

CIDREE Arts Expert Group Project

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Summary Report

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A qualitative study to identify and explore resources that are currently being used effectively to build confidence and support teaching the arts in primary education.

Research project question

‘Effective resources to support arts education - how do teachers identify and use resources to effectively support their teaching of the arts?’

Introduction

The idea for this project arose from a discussion at the arts expert group meeting held in Lyon in September 2017. The topic of this meeting was “Art education resources for teachers”. The focus of the meeting was a discussion about the digital resources that are currently available for the professional development of teachers of arts education. The group also discussed the development and integration of arts education within 21st century curricula.

During the discussions in Lyon, group members identified an issue of mutual interest, namely that primary teachers may be confident in teaching some of the arts subjects in the primary curriculum in each country but are rarely confident in teaching all the arts subjects. This discussion on the skills and self-confidence that is required of teachers when teaching the arts in primary schools reflected the discussion at a previous experts group meeting in Utrecht in September 2016. The meeting was organised by SLO Netherlands on the theme, “Experiences with a contemporary curriculum in visual arts and how it contributes to 21st century needs and skills”.

As a result of these discussions, the group members decided to submit a proposal to the CIDREE Board to undertake a research project that would identify resources that are effective (and effectively used) in building confidence and supporting teaching of the arts in primary education.

A subsequent arts expert group meeting held in Dublin in September 2018 was used to discuss the Lyon proposal further and plan it out in more detail, in order to submit it in time for the next CIDREE Council meeting in November 2018. The group’s

proposal was accepted and a small amount of funding was granted for translation into English of each country's summary report contribution.

Background

The arts expert group agreed to design and implement a qualitative study which would incorporate a survey and follow-up interviews. The group agreed to interview a small sample of respondents from each country based on their survey answers. The overall study was designed to provide information on the following.

- The arts in which teachers are less confident.
- The resources they use effectively to support their teaching in the arts.
- How the resources are used and their impact on the teachers' practice.
- The common features of these resources that are applied effectively.
- The needs that remain.

The purpose of the study was both to identify helpful resources and to understand how teachers (and teacher trainers) have used them effectively to support their teaching of arts subjects in which they are less confident.

The research question agreed by the group was: "Effective resources to support arts education - how do teachers identify and use resources to effectively support their teaching of the arts?" This quantitative and qualitative research was carried out by the group between January and June 2019. The focus of the research was on how primary teachers identified and made effective use of resources to assist them in teaching arts subjects, including visual art(s), drama, dance, music. While not all members identified exactly the same arts areas as extant within their own curriculum, it was decided that any variations could be mitigated by adaptations to the study in each country.

The expert group agreed a common set of online survey questions and individual interview questions so that all the responses from the countries involved could be collated and analysed along similar lines.

A meeting was held in Sarajevo in September 2019 to discuss the outcomes from the research question that the group had posed at the Dublin meeting in 2018.

Methodology

Each expert group member

- contributed to designing a common survey and formulating the questions;
- identified the target audience in their country;
- identified a small sample for interview after the survey (the interview questions were compiled after the survey and adapted for each country);
- generated a summary report for their country and arranged for its translation into English, where necessary.

Initially, each of the six countries involved in the project conducted an online survey, which was made available from Monday 11th February to Friday 8th March 2019. From the initial analysis of survey returns in each country, the expert group members engaged in a collaborative analysis of the results throughout April 2019. Corresponding by email, the group discussed and agreed the main themes emerging from the survey and this information was then used to help refine the subsequent interview questions. The group members agreed on the same set of questions to ask the selected teachers in each country. Education Scotland's Improvement and Evaluation team provided advice to the expert group on drafting both the survey questions and the interview questions.

In each country (with the exception of France, where only the survey was undertaken), a small sample of respondents to the survey were chosen to answer the common interview questions. The sample was selected based on the breadth of the teachers' responses to the survey. Interviews were conducted from April to June 2019.

An initial analysis of the interview responses was undertaken by each country during June and July 2019. The group members then each drafted an executive summary of both the survey and interview phases to be used as the basis for discussion during the meeting scheduled to take place in Sarajevo.

The experts group met in Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 2019 to review and evaluate the study in detail and consider recommendations based on the research findings.

The methodologies used, specific to each country, are detailed in each country's summary report. Links to the summary reports may be found in Appendix A. The common survey questions agreed by the group are listed in Appendix B and the common interview questions are listed in Appendix C.

All materials, resources, research and documentation generated are available on the [CIDREE website](#).

Summary of findings

There were a number of similar findings from across the surveys from each country. For example, the majority of primary teachers stated they had most confidence in teaching visual arts and least confidence and experience in teaching dance. Respondents identified that, in general, the key features that were useful in any arts-based resource were that: it was easy to use, understand and apply to the individual teacher's own classroom context, it was clear and consistent in the language used, and that it could be adapted and combined with other resources or across other arts subjects.

The findings also indicated that the more confident a teacher was in the arts-based area they were teaching, then the more likely they would be to develop their own resources. Teachers said that resources need to be interactive and should allow students to be creative. Overwhelmingly, the majority of resources used by teachers

were visual. Although audio-based resources were not included in the survey options, it was noted that they are used fairly extensively and also form an important aspect of video resources. The interviews, conducted with teachers after the online survey closed, provided information that correlated with the survey data. The examples provided gave a more in-depth picture of how the teachers made effective use of a range of arts-based resources.

There were also interesting differences in the data from some of the countries involved. For example, Scotland, until recently, had a widespread system established where visiting teachers, skilled in arts-based subjects, would visit primary schools to teach arts education. The Netherlands established a system of support about ten years ago where cultural institutions work closely with designated Cultural Curriculum Coaches and Coordinators within schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were agreed by the CIDREE arts experts group, at the fourth meeting of the group in Sarajevo, based on the findings from the research project conducted during the period January to June 2019.

1. Resource authors should involve teachers, as the primary users, in the process of resource design.

Some commercial resource providers encourage teachers to contact the company directly to suggest improvements or additions to the resource. In Scotland, some local authorities commission teachers to design resources for schools across the local authority.

2. Resource authors should consider how to provide support for effective use of a resource.

Support might be provided, for example, through training by local authority visiting specialist teachers or training by commercial organisations that provide resources (see Scotland's research summary paper). In addition, primary teachers should be encouraged and given opportunities to share across other schools their effective practice in using arts resources. This should include resources designed by teachers. The French study revealed that many teachers in France are sharing practical resources through individually maintained professional websites.

3. Countries should provide guidance for primary teachers on how to search for and find appropriate, effective resources, as they are added to local and national databases.

The experts group proposes adoption of a simple meta-tagging system (linked to curriculum outcomes) and positive peer review for arts resources. [Dublin Core](#) is an example of agreed system-wide meta tags. Countries will require a repository for resources. The experts group suggests that resources may then be linked and promoted through social media platforms e.g. Facebook, Pinterest etc. Examples of existing repositories include the [Digital Repository of Ireland \(DRI\)](#) and [Glow](#),

Scotland's national education intranet. The Netherlands is also working on developing a digital repository system.

France has a national programme for listing national and regional resources (museums online, arts education organisations etc.). In addition, a national arts education programme, '[Education artistique et culturelle](#)' is being developed under the co-supervision of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education. Many arts resources are available through a shared website for the programme.

4. Countries should find ways to promote resources that teachers have been able to use effectively.

Countries could provide examples, in the form of case studies, of how resources have been used effectively, similar perhaps to those included in the research summary papers from the countries involved in this project.

5. Countries should exemplify solutions to the barriers faced by schools in outlying geographical areas in accessing arts venues.

There are examples of emerging approaches in different countries to using video-conferencing. [Vscene](#) is free for educational use and is being used with increasing frequency across outlying geographical areas in Scotland.

Schools should also be proactive in identifying local artists and performers and inviting them to work with learners. The National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts (LKCA) in the Netherlands has worked with local cultural institutions to train artists to work in primary schools. The programme is called 'Cultuureducatie met kwaliteit' ('Cultural education with quality') <https://www.cultuurparticipatie.nl/>. The Estonian National Curriculum body strongly encourages schools to engage in partnerships with arts organisation and individuals in their local area, including regional schools of music.

6. Countries should develop and make optimum use of networks of people as resources, including staff in local and national bodies, and classroom teachers.

The Netherlands has an effective programme that offers professional learning for teachers to become accredited Cultural Curriculum Coordinators or Cultural Curriculum Coaches (see The Netherlands' research summary paper). The experts group noted the powerful support provided for arts education through this 'train the trainers' programme which effectively strengthens local networks.

In Ireland, the Creative Schools initiative was introduced in 2018, led by the Arts Council in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The initiative enables schools to apply to achieve 'Creative School' status and supports them to collaborate on arts projects. A 'Creative Associates' programme has also been introduced for artists working with schools.

7. Countries should provide and promote opportunities for continuing professional learning for teachers in the different arts disciplines.

These opportunities should focus mainly on pedagogy and aim to increase teachers' self-confidence.

Current examples include the provision in Scotland of national expressive arts workshops that are planned and offered to primary teachers by the expressive arts national network. This network is a collaborative of local authority officers, teachers and initial teacher education lecturers, facilitated by Education Scotland. In Estonia, the standard of professional vocational training is considered to be high. The Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre has a key role in supporting teachers with no academic arts qualification to acquire the qualification through a module system. In addition, higher education institutions offer training to teachers during in-service events.

Appendix A

Survey questions (example from Scotland)

About You

1. Which local authority do you work in? Please tick one response (from list provided)

2. Please indicate how confident you feel in delivering the following expressive arts areas.

	Very confident	Confident	Not very confident	Not confident at all
Art and design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drama	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Do you have a professional or academic qualification in one or more expressive arts subjects?

Yes

No

About Resources

4. What are the key features in a useful expressive arts resource? Please tick all that apply.

- It is simple to understand
- It has clear and consistent language
- It is concise
- It can easily be applied to my context
- There is a good balance between text and pictures
- The design is attractive
- The layout is easy to follow
- It is easy to find online

5. Which of these features do you think are the most important?

6. What type of resources do you use most frequently to support your teaching in expressive arts? Please tick all that apply.

- Visual resource
- Case study
- Video
- Presentation
- Other (please specify):

7. What are the main benefits you experience from using these resources to support your teaching in the arts? Please tick all that apply.

- Increased confidence
- Increased knowledge
- Improved skills and capability to teach arts
- Ideas for new ways of teaching expressive arts
- Other (please specify):

8. Which specific resources do you find most useful in supporting your teaching in expressive arts? Please provide brief details (e.g. title and publisher) or an online link.

Appendix B

Interview questions (example from Scotland)

1. Could you tell me about one or two resources you've been able to use effectively with your pupils?.

Prompts for interviewer

- *How did you hear about the resource(s)?*
- *How did you access it?*
- *How long have you been using it?*

2. What **features** do you think makes the resource an effective one to use with your pupils?.

Prompts for interviewer

- *Is it simple to understand?*
- *Does it use clear and consistent language?*
- *Can it easily be applied to your context?*

3. Please describe **how you have used the resource(s)** with pupils in your classroom.
4. If you can, please describe how the resource(s) contributed to **your own professional development** e.g. improved confidence, greater knowledge and understanding, improved skills.
5. Could you tell me what type of **impact** the resource had on your pupils? e.g. increased engagement with expressive arts, pupils reporting increased enjoyment.

