancement and its benefits. (Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Youth & community organizations play a pivotal role in providing opportunities for young people to access the Arts and creating a philosophy that facilitates real participation with a focus on process over product. By collaborating with schools, artists, young people and funders, youth organisations have a role to play in removing barriers, building relationships and ensuring participation of the most marginalised children and young people in community arts programmes and creative spaces in their communities. Sowden (2019) recognized that 'arts education is a chance to build resilience and determination in children, as well as to help them master complex skills, there are real advantages to teaching in a more exploratory way, where children can experiment and both parents and teachers can encourage children to explore that's the way you get the biggest benefit, not just learning to reproduce a particular work by Monet or a dance sequence.' This is why youth organizations are so crucial in holding the all-important non-formal youth led learning approach to the Arts and should be collaborating with schools to provide this kind of programming.

Examples of Community Arts Practices to Build on as Part of a National Strategy for the Arts and Social Inclusion in Education: The FamiliBase Model of Community Arts

FamiliBase is a centre for children, young people and families in Dublin 10. They have three strands of programme delivery Early Years, Child and Family and Youth and Community. Within the Youth and Community strand, they provide a range of community arts programmes, encompassing all aspects of expression and creativity, free of charge to marginalized children and young people in the Dublin 10 community. The centre has a recording studio and Black Box Theatre; they facilitate Ballyfermot Youth Theatre (established under a Creative Ireland Programme funded project with Youth Theatre Ireland) and a range of other successful arts programmes. The success is down to the child/youth centred approach to programming and the clearly defined programme philosophy. For example, the FamiliBase Music Programme; musical creativity was presented to the young people as accessible, free of charge and not dependent on any great ‘natural flair’ for music, there was no ‘talent competition’ or ‘battle of the bands’ encouraged. In the music group, they used a non-classical approach to musical learning to make music more accessible. There was no requirement for young people to sit grades, no requirement to perform, no requirement to compete. Outcomes were set by the young people and evaluated with them. They ensured they had excellent facilitators rather than music teachers, with the required skills and experience, employed by the service rather than contracted in for a brief period of time. While the programme activities are not based on traditional conservatoire style, they have fostered a collaborative relationship with the local music schools and colleges to bring young people from all skill levels and backgrounds together in a collaborative, youth led music programme. The documented outcomes were phenomenal; young people did learn musical instruments, did perform, and did write music, edit music, manage the stage but crucially only when they were ready and if they wanted to. Even more significant were the outcomes in relation to mental health, peer relationships, confidence, advocacy (the young people set up an advocacy group to challenge practices in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and progression to third level Arts courses. A key objective of their model is to steer clear of promising expected hard outcomes at the beginning of the programme. These kinds of constraints usually result in many young people falling away from the programme while only a small few see it through until the end. Both in and out of school, Arts can be used as everyday ways of belonging to a community. Public art projects can confront and change community sentiment about particular demographics of young people.’

What can be learned from this successful community model of arts inclusion?

- Ensure that entry methods to creative programmes are flexible and supported (outreach children and young people who drop out to ensure barriers of participation are removed)
- Ensure that programmes are youth/child led
- Ensure programmes are no cost/low cost
- Co-develop programmes with young people that are non-competitive with a focus on the process and balance the intrinsic and instrumental outcomes

- Employ artists who are strong facilitators, who allow young people to lead, who focus on the young person's process and who are able to adapt should there be no predefined programme outcomes
- Collaborate with schools in developing and delivering creative programmes.

6. The School Completion Programme and Arts Provision: Concerns regarding the current strategic direction of SCP in relation to reduction of the Arts in recent years

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is a central element of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) plan. The programme enables local communities to develop tailored strategies to maximise participation levels of those at risk of early school leaving in the education process <https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2021-press-releases/PR21-03-01.html>

SCPs must be supported to be *creative* in their implementation efforts and to be able to make local decisions to address local needs (and this includes using arts to engage specific cohorts of children and young people).

Summer programmes could facilitate themed events to complement particular areas of interest to individual children/young people.

Some children may have specific communication and/or learning needs that will challenge their engagement in structured, manualised programmes. SCPs must have flexibility to utilise the Arts to engage these children and young people (this is currently restrained by TESS). This needs to be re-established to include literacy Arts (for students who struggle with literacy) to engage them in creative writing through poetry, writing and composition workshops.

Engagement through arts would support SCP staff to develop relationships with the identified children and young people and to 'prepare' for the implementation of more specific and more structured interventions.

It needs to be recognised that the Arts are key to 'complement' some structured interventions, for example, the Seasons for Growth programme that supports children who experience loss and bereavement is ideally delivered with a visual art component (i.e., children make collages of changing seasons etc.).

Also, Arts-based programmes are vital to engage the most disengaged families as parents may initially favour the Arts-based programmes over specific, manualised 'programmes' of intervention.

In the case of particularly marginalised communities, who may be least likely to attend events demonstrating and celebrating the skills acquired by the children and young people, their own resource/community centres could be used to host such events.

New and existing creative arts initiatives (including national initiatives such as, for example, Music Generation) should develop stronger partnerships with SCPs. As a national programme targeting the most socially marginalised children and young people, SCPs are best placed to ensure that these children are meaningfully participating in these initiatives. SCP staff could have a role in identifying areas/activities of high interest in individual schools/class groups/individual young people.

There are existing links with agencies such as TÚS and Community Employment (CE) which could be fostered to recruit people in the community with creative arts skills and qualifications, i.e., potters, wood turners, stone cutters, leather workers, cooks, photographers, music recording and production specialists.

SCPs are well placed to be the link between school-based Art education and Community based Arts practice. There are exciting opportunities for collaborations between SCPs, Youth Services and schools around independently funded Arts practice, including involvement in local and national parades and festivals, large scale murals and performances. There are also potential links between the academic study of Art as a school subject and participation in ‘Art Projects’ in the community.

SCPs have utilised creative arts therapies for many years, either by funding their provision or in direct service delivery (many SCP staff have background in professional therapeutic disciplines, including creative art therapy disciplines). As SCPs work with the most vulnerable children and young people in schools, and given the extensive experience of SCP staff in multi- and transdisciplinary work, it would seem important to include SCPs in potential development of creative art therapies in schools.

In order to foster creativity in our most vulnerable children and young people, we need to foster creativity of SCP staff who work with them. An overarching national framework for SCP is needed, but within this framework, we must acknowledge, promote, value and reinforce creativity in individual SCPs, through, for example, creative problem solving, autonomy in decision-making, identification of own CPD needs, etc. Creativity has been ‘embodied’ in all SCPs for many years. Recent Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) developments have restrained this creativity and this may have a negative impact on the quality of service delivery in SCP.

To maximise the potential of the Schools Completion programme to meet the needs of the most vulnerable young people our learning suggests:

Include SCPs in creative partnerships in schools and communities.

Include SCPs in future development of creative arts therapies in DEIS schools.

Recognise, value and reinforce creativity of SCP staff.

7. Therapeutic Dimensions to the Arts

The Joint Oireachtas Education Committee report in response to Covid (Jan 2021) gives this key recommendation: ‘Emotional counselling and therapeutic supports should be provided in all primary and secondary schools as an urgent priority’

https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_education_further_and_higher_education_research_innovation_and_science/reports/2021/2021-01-14_report-on-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-primary-and-secondary-education_en.pdf p.12 - see also p.27.

This invites a key role for the Arts in such therapeutic roles, whether as for example, art, play or music therapy.

8. Initial Teacher Education – Expanding Emphasis on the Arts in Education, Arts and Social Inclusion in Education

The area of teacher education, initial and continuing, is crucial to ensure teachers are equipped with the skills, confidence and resources to use the Arts and creative approaches in their classrooms.

In the Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers (Teaching Council, 2017) there is a reference to creativity in one of the learning outcomes for student teachers, and there are others on critical thinking and on communications skills.

'cross-curricular links and themes including citizenship; creativity; inclusion and diversity; initiative and entrepreneurship; personal, social and health education; and ICT, as appropriate to the sector and stage of education, and how these are related to life experiences.'

Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education (Teaching Council, 2020) includes creativity and reflective practice for teachers.

'fostering a creative mindset among student teachers, teachers as reflective practitioners; teachers as innovators; teachers as researchers; teachers' relationship with the school as a learning community and the development of Taisce to support the process of portfolio-based learning.'

Building on these developments, there is a need for an acceleration of emphasis and time given in initial teacher education to ensure future teachers are confident in teaching the range of arts subjects to a high level.

9. Prison Education and the Arts in Irish Prisons

The strong association between prisoners and early school leaving, poverty and low literacy levels, as well as prior homelessness is well recognised in Irish research (Morgan & Kett 2003; Seymour & Costello 2005) Educational services are available across all prisons in Ireland and are provided in partnership with a variety of educational agencies, including the Arts Council of Ireland. Creative arts programmes available to prisoners include art, craft, creative writing, drama, film production, music, photography, sound recording and production and stonework.

The Irish Prison Education Service has an Arts Development Officer whose role was originally established to co-ordinate the Visual Artists in Prisons Scheme and the Writers in Prisons Scheme. These popular and productive programmes, which were launched over 30 years ago, are co-funded by the Irish Prison Service (IPS) and the Arts Council of Ireland.

The Visual Artists in Prisons Scheme provides visual artists with opportunities to engage with groups of prisoners and their art teachers in Irish prisons through the medium of workshops which have included ceramics, drawing, mosaics, painting and sculpture. Similarly, writers are given the opportunity to work with groups of prisoners through the Writers in Prisons Scheme. Teachers or librarians within the prison invite selected writers to facilitate workshops which have included literature, playwriting, poetry and screenwriting. Such schemes are being expanded to offer workshops in the performing arts as locally organised workshops with actors and musicians have been positively received by prisoners (Shortt, 2018).

An arts exhibition is organised every other year in Ireland to showcase creative arts by people in custody and to recognise the positive and central role of the Arts in the Irish Prison Education Service. In 2019, 'Open Minds' was an exhibition curated by renowned Irish artist Brian Maguire. Prisoners and ex-offenders' artwork was displayed to remind people that the incarcerated have not disappeared from society but are still part of the community to which they will return and visitors were invited to approach the work with an open mind and to see beyond the person who had been convicted (Maguire in English, 2019).

Scope for Further Development in the Arts and Prison Education Sector:

Due to the significant benefits of the Arts in prison education, the implementation of further programmes and the expansion of existing programmes is recommended. Additional elements which could be considered include:

- Involving prisoners' families - developing opportunities for prisoners to engage in creative arts activities/workshops with their children or other family members so that the associated benefits can be amplified
- Including outside participants - allowing some outside participants to take part in prison arts programmes could provide opportunities to challenge pre-conceptions about prisons and prisoners and improve relations between prisoners and society. It might also enable prisoners to explore their identity, other than that of a prisoner, with the chance to identify as an artist among fellow artists.
- Providing prisoners with opportunities to be creative leaders - prisoners could be trained to co-facilitate arts activities/workshops. They could be peer-led or with the support of a teacher or outside facilitator. For example, the Alternatives to Violence Project (a community of volunteers who run experiential workshops in conflict resolution and restorative practices) is facilitated in prisons by a mixed team of 4-6 outside and prison-based facilitators.

10. Ireland's human rights obligations in relation to the right to participate in culture

The right of every person to participate in the cultural life of the community was established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is articulated in Article 15 of the International Covenant on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and in Article 31 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, among other treaties:

Article 31

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the Arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Under these obligations the state must respect, promote and protect the right. This means the state must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of the right (for example limitations on freedom of speech, participation, assembly or access to information); it must protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses (such as the deliberate exclusion of

different cultural identities from education programmes) and *it must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of the rights.*

On the positive actions required, the UN is very explicit - 'Culture as a social product must be brought within the reach of all, on the basis of equality, non-discrimination and participation. Therefore, in implementing the legal obligations enshrined in article 15, paragraph 1 (a), of the Covenant, States parties must adopt, without delay, concrete measures to ensure adequate protection and the full exercise of the right of persons living in poverty and their communities to enjoy and take part in cultural life.'

In the UN's most recent correspondence to the Irish State on the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child it urged Ireland to ensure full adoption of the various rights in the Convention, including a formal mapping of needs, allocation of appropriate budgets and adequate data collection.

The right to participate in culture is cited Culture 2025, underpins the Arts Council's Equality Human Rights and Diversity Strategy and Policy, and has shaped the thinking behind the Creative Ireland programme. However, a systematic plan to uphold this right for children does not exist.

- The Creative Ireland Programme is not currently in all DEIS schools nationwide.
- There is currently a lack of priority given for the inclusion of arts and culture in school and afterschool settings.
- The Creative Youth programme which focuses on outside of school activities does not currently prioritise children living in poverty and socio-economic exclusion in its programmes.
- Local Authority funding for children's recreation, play and culture is not currently ring-fenced.
- A culture subsidy is not currently available for children (formerly known as the culture card). The introduction of a universal subsidy for every child to engage in one cultural opportunity each year is one of the proposals advanced as part of the No Child 2020 initiative, though not currently implemented.
- The national investment in arts for children is not currently proportional to that for adults.

The right to participate in culture

The right of every person to participate in the cultural life of the community was established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 27, and is articulated in Article 15 of the International Covenant on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Ireland ratified in 1989.

Article 15

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone:
 - (a) To take part in cultural life;
 - (b) To enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications;
 - (c) To benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.
2. The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for the conservation, the development and the diffusion of science and culture.
3. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity.
4. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the benefits to be derived from the encouragement and development of international contacts and co-operation in the scientific and cultural fields.

In ratifying an international treaty, the Irish State is obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the right.

The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires States to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. The obligation to fulfil means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights.

The UN issued 'General Comments' to guide states in their interpretation of human rights obligations. In General Comment 21 on the right to participate in culture, the UN is very explicit about social exclusion

...poverty seriously restricts the ability of a person or a group of persons to exercise the right to take part in, gain access and contribute to, on equal terms, all spheres of cultural life, and more importantly, seriously affects their hopes for the future and their ability to effectively enjoy their own culture.

Culture as a social product must be brought within the reach of all, on the basis of equality, non-discrimination and participation. Therefore, in implementing the legal obligations enshrined in article 15, paragraph 1 (a), of the Covenant, States parties must adopt, without delay, concrete measures to ensure adequate protection and the full exercise of the right of persons living in poverty and their communities to enjoy and take part in cultural life.

Progressive realisation, maximum available resources, non-retrogression and minimum core obligations

Non-discrimination and equality are essential to enjoying economic, social & cultural rights, and Ireland is obliged to fulfil the right to participate in culture without discrimination of any kind.

In addition to the requirement to respect, protect and fulfil rights, international rights bodies have interpreted and developed how rights can be realised in practice, and identified some core principles relevant in particular to realising social, economic and cultural rights. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) have helpfully set these out for Irish policy makers and civil society. These provide a useful lens through which we can assess progress by the Irish state in ensuring that all children have the right to participate in culture:

Progressive realisation

Full rights realisation may be difficult in short-term, including due to constrained resources. States do have a continuing obligation to take appropriate steps – deliberate, concrete, and clearly targeted – to realise rights as quickly and effectively as possible. ‘Appropriate’ includes legislative, administrative, financial, educational, & social measures

Maximum available resources

States must take steps to realise rights to the maximum of available resources. When resources are severely constrained, vulnerable people can be protected by relatively low-cost targeted programmes

Non-retrogression

Retrogression occurs when States take steps that deprive people of rights they previously enjoyed; essentially the opposite of progressive realisation. States should not cut funding for essential goods and services where this would cause undue hardship, unless they can prove that they do not have the necessary resources.

Minimum core obligations

At a minimum, States are obliged to provide for the 'minimum essential' levels of rights. A failure to provide this minimum is a failure by the State party to discharge its obligations.

Immediate obligations

States have immediate obligations to realise substantive and cross-cutting rights such as equality and non-discrimination; these overarching rights are not subject to progressive realisation. The budgetary process must include mechanisms to deliver transparency, accountability, participation. Citizens should have access to remedies in cases of rights violations.

In 2015, the UN Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights recommended that Ireland ‘consider instituting human rights impact assessments into its policy-making process, particularly in relation to the Covenant rights’. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission note how the Programme for Partnership Government 2016 commits to developing a process of budget and policy proofing ‘as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights’.

The next report on their progress to the UN in 2021 [have requested clarity from IHREC].

The specific rights of children to participate in culture

In Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the specific right of children to participate in culture have been set out:

Article 31

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the Arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

This is complemented by Article 12 on the voice of the child and Article 13 on freedom of expression, including artistic expression.

In the UN's 'Concluding Observations' on Ireland's compliance with the Convention in 2016, it urged Ireland to ensure full adoption of the various rights in the Convention, including a formal mapping of updates, allocation of appropriate budgets and adequate data collection.

The right to participate in culture is cited Culture 2025, underpins the Arts Council's Equality Human Rights and Diversity Strategy and Policy, and has shaped the thinking behind the Creative Ireland programme.

Specifically, the Arts Council notes that it is bound by Public Sector Duty (and equality legislation), which:

'outlaws discrimination and requires all publicly funded organisations to take positive policy measures to promote equality of opportunity, access and outcomes for all those living in Ireland regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, civil or family status, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller Community. Furthermore, the Arts Council notes the ground of socio-economic background as a further basis for which equality of opportunity, access and outcomes must be guaranteed.'

This initiative points to the fact that a systematic plan to fulfil the right to participate in culture for all children is required.

11. Other Issues for Consideration

Other issues that a comprehensive national strategy for arts and social inclusion in education will need to consider include as follows:

- Arts and Life Skills
- Setting targets for the Arts and Social Inclusion in Education
- Interplay between Arts and Science, Arts and Entrepreneurship

- Outreach dimensions to Arts Projects and Engagement – Community and individual outreach
- Arts as processes and methods for teaching
- Digital Literacy and the Arts
- Proposed sustainable funding models for Arts and Social Inclusion in Education
- Community partnership opportunities, including stronger embedding with Local Area Partnerships
- CPD and Arts Education, with a focus on DEIS schools and on school principals
- Role of local authorities
- Schools as Community Lifelong Learning Centre
- Further Models of Good Practice (in communities and schools)
- Early Childhood Education and the Arts

APPENDIX A: Background on Creative Schools Initiative

Elements:

- **Creative Schools Coordinator:** a person or two people from each Creative School is appointed the Creative Schools Coordinator. This person completes the initial paperwork: a long application form, circulating surveys to staff, etc. The Coordinator liaises with the Creative Associate. He/she works with the Associate to choose a creative focus for the school year, through engaging with the children and arranging a vote amongst them. The Coordinator also relays information to the staff involving Creative Schools.
- **Creative Associate:** every school involved in Creative Schools is assigned a Creative Associate. They are someone who works in the Arts, who ideally has contacts in various arts roles. They can engage children in creative workshops and projects themselves, or contact others in the Arts who can work with the school to achieve creative outcomes.
- **Funding:** schools receive €2-4,000 each year to fund the creative projects. Schools can be in the programme for 2 consecutive school years.
- **Training:** all Creative Schools Coordinators received initial training in the September of their first year. This focused on thinking creatively and how to encourage this in children. There were further optional training sessions and Coordinator networking events where Coordinators could share good practice.

APPENDIX B: References to the Arts in DEIS Plans

DEIS Plan 2017. Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools. DES

The Arts nurture a motivation to learn by emphasising active engagement, creativity and innovation, disciplined and sustained attention, persistence and risk taking, among other competencies. The integration of the Arts in education is also part of an inclusivity strategy and can result in strong positive cognitive, emotional, social and collaborative changes in learners. This is particularly relevant to DEIS schools which cater for high numbers of children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds whose access to the Arts may be limited.

One of the objectives of the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 is to create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation by implementing the Arts in Education Charter, launched in 2013, and by the expansion of Music Generation Music Education Partnerships. A mapping exercise will be undertaken under the Arts in Education Charter, which will highlight areas of the country with poor arts in education access and participation for young people. This may highlight disadvantaged schools and areas with a view to using the data to improve access and participation for young people to the Arts in those areas highlighted. Devising an integrated implementation plan for arts in education is also a priority for the Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022 under Pillar 1. The Plan, Arts Rich School Award ARÍS, will be launched in co-operation with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in September 2017 (p43).

Goal 3.11 – Supporting Arts in Education

71 Initiatives under the Arts in Education Charter to take account of the needs of schools in the SSP. Q4 2017 DES

72 Interventions developed by SSP schools around the Arts to be included in school planning and reporting under the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Q4 2017 Schools (p 44).

Action Plan for Education 2017. DES

Junior Cycle Reform: we will continue to implement the new Junior Cycle framework and will implement new Junior Cycle subject specifications for Irish, Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian), visual Arts and develop a range of new short courses. We will award the first cohort of learners (approximately 60,000 students) with the new Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement which will capture a wider range of experiences and competencies (p13).

We will develop new guidelines for schools on Entrepreneurship Education; implement the Arts in Education Charter and the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development including an audit of Education for Sustainable Development in the primary and post-primary curricula (p 48)

Objective 4.6: Create a stronger focus on Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation

108 Implement the Arts in Education Charter, subject to the drawdown of Dormant Account Funding. DES

108.2 Deliver National Arts in Education Day & Conference Q2 DES

108.3 Commence the first new Music Education Partnerships (MEPs), to expand MEPs, under the remit of Music Generation, to up to nine extra areas of the country, a project co-funded by u2/the Ireland Fund and the DES Q3 Music Generation

108.4 Implement Pillar 1 of 'Creative Ireland' Initiative on Arts Rich Schools Initiative, ARIS. Q3 DAHRRGA

108.5 Deliver Teacher/Artist Partnership as a Summer Course in each of the 21 Association of Teachers/ Education Centres in Ireland areas, as a model for CPD. Q4 DES

108.6 Co-operate with D/Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs on implementation of Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022. Q4 DAHRRGA

108.7 Create a National Digital Map of Arts in Education activity throughout the country. Q4 DES

108.8 Develop a National Central Research Repository for Arts in Education Research in Ireland. Q4 DES (p 56/57)

The curriculum is evolving. In 2016, we need to focus on the future needs, abilities and capacity of students. Focus must remain on literacy and maths, but new subjects should be introduced such as the Arts, entrepreneurial education, and mental health awareness (p81)

DEIS 2005 - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools. An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion. DES

In this context, physical education and arts education play a particularly important role in offering learning opportunities which are enjoyable and fulfilling, which encourage creativity, imagination and self-expression and promote skills in the conceptual, physical and affective domains (p45)

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