



Early Childhood Arts

Three Perspectives

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Glossary of Early Childhood Terms

Active learning

involves children learning by doing; using their senses to explore and work with the objects and materials around them. Through these experiences, children develop the dispositions, skills, knowledge, and understanding, attitudes, and values that will help them to grow as confident and competent learners.

Agency

is exercised by children when they feel empowered to make decisions and choices within a supportive social and physical learning environment. Children who exert agency are active agents (and initiators) of their experiences rather than passive recipients of experiences created by others. When children are supported in exerting their agency they also learn about compromise, negotiation, failure, success and resilience (Macfarlane & Cartmel, 2008).

Aistear

(the Irish word for journey) is the *Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 2009.

Assessment

refers to the systematic process of observing, gathering information, documenting and reflecting upon children's learning in order to support and extend this learning appropriately. Assessment of learning is to inform others about children's achievement. Assessment *for* learning uses assessment processes to assist children to learning and develop.

Child-initiated activities

include methods where children take the lead or share the lead with adults in experiences.

Co-construction

is the joint creation of an activity, action, form, stance, interpretation, argument, emotion or any other reality that is culturally meaningful between an educator and a child. In order to co-construct, both participants are involved in learning in partnership within their own social and cultural contexts (Ochs and Jacoby, 1995).

Competent

infers having sufficient knowledge and skill to have achieved a particular purpose. For example, a child knowing and being able to put the bucket of sand down in order to be able to open a door and make it through with the bucket. It is the condition of being able and capable. Children have learning skills and capacities from birth. These skills and capacities can be enhanced through their interactions with family, peers, adults and the wider world.

Constructivism

is the psychological theory emanating from Piaget, Vygotsky and others, which proposes that humans construct their own knowledge, intelligence and morality through a series of stages and often in collaboration with others.

Creative practice

refers to the artist or educator combining their creative and imaginative disposition with excellent facilitation skills to bring to life children's own ideas and skills, often enhancing the creative learning environment already in place in the setting.

This is different in primary education which tends to be more subject oriented, where the artist brings their artistic ability, materials and approach to support children's development in specific art form skills. Of course, in many cases these are not exclusive.

Critical or sensitive periods

are windows of opportunity in time where a child is most receptive to learn with the least amount of effort.

Culture

refers to the ethnic identity, language and traditions which every one of us has. It includes education, ways of thinking, class, food and eating habits, family attitudes to child rearing, and division of family roles according to gender or age. Cultures are neither superior nor inferior to each other. Culture evolves for individuals and communities over time.

Curriculum

entails 'all the experiences, formal and informal, planned and unplanned in the indoor and outdoor environment, which contribute to children's learning and development' (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2009a, p. 54).

Curriculum framework

is a scaffold or a broad outline of educational aims and goals which helps the adult to develop a curriculum for the children in his or her setting.

Development

is the process by which a person changes and grows over time, influenced by both experiences and physiological changes. It has two dimensions: normative (following a prescribed pattern) and dynamic (depending on time and experience).

Developmentally appropriate practice

is educational practice that embraces children's developmental stages. This term has been criticised as it is based on universal laws of development and, without definition, may not be appropriate depending on the cultural context of the children. The term coined in the literature as an alternative is *practice appropriate to the context of early development*.

Dispositions

consist of inherent characteristics of mind and action, and tendencies to respond to situations in characteristic ways that develop through interactions with others. Dispositions that are important for lifelong learning would include a curiosity, an enthusiasm for exploration, communication, perseverance, problem-solving and collaborative action.

Early childhood

is defined as the period before compulsory schooling; in Ireland the early childhood period extends from birth to six years.

Early childhood arts

includes a wide range of different practices and experiences, including artist workshops, performances and residencies in early childhood settings, the creative arts work that takes place in early childhood settings themselves through early childhood educators, and creative arts activities taking place in young children's homes and family lives.

Early childhood artist

is the term used to describe creative professionals or companies in all art-forms (music, visual arts, crafts, photography, dance, theatre, sculpture, literature, environmental arts)

Early childhood educator

is the term used to define all those who work with children in early childhood settings and with children's parents and carers. The term 'educator' is used to emphasise the educative nature of the role rather than the terms 'carer or practitioner', which implies a focus on practice but without educational theory.

Hands-on experiences

are those that are available for children to touch, taste, smell and do allowing children explore social, physical and imaginary worlds.

Heuristic play

involves providing opportunities for toddlers to explore everyday objects and make discoveries within a safe environment.

Higher-order thinking

skills include problem-solving, predicting, analysing, questioning, and justifying (see also thinking skills below).

Hypothesise

is to wonder why something is the way it is and to make a suggestion.

Learning

is a complex, dynamic and interactive process whereby knowledge is created through experience. Formal learning consists of learning experiences which have been planned for the child. Informal learning occurs randomly on a continuous basis as the child interacts with the environment.

Meta-cognitive skills

are those that support children to think about their own learning such as remembering and thinking, reflecting on their work and the usefulness of their current strategies; an ability to evaluate - to think about thinking.

Non-verbal cues

can include any form of communication that does not involve using speech such as facial expressions, gestures, pointing at pictures, body language and use of communication systems such as sign language to facilitate understanding.

Oracy

is the expertise, skill and knowledge involved in effective verbal communication.

Pedagogy

can be conceived of as a holistic, interactive process where one individual contributes to the learning and development in another.

Professional practice

is the term used in recognition of the role of an ECEC educator as a professional. It is also in acknowledgement of the continuously changing nature of what is regarded as best practice at any given time.

Reflective practice

involves adults thinking about their work with children and planning and implementing the curriculum to best support the children's interests and strengths. Observing, listening and discussing with colleagues are key components of reflective practice.

Síolta

(the Irish word for seeds) is *The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*, which was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) in 2006.

Scaffolding

is a metaphor used to describe the process by which adults (and capable peers) support and guide children's learning, enabling children to reach to the next level of ability, beyond their own personal capability at that time. The term was coined by Bruner building on Vygotsky's work.

Socio-culturalism

is interpreted broadly to incorporate the range of perspectives such as social-constructivism, activity theory and post-modern views of co-construction that are currently influential in early childhood care and education (Anning, Cullen and Flear, 2009, p. 1).

Special educational need

in relation to a person refers to, 'a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health, or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition' (Section 1 of the *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004*, see also *Specific requirement*).

Thinking skills

can include questioning (babies having their curiosity interpreted by attentive adults, and when older asking questions); making connections (between people, places and things); reasoning (working things out and later explaining); evaluating (reviewing what they learned); problem-solving (the learner recognises something can be changed and that they have the agency [power] to do it) and creative thinking (seeing many alternative ways of exploring, discovering, finding out about the world and doing).

Working theories

on how the world works are developed by children who are given opportunities to problem-solve, to explore, and supported to access appropriate information. They learn to be creative and adventurous, and to make decisions about themselves as learners.

Zone of proximal development according

to Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) is the distance between the [child's] actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the [child's] level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.



Perspective one:

The Landscape of Early Childhood Education and Care in Ireland – Policy and Provision

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[C]hildren learn from the earliest moment and continue to learn throughout their lives. Education is concerned with all the phases of life, including the very early childhood phase.

Ready to Learn, 1999.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood, children's well-being and early childhood education and care (ECEC) have become a focus of government attention and policy in Ireland over the past decade to an unprecedented extent. At a cultural and constitutional level, the state's role in early childhood has heretofore been tightly conscribed and essentially minimalist. The roots of this lie in our constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann) which positions parents as the primary carers and educators of children with 'inalienable' rights and duties, with the state intervening only in exceptional cases where children are at risk, particularly in the early years (birth to 6) prior to formal education.

It is only in relatively recent years that children's rights and participation as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by the Irish Government in 1992, have been considered and that the dominant developmental discourse which positions children as 'adults in waiting' has been challenged by a social constructionist perspective.¹ More recently still the discourse has moved to consider the concept of *well-being*, across the life course, as a theory to inform policy and a tool for measuring outcomes. The developmental approach continues to underpin thinking to a large extent and is a key driver in the field of education in particular.

However it is important to appreciate that the policy drivers which brought early childhood and children's education and care more to the forefront in Ireland were not operating from a children's rights, wellbeing or even developmental frame. Rather an equality agenda, focusing on women's participation in the labour market², an emphasis on 'smart economies', and a growing body of evidence that early childhood investment paid dividends in terms of prevention of higher social and economic costs through the life course were, and to a large extent remain, the underpinning rationales.³

Nonetheless there has been a growing appreciation and evidence base which recognises the intrinsic value of early education for children's learning and development⁴ and overall well-being, reflected in the fact that early childhood education and care is now an established provision as well as an emerging profession. The inextricable links between care and education in the earliest years of life are long acknowledged but as the discourse evolves the emphasis is shifting to focus on education as the key focus (reflected in the change from early childhood care and education **ECCE** to early childhood education and care **ECEC**) in EU policy⁵ and increasingly in the literature and in professional education and training. This shift in emphasis and more rigorous attention to the value of high quality ECEC is reflected in its inclusion in the Arts in Education Charter, jointly published by the Departments of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht and of Education and Skills in December 2012.⁶

¹ *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood.* James, A. and Prout, A. 1997.

² *Between Work and Care: the shaping of European social citizenship*, Dr. I.L. Bleijenbergh, 2005

³ OECD. *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Background Report.* Carmel Corrigan, Dept of Education and Skills.

⁴ French, G. (2007). *Children's early learning and development.* Background paper for Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework. Commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment: Dublin.

⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:175:0008:0010:EN:PDF>

⁶ <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Arts-In-Education-Charter.pdf>

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early childhood is usually defined as the period from birth to 6 years. The 2011 Census recorded 486,242 children aged up to 6 years living in Ireland. This represents 42% of the child population of 1,148,867, which in turn represents 25% of the total population. Ireland has the highest percentage of children in the EU, where the average is 19%. We currently enjoy the highest birth rate of 27 European Union nations. There were 74,000 babies born in Ireland in 2011.⁷

From the perspective of conceptualisations of children and childhood, a developmentalist paradigm has dominated western/northern thinking strongly shaping education policy nationally and internationally. Historically in most societies and contemporaneously in many parts of the world there was little concept of the extended 'childhood' taken for granted today. The period from birth to 6 was seen as 'infancy' – a time of dependency and care, closeted within the family, from which children emerged as contributors both economically and socially.⁸ Child welfare reforms which had their roots in the 19th Century came to understand children's participation in the workforce, particularly in harsh and often dangerous occupations and conditions, as exploitative and unjust. Access to education was seen as the remedy and indeed a right of childhood and this has become the cornerstone of child related policy and provision since.

Universal access to education, and particularly to free and compulsory education of good quality secured until the minimum age for entry to employment, is a critical factor in the struggle against the economic exploitation of children.⁹

The legal school age for children in Ireland is 6 years of age, but traditionally the vast majority of children start school between ages 4 and 5, spending two years in reception classes (junior / senior infants) before progressing to 1st class – the beginning of formal (and legally mandated) education.¹⁰

A Free Pre-School Year Scheme (FPSY) was introduced with effect from January 2010.¹¹ It is estimated that approximately 100,000 children participate in ECEC services in Ireland with up to 70,000 benefitting from the FPSY.

In the earlier years, services for children aged birth – 3 are mainly focused on daycare provision for working parents. Local community services such as parent and toddler groups and parent support groups are largely ad hoc and frequently self-organised by groups of parents or community groups on a sessional, daily or weekly basis.

⁷ <http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/1220/359766-esri-birth-rate/>. Retrieved 27.5.2013

⁸ Cunningham, H. 2006, *The Invention of Childhood*

⁹ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education/child-workers>

¹⁰ However both in terms of class sizes and teacher training, infant 'classes' are not consistent with evidence based good practice for early years provision. Hayes and O'Flaherty, 1997.

¹¹ <http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.aspx?fn=/documents/childcare/GuidetotheProgrammeAdministrativeProceduresforServiceProvidersandParents.htm> Retrieved December 20, 2012

POLICY STRUCTURE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD IN IRELAND

Policy responsibility for early years rests with a number of Government Departments: Primarily Education and Skills, Children and Youth Affairs, and the HSE through the Department of Health. Pre-school regulation and inspection services, established in 1996, are currently operated by the HSE, but are to come under the auspices of the soon to be developed Children and Families Unit within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs¹² (see fig.1).

A number of structures and agencies have been established to support the implementation of policy and the development of provision e.g. to administer grant aid (Pobal), co-ordinate and promote development (City and County Childcare Committees) and focus on research (Early Years Education Policy Unit), regulation of standards (Preschool Inspection Service), curriculum (NCCA) and training (QQI).

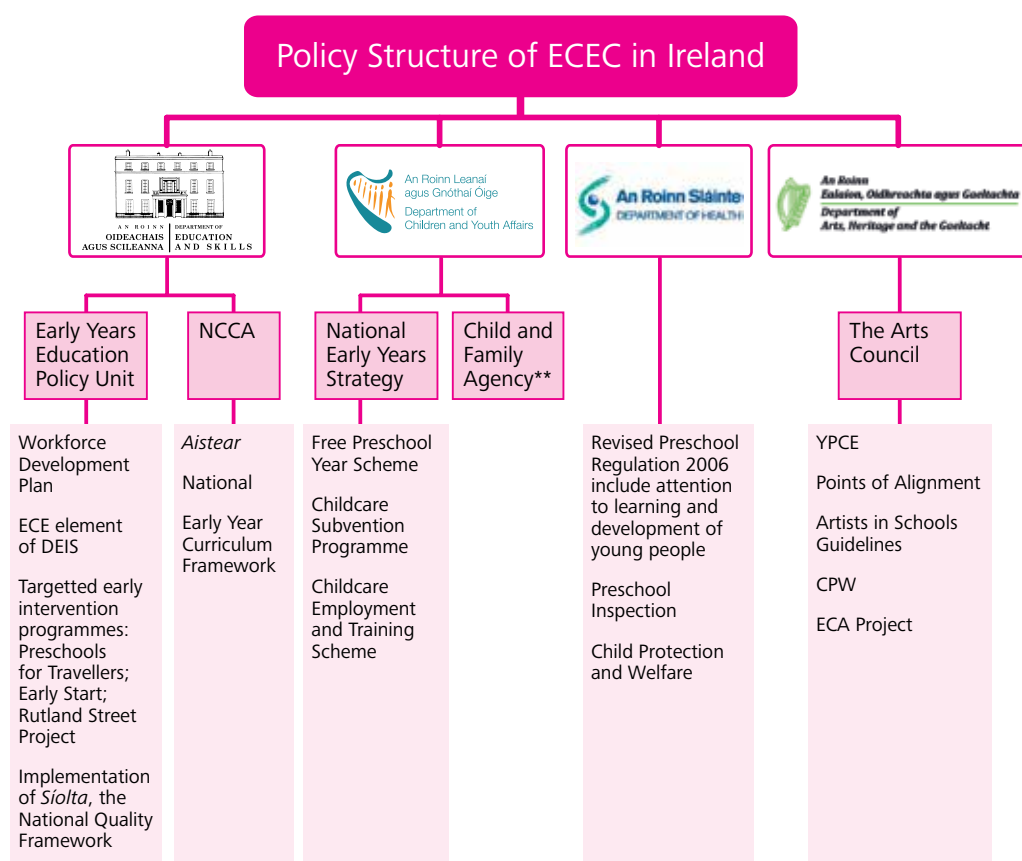


Fig. 1: Policy Structure of ECEC in Ireland

**The Child and Family Agency is a new stand alone agency being established under the auspices of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It will have responsibility for child protection and welfare, including the regulation and inspection of pre-school services currently under the remit of the HSE.

¹² Report of the Taskforce on the Child and Family Agency, July 2012
<http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/ChildFamilySupportAgency/TaskForceReport.pdf>

THE EVOLUTION OF ECEC POLICY IN IRELAND

The landscape of early childhood services and policy has been evolving rapidly over the past 25 years. On a comparative basis, Ireland ranks highly on measures of educational well-being¹³ coming 5th in a total of 30 countries. However, early childhood provision has grown dramatically, from an extremely low base by EU standards. This has been achieved, largely through targeted investment of EU structural and social inclusion funding.

However, in terms of quality, accessibility and affordability Ireland ranks poorly relative to other EU countries with low rates of public investment, approx. 0.25% of GDP compared to the recommended 1% in Denmark and 0.8% in Norway.¹⁴

Prior to 1990, there was very limited policy focus on early childhood in Ireland. The establishment of the New Opportunities for Women (NOW) programme created an impetus to enable higher levels of participation by women in the labour market, with childcare being seen as an 'ancillary and technical' measure required to give effect to this ambition. This gave rise to the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP), a programme of capital investment in childcare development. Before this initiative there was very little capacity in the childcare sector and most provision operated on an informal extended family or 'black economy' and mainly invisible model of childminding or through private or community providers (e.g. the Community Playgroup movement). A small range of services were (and are) provided, largely at the behest of the then Health Boards, to children whose welfare was at risk.

But significant change was imminent. Following years of lobbying by community groups and an impetus from Europe, An Expert Working Group on Childcare and the National Childcare Strategy arose from the national agreement Partnership 2000 (Government of Ireland, 1997), which ran from 1997 to the end of 1999. Following this, the National Development Plan 2000–2006 targeted the development of childcare as a key action. A white paper on early learning, *Ready to Learn*, was published in 1999. Based on its recommendations the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) was established in 2002 and operated until 2008 (when it was abolished and absorbed into the Early Years Education Policy Unit of the Department of Education and Science. Along with a substantial body of research, the CECDE developed *Síolta*, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education in Ireland (2006).

Since 2000 there has been a concentrated focus on policy development in relation to children in Ireland. The National Children's Strategy (2000–2010) was developed to give expression to the Irish State's commitments under the UNCRC. It was hailed as a visionary and exemplary strategy. However, while the Strategy achieved or made significant progress on many of its objectives, it was hampered by *the lack of a clear implementation plan driving delivery and outlining practical issues such as budget, timeframe and accountability*.¹⁵

Currently the DCYA are engaged in the development of a Children and Young Peoples Policy Framework which is a continuation of and the replacement for the National Children's Strategy 2000–2010. A National Early Years Strategy which will form part of the Framework and will focus on improving the lives and outcomes for all children from birth to 6 years, particularly through the provision of universal services. The Policy Framework includes a strand on children's participation, including their access to and participation in arts and cultural activities.

¹³ *Doing Better for Children* © OECD 2009

¹⁴ OECD. Family Database 2012.

¹⁵ <http://www.childrensrights.ie/resources/ten-years-did-national-children%E2%80%99s-strategy-deliver-its-promises>

INVESTMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Over the decade 2000 to 2010, the State, initially in partnership with the EU, invested €425 million capital funding to create childcare places throughout Ireland. Much of this development arose under the National Development Plan, 2000-2006 through which the majority of funding for the development of childcare facilities was channelled (EOCP as above). In essence, this was a labour market / equality stimulus strategy. Approximately 65,000 additional childcare places were created, greatly improving the availability and accessibility of services to children and families.

In 2000 the first National Children's Strategy was published. It was an ambitious 10 year strategy intended to give effect to the obligations attaching to ratification of the UNCRC. Among its objectives was a commitment that:

"Children's early education and development needs will be met through quality childcare services and family-friendly employment measures" (NCO 2000, page 50).

Between 2000 and 2012 the number of childcare and early educational facilities in Ireland increased from 2,029 to in excess of 4,500.¹⁶ Circa 4,500 pre-school services are notified to the HSE and Childminding Ireland has a membership register of approximately 1,000 members. It is estimated that there are at least five times that many that are unregistered.¹⁷ However, in contrast to most of our European neighbours, the costs of childcare are borne almost exclusively by parents with little or no state subvention. Increases in Child Benefit were rationalised as the state's contribution to the costs of childcare, as well as a measure to reduce child poverty. Additional initiatives included a €1,014 per annum childcare payment for each child under six, introduced in 2006 but subsequently withdrawn and replaced with a universal Free Preschool Year (FPSY) in 2010.

¹⁶ Based on number of services registered for FPSY and HSE lists of registered services per County.

¹⁷ <http://www.childminding.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Narrative-Report-2011-Childminding-Ireland.pdf>

FREE PRE-SCHOOL YEAR SCHEME

In January 2010 a universally available preschool year was introduced. All children aged more than 3 years 2 months and less than 4 years 7 months at 1 September in the relevant pre-school year are eligible for this scheme, which provides 3 hours of preschool, 5 days per week for 38 weeks a year. The programme is provided in both community and private crèches and it would appear that the vast majority of notified settings participate (4,500).

The free preschool year has been widely welcomed and been very successful in terms of take up. About 95% of eligible services and 94% of the target population, equating to 63,000 children participated in 2010 from the outset.¹⁸ This effectively has created a level of universality in early childhood provision previously only associated with Primary school. Recent statements by Minister for Education Ruairí Quinn, and Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton indicate a recognition of the value of early childhood education and herald a future extension of the provision to two years duration. The 2011/2012 school year is the first in which the vast majority of Irish children have entered primary school having completed a full year in preschool and data is being collected on the impact of this. According to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, anecdotally schools have reported higher levels of school readiness which is one positive outcome of the scheme.

However universal provision in itself will not guarantee positive outcomes for children, unless the quality of provision is high. Certainly some provision is of a high standard, but there are clear indicators, both in terms of professional training and adoption of quality frameworks that standards are variable on a spectrum from excellent to unacceptable.

To this end, both the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs and Education and Skills have committed to focus their work on the implementation of quality frameworks (*Síolta*) and curriculum (*Aistear*) over the coming years. In addition, a workforce development plan has been published¹⁹ to up skill and increase the standards of education and training of practitioners and educators across the sector.

¹⁸ Oireachtas Library and Research Service. (2012). *Spotlight: Early childhood education and care*. No 4. Dublin: Oireachtas Library and Research Service.

¹⁹ Workforce Development Plan for the early childhood care and education sector in Ireland, Department of Education and Skills. (2010).

QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN IRELAND

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) can bring a wide range of benefits – for children, parents and society at large. However, these benefits are conditional on “quality”. Expanding access to services without attention to quality will not deliver good outcomes for children or long-term productivity benefits for society.²⁰

As noted, high quality is essential to achieving optimum outcomes for children in ECEC. The quality of provision in Ireland’s early care and education services is uneven and variable, and affordability and accessibility remain serious problems for a large proportion of families with young children. Excluding families and the infant classes in primary schools, ECEC continues to be largely provided by the private, voluntary and community sector, with a limited range of services provided or contracted by the state for children experiencing disadvantage or whose welfare is deemed to be at risk. This results in a diversity of services which include part and full day provision, in pre-schools (including Irish language naíonraí), playgroups, crèches, childminders and home based care (nannies, au pairs). Different approaches operate in different settings with a variety of curricula and philosophies such as Froebel, HighScope, Montessori, Steiner, and play-based philosophies and sometimes a combination of the above. A regulatory and inspection system, operated by the HSE under Section 7 of the Childcare Act 1991/2006 applies to group and home based services catering for more than six children under 6 years of age.

While small proportions of staff are third level graduates, the standard qualification level (FETAC 5) is low and 25% of staff is below this level. And though Ireland has an excellent national quality framework (*Síolta*) and a curriculum framework (*Aistear*), these have not been comprehensively rolled out. As a result, the quality of education and care services is very inconsistent. In this respect the truism that childhood in Ireland is ‘policy rich but implementation poor’ certainly applies.

FRAMEWORKS FOR EARLY LEARNING QUALITY AND CURRICULUM – *Síolta* and *Aistear*

Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, was developed by the then Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.²¹ It was published in 2006.²²

Síolta is designed to define, assess and support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in early childhood care and education (ECEC) settings where children aged birth to six years are present. These settings include:

- Full and Part-time Daycare
- Childminding
- Sessional services
- Infant classes in primary schools

*Aistear*²³ is the early childhood curriculum framework for all children from birth to six years in Ireland. It was the outcome of many years of research, consultation, planning, and development by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in partnership with the early childhood sector in Ireland and abroad. *Aistear* describes the types of learning (dispositions, values and attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding) that are important for children in their early years, and offers ideas and suggestions as to how this learning might be nurtured. The Framework also provides guidelines on supporting children's learning through partnerships with parents, interactions, play, and assessment.

The *Aistear* curriculum, which draws heavily on the New Zealand *Te Whariki*²⁴ curriculum, is thematically based, and influenced by emerging sociology of childhood perspectives. The themes of *Aistear* are:

- Well-being
- Identity and Belonging
- Communicating
- Exploring and Thinking

The *Aistear* framework readily lends itself to the creation of an arts rich environment and practice as evidenced in the documented research undertaken by a number of arts organisations and partnerships recently.²⁵

Well-being *Aistear* Theme:

1. express themselves creatively and experience the arts
2. express themselves through a variety of types of play
3. develop and nurture their sense of wonder and awe
4. become reflective and think flexibly

²¹ The CECDE was abolished in 2008 and the Early Years Education Policy Unit, in the Department of Education and Skills, has taken responsibility for the implementation of *Síolta*.

²² <http://www.siolta.ie/about.php>

²³ http://www.ncca.biz/Aistear/pdfs/PrinciplesThemes_ENG/Principles_ENG.pdf

²⁴ *Te Whariki* is the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, published in 1996.

<http://www.educate.ecce.govt.nz/~media/Educate/Files/Reference%20Downloads/whariki.pdf>

²⁵ McKenna, A. (2013). *Open the Door: Experience, change and legacy from the Kid's Own Being and Belonging Early Years Project* Tiny Voices – a 16 week early years music pilot project, is a partnership between Common Ground, The Base (Ballyfermot) and Early Childhood Ireland. The research was carried out by Mairead Berrill and is co-published with St Patrick's College and in association with University College Cork

Both *Síolta* and *Aistear* stress the importance of the adult in supporting the optimal well-being, learning and development of the child reflecting contemporary thinking in effective pedagogy.

IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

The developments of both *Síolta* and *Aistear* have placed an increased emphasis on training and professional development, as their implementation depends on the availability of a skilled and educated workforce. *The centrality of highly skilled, knowledgeable and competent adults supporting children's early learning and development, is also a fundamental premise upon which Síolta and Aistear are built* (Department of Education and Science, 2009: 8).²⁶

A 12 step *Síolta* Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) has been developed whereby ECEC settings carry out a range of activities including; baseline self assessment, action planning and quality development work, evidence collection and portfolio building. The setting is supported in this activity by an experienced, qualified mentor (*Síolta* Mentor) who has been trained to guide the setting through each step of the QAP. At the conclusion of these activities, the ECEC setting submits the completed *Síolta* portfolio for external validation. There is no equivalent process in relation to *Aistear*. An *Aistear* Toolkit has been developed and is available through the NCCA.²⁷

The development and dissemination of *Síolta* the National Quality Framework and the development of the *Aistear* curriculum has provided a useful set of resources for ECEC educators, albeit that the evaluation of the implementation of *Síolta* found a number of challenges for early childhood practitioners in its implementation, not least the 'arcane' language and an ambiguity in terms of standards and practice.²⁸

However, to date implementation has been limited and, in the case of *Aistear* in particular there is no statutory or regulatory mandate, nor is there a national implementation plan to ensure its dissemination and adoption by ECEC settings.

²⁶ Department of Education and Science. (2009). *Developing the workforce in the early childhood care and education sector*. Background discussion paper.

²⁷ http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Early_Childhood_and_Primary_Education/Early_Childhood_Education/Aistear_Toolkit/

²⁸ Goodbody Consultants: *The Evaluation of Síolta: Final Report December 2011*

EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS AND EDUCATORS' EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN IRELAND

National and international research has established that the skills and qualifications of adults working with young children is a critical factor in determining the quality of young children's early childhood care and education experiences.

Department of Education and Skills, 2010

The education and training of early childhood educators in Ireland is diverse and uneven yet it is widely recognised that central to the achievement of high quality standards is the professionalisation of the workforce. A recent survey undertaken by Pobal²⁹ found that 87% of staff in early childhood services had qualifications at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, a significant increase from 76% the previous year. However the proportion of staff with degree-level qualifications remains low, with only 12% of staff at Level 7 or above. Thirteen percent have no formal qualifications.³⁰ There is no regulatory standard for qualifications or experience to work in early years settings in Ireland, although criteria for services to offer the free preschool year included a requirement for the 'room leader' to have attained FETAC level 6 accreditation.³¹

The range and availability of professional education and training for early year's educators and practitioners has also grown substantially in recent years, particularly since the establishment of FETAC in 2001. A number of universities and Institutes of Technology and Colleges of Education now provide honours degree level courses (level 7/8) in early childhood and Froebel College and NUI Maynooth are jointly offering a new BA in Early Childhood Education. The numbers of students and experienced practitioners undertaking post graduate courses, research and higher level degrees have increased, however many of these graduates do not take up career options in early childhood settings. Training at Fetac level 5 and 6 is widely available through private providers and VEC or FÁS. Courses in specific curricula or approaches such as Montessori, Froebel, and HighScope are available, usually through private providers, in addition to a number of Institutes of Technology and some colleges of education.

A Workforce Development Plan was published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2010. Its key objective is to ensure that:

- all staff engaged in the provision of early childhood care and education services for young children and their families are appropriately qualified for their role and responsibilities.

Its vision is that the workforce would be supported to achieve qualifications that will equip it to *deliver high quality, enriching early childhood care and education experiences for all children aged birth to six years.*³²

To date concrete steps have been taken to progress these ambitions. These include the requirement for qualified staff in settings offering the FPSY, including a higher

²⁹ Pobal Annual Survey of the Early Years Sector, 2012.

³⁰ Barnardos / Start Strong Towards a Scandinavian Childcare System for 0–12 in Ireland. November 2012

³¹ A new agency: Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in 2012 based on an amalgamation of FETAC, HETAC, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Irish Universities Quality Board IUQB.

³² Department of Education and Skills. (2010). *A workforce development plan for the early childhood care and education sector in Ireland*

level of capitation grant for centres with staff qualified at degree level. In terms of implementation of the WDP, the Early Years Education Policy Unit has been tasked with:

- Development, publication and dissemination of public information associated with the implementation plan.
- Collection of relevant data from all agencies involved in the implementation plan.
- Monitoring progress against benchmarks that will be agreed with the further and higher education providers.
- Monitoring the implementation of the Workforce Development Plan for the ECEC sector and publishing progress reports on a biennial basis.

Recent revelations of poor practice in some ECEC settings have sharpened the focus on the urgent need for quality assurance and the need to ensure the workforce is adequately trained and qualified. The Workforce Development plan does not specify targets for a desirable ratio or type of qualification or indeed a timeframe by which all staff should be trained.

INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ECEC

Internationally, there is a growing body of literature and evidence based policy which supports the development of high quality ECEC as an integral aspect of education, children's rights and well-being and as a worthwhile and validated social and economic policy strategy. (See also Supporting the growth of early childhood arts practice in Ireland paper prepared by Early Arts UK).

The Delors report (1996) summarised the essence of education as:³³

- learning to know: developing one's concentration, memory skills and ability to think
- learning to do: communication, team and problem solving skills, ability to take initiative
- learning to live together: empathy, curiosity, and strong interpersonal skills
- learning to be: developing imagination and creative expression, ability to know oneself and know others

The OECD report, *Starting Strong III*³⁴ introduces five policy levers that are found to be effective in encouraging quality in ECEC by international research:

- 1 Setting out quality goals and regulations.
- 2 Designing and implementing curriculum and standards.
- 3 Improving qualifications, training and working conditions.
- 4 Engaging families and communities.
- 5 Advancing data collection, research and monitoring.

A UNESCO/Brooking report (2013) *What every child should learn* identified 7 domains of learning across pre-primary, primary and second level education. These are:

- Physical well-being
- Social and emotional
- Culture and the arts
- Literacy and communication
- Numeracy and mathematics
- Science and technology

Specifically Culture and the arts included sub domains of:

- Creative Arts
- Cultural Knowledge
- Self and Community Identity
- Awareness of and respect for Diversity.

Examples of learning to be accessed included:

Creative expression, including activities from areas of music, theatre, dance or creative movement and the visual, media and literary arts. Also cultural expression in families, schools, community and country.

³³ The Delors Report was published by UNESCO and the International Commission on 21st Century Education (1996).

³⁴ Op cite OECD 2012

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the rationale for an Arts Council strategy on Early Childhood Arts is both timely and consistent with the broader policy frameworks of policy and attention to ECEC in Ireland. The evidence for the value of high quality ECEC is incontrovertible and the contribution that high quality arts practice can contribute is compelling.

The coming together of the Arts in Education Charter, *Aistear (National Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, 2009)* and the long awaited establishment of universal access to early childhood education through the Free Preschool Year (FPSY) creates the unprecedented opportunity to position early childhood arts as a right and a core experience of childhood.

In that respect, the next two papers in this suite of documents: (1) *Place of the Arts in Early Childhood Learning and Development*; and (2) *Supporting the Growth of Early Childhood Arts Practice in Ireland*; provide the evidence base for the contribution of early childhood arts to children, parents and Society and the rationale for development of this area of artistic endeavour, at this time and into the future.



Perspective two:

The Place of the Arts in Early Childhood Learning and Development

Dr Geraldine French
July 2013

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Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow'. His name is 'Today'.

Gabriela Mistral¹

INTRODUCTION

This paper has been commissioned by Arts Council Ireland to inform the development of a national strategy for early childhood arts in Ireland. The paper is based on contemporary thinking and knowledge of child psychology, early learning and development and childhood studies, in particular the theoretical principles and pedagogical approaches to early childhood art-based learning.

It begins with an exploration of the concept of pedagogy. International research on the importance of effective pedagogy in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is then discussed setting out the evidence and rationale for public policy attention to the area of the arts in early childhood. Pedagogical organisation or framing is then considered along with the underpinning concepts of supporting children's creativity, thinking and language relevant to the practice of early childhood arts. The importance of interactions between novices and experts (adults and learners) is highlighted throughout and specific interaction strategies thought to enhance children's learning are identified. The principles underpinning early learning and development in relation to how children learn are then outlined. Finally, drawing in part from the literature on effective pedagogy, and the principles underpinning early childhood education, contemporary perspectives on children and those who work with very young children (incorporating both early childhood artists and early childhood educators) are presented.

While acknowledging that the field of early childhood education and care is evolving in Ireland with the consequent need for the professional development of the sector the term early childhood educator is employed. This shift in terminology from the more traditional term 'practitioner' is influenced by Amelia Gambetti² of the Reggio Emilia schools in Northern Italy who highlighted that to concentrate on the word 'practice' and avoid the word 'teacher' or 'educator' is to remove the theory of education and pedagogy from the practice. In this paper the term early childhood educator is used to emphasise the educative nature of the role, to foreground that children are learning from birth and to inspire the professional development of the sector.

A socio-cultural understanding of children's learning is adopted to inform this paper, predicated on the dynamic nature of the approach and the emphasis on children learning through interactions with others. Since children learn with the support of others, early childhood artists and educators are thus challenged to take a proactive role in children's learning and in their pedagogical practice in early childhood education and art settings.

¹ Mistral, G. (1948). *His name is today*.

² Gambetti, A. (2010). *How can our daily experiences with young children inform planning and policy making for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Regional Seminar hosted by the National Children's Nurseries Association. Held on April 29th, in the Clock Tower, Malborough Street, Dublin.

WHAT IS PEDAGOGY?

In the context of early childhood education, a commonly used definition of pedagogy is the practice, the art, the science, or the craft of teaching.^{3, 4, 5} Moyles, Adams and Musgrave⁶ represent pedagogy as a more reflective act, encompassing both the act of instruction and the ability to discuss and reflect on it. Pedagogy therefore involves *"the principles, theories, perceptions and challenges that inform and shape it"*.⁷ Pedagogy, in this sense, connects the role of an early childhood educator and artist with personal, ethical, cultural and community values, the curriculum and outside influences. This definition complements a socio-cultural understanding, depicting pedagogy in the early years as operating not only from *"a shared frame of reference (a mutual learning encounter) between the educator, the young child and his/her family"*⁸, but also the cultural context of the educator and the artist.

There is one key element missing in the definitions above; the dialogical and relational nature of pedagogy between one human being and the other. The concept of relational pedagogy in ECEC has been elucidated by Papatheodorou and Moyles.⁹ Relational pedagogy focuses on the connections between people, ideas and places and the impact of these relationships on education, educators and learners. This concept draws, in part, from Freire and other progressive educators who strongly oppose education systems which focus on transmission of knowledge which is disconnected from the experiences of the learner. Freire¹⁰ described education as a dialogue, which goes beyond deepening understanding between people. Such dialogue cannot take place without love for mankind and the world; *"love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself"*. True dialogue where each person has an equal voice, without domination of one over the other, is marked by humility, faith in man's abilities, hope, mutual trust and critical thinking. Relational pedagogy places communication and interactions at the core of educational practice and underpins both social, cognitive and therefore creative development.¹¹

Relational pedagogy is closer to the concept of pedagogy in early childhood that has evolved in those countries who inherited a social pedagogical tradition, such as the Nordic and Central European communities. As outlined in *Starting Strong II* the pedagogue embraces a holistic view of children. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *"This is not the child only of emotions – the psycho-therapeutical approach; nor only of the body – the medical or health approach; nor only of the mind – the traditional teaching approach"*.¹² For the pedagogue, these are inter-connected elements of each child's life, not compartments needing to be addressed separately. But this is not simply a philosophical ideal.

³ Watkins, C. & Mortimore, P. (1999). Pedagogy: What do we know? In P. Mortimore (Ed.). *Understanding pedagogy and its impact on learning* (pp. 1–19). London: Chapman.

⁴ Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2004). Quality teaching in the early years. In A. Anning, J. Cullen, & M. Flear (Eds.). *Early childhood education: Society and culture* (pp. 137–148). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

⁵ Papatheodorou, T. (2009). Exploring relational pedagogy. In T. Papatheodorou & J. Moyles (Eds.). *Learning together in the early years: Exploring relational pedagogy* (pp. 3–18). Oxon: Routledge.

⁶ Moyles, J., Adams, S., & Musgrave, A. (2002). *Study of pedagogical effectiveness in early learning*. Research Report No. 363. London: Department for Education and Skills.

⁷ Op cite, p.5.

⁸ Op cite, p.5.

⁹ Papatheodorou, T. & Moyles, J. (Eds.). (2009). *Learning together in the early years: Exploring relational pedagogy*. Oxon: Routledge.

¹⁰ Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 77–78.

¹¹ Papatheodorou, T. & Moyles, J. (Eds.). (2009). *Learning together in the early years: Exploring relational pedagogy*. Oxon: Routledge.

¹² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2006). *Starting strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, p.59.

Bowman, Donovan and Burns provide research evidence from the US that early childhood programmes “*must attend to cognitive, social and emotional development simultaneously*” in order to have a positive impact.¹³ Young children will be enabled to learn more effectively if they are anchored by the emotional support, respect and acceptance of a nurturing adult.

Pedagogy also relates to the dual role of educator and learner. Watkins and Mortimore¹⁴ cogently identified pedagogy as any activity consciously designed by one individual to contribute to learning in another. Thus, the educator is a learner and the learner is an educator. These dual roles reflect the discussion above in relation to the reciprocity of participants in learning encounters¹⁵, combined with equality and mutual trust of participants.¹⁶ Rogoff¹⁷, in a discussion on adults as experts facilitating novices’ learning, focuses on interactions between individuals of varying expertise. She provides a useful concept to consider the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning. She refers to expert and novice in relation “*to the activity in question, not absolute designations*”.¹⁸ In the context of children’s learning, children and adults therefore are not on different sides, but can collaborate in varying responsibilities and roles and become a community of learners. Children can be experts and adults novices.

Pedagogy defined in this way is a dynamic, interactive and collaborative process. This process should be underpinned by trust, love and care, reflection, mutual respect, and understanding. Educators, artists and learners/experts and novices engage with each other in mutual learning encounters integrated within the socio-cultural activities of the participants. But why is pedagogy, a term traditionally associated with primary teaching, considered important in early childhood? The answer is addressed in the next section.

¹³ Bowman, B., Donovan, S. & Burns, S., eds., (2001). *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers*. Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy, National Research Council. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, p.58.

¹⁴ Watkins, C. & Mortimore, P. (1999). Pedagogy: What do we know? In P. Mortimore (Ed.). *Understanding pedagogy and its impact on learning* (pp. 1–19). London: Chapman.

¹⁵ Moyles, J., Adams, S., & Musgrave, A. (2002). *Study of pedagogical effectiveness in early learning*. Research Report No. 363. London: Department for Education and Skills.

¹⁶ Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin

¹⁷ Rogoff, B. (1998). Cognition as a collaborative process. In D. Kuhn & R. Siegler (Eds.). *Handbook of Child Psychology* (pp. 679-744; 5th ed.). New York: John Wiley.

¹⁸ Op cite, p.699.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY IN ECEC

An ambitious anti-poverty early intervention programme called Sure Start was established in the United Kingdom, opening its first centre in 1999. It concentrated on early education and care in areas of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage. It was established as a result of the findings of a Comprehensive Spending Review¹⁹ commissioned by the Labour government. In this review the impact of high quality ECEC was found in all social groups but was most significant in children living with poverty. Parallel to that, two significant research projects relating to effective early education were funded by the UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES). With their focus on the identification of the components of effective pedagogy for young children, they serve as a useful foundation for this paper. These components are equally relevant to early childhood artists and educators.

The first research project, Effective Provision for Pre-school Education (EPPE), was a longitudinal study which began in 1997. It aimed to investigate the types of early childhood education and care provision which were most effective in promoting children's progress and development.²⁰ The resulting evidence was based on 141 randomly selected early childhood centres, providing ECEC for a total of 2,800 three and four year old children in six local authorities in England and in excess of 300 children cared for in homes. The study demonstrated that high quality early childhood education does make a significant difference for all children in terms of attainment for those cohorts in centre-based education. The greatest gains were found for children who were identified as disadvantaged based on a range of one or more indicators, including: English was not their first language; they lived in a family of three or more children; they had a low birth weight; their mother had no educational qualifications; one parent was unemployed; and they grew up in a single parent household.²¹

The EPPE study also suggested that families who are disadvantaged can provide a supportive learning environment with good learning outcomes for their children. The EPPE project found that it was what the parents *did* (for example playing with children, reading stories, engaging in creative arts experiences) that significantly influenced children's learning outcomes, and not their socio-economic status based on the indicators of disadvantage above. Likewise, in the settings it was what educators *did* (providing rich early learning experiences, meeting individual needs, and especially interacting meaningfully with children) that made the significant differences to children's outcomes.²²

The findings from the EPPE study formed the basis of a second comprehensive, rigorous research project Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY).²³ The researchers employed the children's outcome data from the EPPE study in relation to academic, social and dispositional learning to determine effective settings. Intensive case studies were then conducted in 12 of the most effective settings and two

¹⁹ Comprehensive Spending Review. (1998). *Cross departmental review of provision for young children*. Supporting papers Volume 1 & Volume 2. London: Her Majesty's Treasury.

²⁰ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., Elliot, K. (2003). *The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Findings from the pre-school period*. Brief No: RBX15-03. London: Department for Education and Skills.

²¹ Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2004). Educational disadvantage in the early years: How do we overcome it? Some lessons from research. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 12(2), 5-20.

²² Op cite

²³ Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R. & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years*. Research Report No. 356. London: Department for Education and Skills.

recommended reception classes. As a result the most effective pedagogical strategies to support the attainment, progress and development of children were identified. The key findings of the REPEY project relevant to this paper were that the pedagogy in the most effective settings was characterised by:

- an equal emphasis on social and cognitive development, where both are seen as complementary;
- educator knowledge and understanding of child development and learning, and providing appropriate cognitive challenge;
- strategic planning for a wide range of curriculum experiences; and
- the quality of adult-child verbal interactions through ‘sustained shared thinking’, open-ended questioning and extension of children’s thoughts.²⁴

High quality education and care is ensured by a number of factors, one of which is the quality of the educators. High quality educators are responsive and sensitive to the individual children’s needs, and stimulate the cognitive development of the children.²⁵ The structural environment is also significant. High quality structural environments contain high staff-child ratios, small group size, ongoing and professional training.²⁶ The physical learning environment contributes to quality early education when it is aesthetically pleasing with a rich variety of materials which stimulate curiosity and exploration, carefully arranged and stored for accessibility in interest/learning areas.^{27, 28, 29} Furthermore, it is considered that “*the single most important determinant of high quality ECEC is the interaction between children and staff*”.³⁰

A comprehensive study conducted in the United States was designed to identify the factors that make the greatest difference to young children’s outcomes.³¹ The purpose of the study was to make recommendations to policy makers on where to best direct resources. Consistent with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and the REPEY study, the data revealed that goals for early education may only be achievable if programmes ensure high-quality teacher-child interactions.³² The findings above suggest that a focus on the interactions of early childhood artists with children is important.

Well-designed early education programmes are shown to engender benefits for the participants themselves, government and society.³³ These benefits are reported to

²⁴ Op cite

²⁵ Op cite

²⁶ Op cite

²⁷ Hohmann, M., Weikart, D. & Epstein, A. (2008). *Educating young children*, (2nd ed.). USA: The High/Scope Press.

²⁸ Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W.S., Belfield, C.R., & Nores, M. (2004). Lifetime effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 40. *Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation*, 14. Ypsilanti, Michigan: High/Scope Press.

²⁹ Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S, Gilden, R. & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years*. Research Report No. 356. London: Department for Education and Skills

³⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. (2006). *Strong Foundations: Early childhood care and education*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation p.6.

³¹ Burchinal, M., Vandergrift, N., Pianta, R., & Mashburn, A. (2010). Threshold analysis of association between child care quality and child outcomes for low income children in pre-kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(2), 166–176.

³² In the REPEY study ‘pedagogical’ interactions are the precise cognitive or social interactions actively undertaken by educators in face to face encounters with individual children (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002).

³³ Karoly, L.A. & Bigelow, J.H. (2005). *The economics of investing in universal preschool education in California*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

outweigh the costs.³⁴ "A number of longitudinal studies have shown rates of return from \$4 to \$17 for every dollar invested" over the life cycle.³⁵ The rates of return to the same investment made in a person of a given ability at different ages are demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

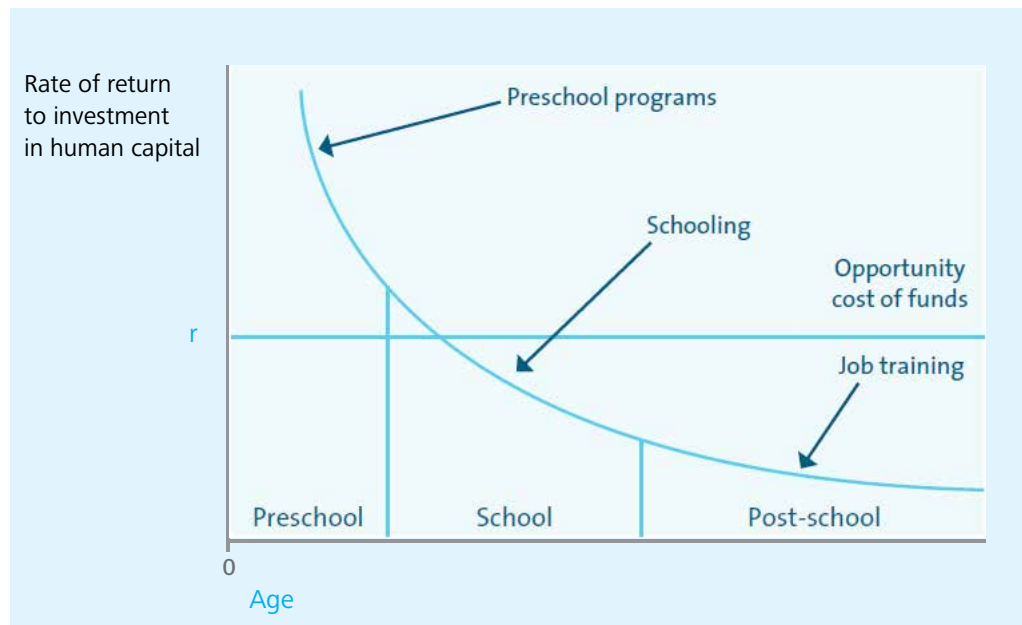


Fig. 1: Rates of return over the life cycle³⁶

The case has been made in Ireland for "targeting expenditure where returns are greatest".³⁷ This has resulted in an unprecedented policy focus on education and care for children in the years before compulsory schooling in Ireland. This policy focus is warranted. We now know without question that high quality early childhood education and care reaps measurable gains in thinking and social skills for all children. Early childhood arts therefore have a significant role to play in children's learning and development. However, optimal conditions for children's early creative learning and development must be supported.

³⁴ Heckman, J. (2006). *The economics of investing in children*. UCD Geary Institute, Research Analysis Evidence, Policy Briefing No. 1. Dublin: University College Dublin.

³⁵ National Economic and Social Council. (2009). *Well-being matters: A social report for Ireland*. NESC Report No. 119, Vol II. Dublin: National Social and Economic Council, p.24.

³⁶ Cunha, F., Heckman, J., Lochmer, L. & Masterov, D.V. (2005). 'Interpreting the evidence in Life Cycle Skill Formation'. *NBER Working Paper No. 11331*. Cambridge, MA: NBER.

³⁷ National Competitiveness Council. (2009). *Statement on education and training*, Dublin: National Competitiveness Council.

PEDAGOGICAL ORGANISATION

In the REPEY study a distinction was made between two particular aspects of pedagogy adopted by educators in early childhood settings, pedagogical framing and pedagogical interactions.³⁸ These aspects are equally relevant to early childhood artists.

Pedagogical framing may be interpreted as curriculum management³⁹ and organisation.⁴⁰ Pedagogical organisation involves the creation of the conditions in which children's learning and development is enhanced. Taking a broad approach, pedagogical organisation involves the educators' (and artists') own stance in relation to their role and identity as educators (and artists), their views of children's learning and how they should support that learning.

Organising for effective pedagogy involves 'behind the scenes' work – arranging the learning environment in such a way as to promote children learning through, for example, discovery, exploration and collaboration. It also involves planning, providing appropriate materials, other resources and assessment.⁴¹ Pedagogical interactions are the precise cognitive or social interactions actively undertaken by educators in face to face encounters with individual children. It is acknowledged that both pedagogical organisation and pedagogical interactions are required to effectively enhance children's learning.^{42, 43}

The challenge for early childhood educators (and artists) is to conduct the first (pedagogical organisation) competently in order to enable the second (pedagogical interactions). Furthermore, as articulated earlier, in this model pedagogical organisation involves more than planning. It is a relational act involving the identity, the values and the theories of the educators (and artists) and their views of children and early learning. Pedagogical organisation involves an ability to be responsive. It is informed by knowledge of child development and learning and the curriculum.

The literature suggests that effective pedagogy in ECEC is more than simply providing resources. It is more than knowledge of the curriculum content underpinned by theory and experience. Effective practice requires adopting strategies that enable learning to take place and it is more than the interactive process itself. It is fundamentally a human, nurturing, dialogic, respectful, responsive, reflective and collaborative act on the part of the educator (and artist) encompassing principles, values and personal theories about learning. In high quality ECEC settings educators (and therefore artists) think about what has occurred in practice and why. Educators consider whether children's learning and development could be enhanced and how that is to be achieved. Reflection and planning is at the core of practice.⁴⁴ As evidenced by Earlyarts early childhood arts experiences encompass and promote all areas of learning and development including numeracy, literacy and language. Those experiences, however, must be of high quality.

³⁸ Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S, Gilden, R. & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years*. Research Report No. 356. London: Department for Education and Skills

³⁹ Wells. G. (1985). *Language, learning and education*. Berkshire: NFER-Nelson.

⁴⁰ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. (2009a). *Learning and developing through interactions*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

⁴¹ Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S, Gilden, R. & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years*. Research Report No. 356. London: Department for Education and Skills

⁴² Op cite.

⁴³ Wells. G. (1985). *Language, learning and education*. Berkshire: NFER-Nelson.

⁴⁴ Godhard. T. (1995). In preface to *Staff-child interactions: A Vygotskyan perspective*. M. Fleer. Canberra: Australian Early Childhood Association.

UNDERPINNING CONCEPTS OF PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

Creative arts experiences provide the context for children's holistic learning and development. Children's learning and development is underpinned by ideas of guided participation, intersubjectivity, co-construction and meaning making, joint attention and collaboration. These terms are defined below; although each is dependent on the other and some interpretations overlap.

- Rogoff⁴⁵ has introduced the concept of **guided participation**. It refers to the process by which children acquire problem-solving capabilities and skills through their active participation in meaningful experiences alongside parents, educators, artists or more advanced peers. An example of this would be making a card for a friend in hospital or making play dough. It may include scaffolding, modelling, open-ended questioning (see later on in this paper), and the many ways educators and artists structure the environment, experiences and engage with the children. For example, adults and children singing familiar nursery rhymes. All sing together:

*'Incy, wincy spider, climbed up the water spout,
Down came the rain and...*

The adult pauses and lets the children finish the line
Washed the spider out'

- Underpinning the processes of guided participation is the concept of **intersubjectivity**. This is the process by which two individuals achieve a joint focus on a problem, item of interest or creative process. Schaffer⁴⁶ puts it in colloquial terms when he describes achieving intersubjectivity as being 'on the same wavelength'. There is a mutual engagement with the understanding and feelings of the other person. Knowledge or understanding is not transmitted or imposed on passive recipients; it is a two-way process. For example, you might have a conversation with a three year old about 'where does the sun go at the end of the day'? You may both have different understanding of what happens but are mutually interested to continue the conversation.
- Children are constantly on a quest to seek meaning in the world around them. **Co-construction** and **meaning-making** involve educators and artists becoming aware of children's knowledge and understanding, and engaging with that; developing excellent communication skills and having the interest and enthusiasm to discover more about the child's topic of interest.

Echoing Rogoff's concepts of expert and novice, children's knowledge (for example of Halloween) is acknowledged as expert from their experience and as valid as the adults.⁴⁷ Jacoby and Ochs⁴⁸ refer to co-construction as 'the joint creation of a form, interpretation... emotion, or other culturally meaningful

⁴⁵ Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in a social context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 8.

⁴⁶ Schaffer, H. R. (2006). *Key concepts in developmental psychology*. London: Sage Publications, p.155.

⁴⁷ Jordan, B. (2009). Scaffolding learning and co-constructing understanding. In A. Anning, J. Cullen, and M. Fler (Eds.). *Early childhood education: Society and culture* (2nd ed.) (pp.39-52). London: Sage Publications.

⁴⁸ Jacoby, S & Ochs, E. (1995). Co-construction: An introduction. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 28(3), 171–183, p.171.

reality'. The focus is on developing intersubjectivity, rather than achieving a specific learning outcome or direction which may exist in the mind of an adult. Children learn through collaboration with others. For example, adults (or children) documenting what children are doing through digital film, photographs or digital voice recordings and, with children's agreement and interest, both parties observing, listening and communicating about what was documented together.

- In order to develop intersubjectivity there must be a shared focus of attention.⁴⁹ Schaffer focussed on the kinds of interactions, or 'joint involvement episodes', that appeared to him to play a particularly significant role in progressing development.⁵⁰ According to Schaffer, *joint attention* or 'joint involvement episodes' refers to any encounter between two individuals in which the participants pay joint attention to, and jointly act upon, some external topic. For example the process of working with clay where both individuals are interested, have equal access to the materials and are mutually engaged.

Within the shared frame of reference, adult activity takes mostly two forms: supportive and challenging. The former serves to maintain the child's current focus of attention. Behaviours include holding objects, arranging objects in order for easier access, or verbally labelling events. The latter takes a more proactive form, especially in problem-solving situations where the child has to be assisted to reach a goal. Schaffer maintains that children's behaviour is richer and more complex during episodes of joint involvement than at other times. Therefore an ability to organise children's attention in joint involvement episodes would appear to be an essential component in adults' behaviour; *"the onus is on the educator to promote sharing of a topic"*.⁵¹ Rankin⁵² determined that true collaborative exploration takes place where all participants influence the direction, timing, and outcome of the investigation. In such a social setting, according to Rinaldi,⁵³ *"doubt and amazement are welcome factors in a deductive method similar to the one used by a detective... where the probable and the possible are assigned a place"*.

- **Collaboration about what matters to children:** Wells refers to how, in the pre-school years, conversation is most effective in enhancing children's development of language, *"when it is collaborative, when it is a joint construction"*.⁵⁴ Wells proposes that episodes like this are more likely to be sustained as there is an increased likelihood that both partners will correctly interpret what each other is saying and therefore collaboratively establish a shared construction of meaning about the topic. Tizard and Hughes⁵⁵ also

⁴⁹ Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in a social context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁰ Schaffer, H. R. (1996). Joint involvement episodes as contexts for development. In H. Daniels (Ed.). *An introduction to Vygotsky* (pp. 251–280). London: Routledge, p.523

⁵¹ Op cite, p. 264.

⁵² Rankin, B. (1997) Education as collaboration, Learning from and building on Dewey Vygotsky and Piaget in *First Steps Towards Teaching the Reggio Way*, Joanne Hendrick (ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

⁵³ Rinaldi, C. (1992) *Social Construction in Reggio Emilia*, paper presented at the summer Institute, 'Images of the Child: An International Exchange with Leading Educators from Reggio Emilia, Italy', Newton: MA, p.5.

⁵⁴ Wells. G. (1985). *Language, learning and education*. Berkshire: NFER-Nelson, p. 15

⁵⁵ Tizard, B. & Hughes, M. (2002). *Young children learning*. (2nd ed.). UK: Blackwell Publishing, p.63.

point to the fundamental significance of creating a common referent between adults and children, in their words 'a shared world of common experience to act as a backcloth to their conversation'. In their analysis there is a lack of shared experience in early childhood settings, which creates a barrier between educators and children. Involving parents, seeking out children's interests, creating opportunities to establish a 'shared world' would appear to be an important first step in this process. Early childhood arts experiences create such a 'shared world'.

In summary the educator and artist is a researcher, a resource and guide to children; to provoke, co-construct, and stimulate thinking, and children's collaboration with peers.⁵⁶ The role of the adult is first and foremost to be that of a learner alongside the children. Educators and artists are committed to reflection about their own pedagogical practice as illustrated in the following figure.

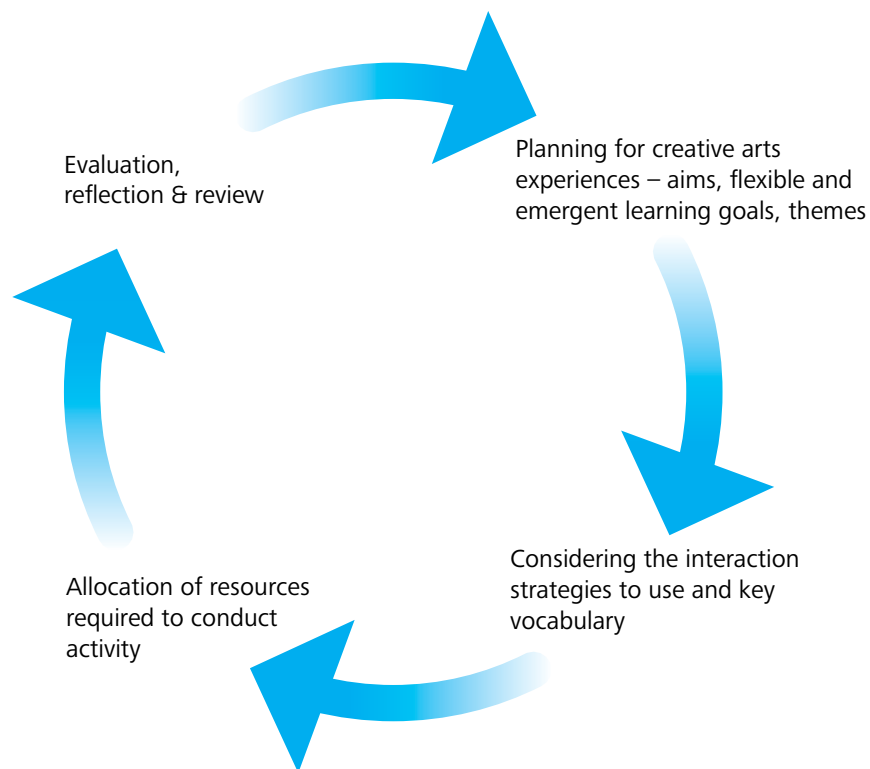


Fig. 2: Planning for and evaluating interactions in early childhood arts experiences

⁵⁶ Abbot, L. and Nutbrown, C. (Eds.) (2001). *Experiencing Reggio Emilia*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Combining the different elements of the discussion above the following figure is a distillation of what the literature suggests is required for effective pedagogical practice in ECEC settings.

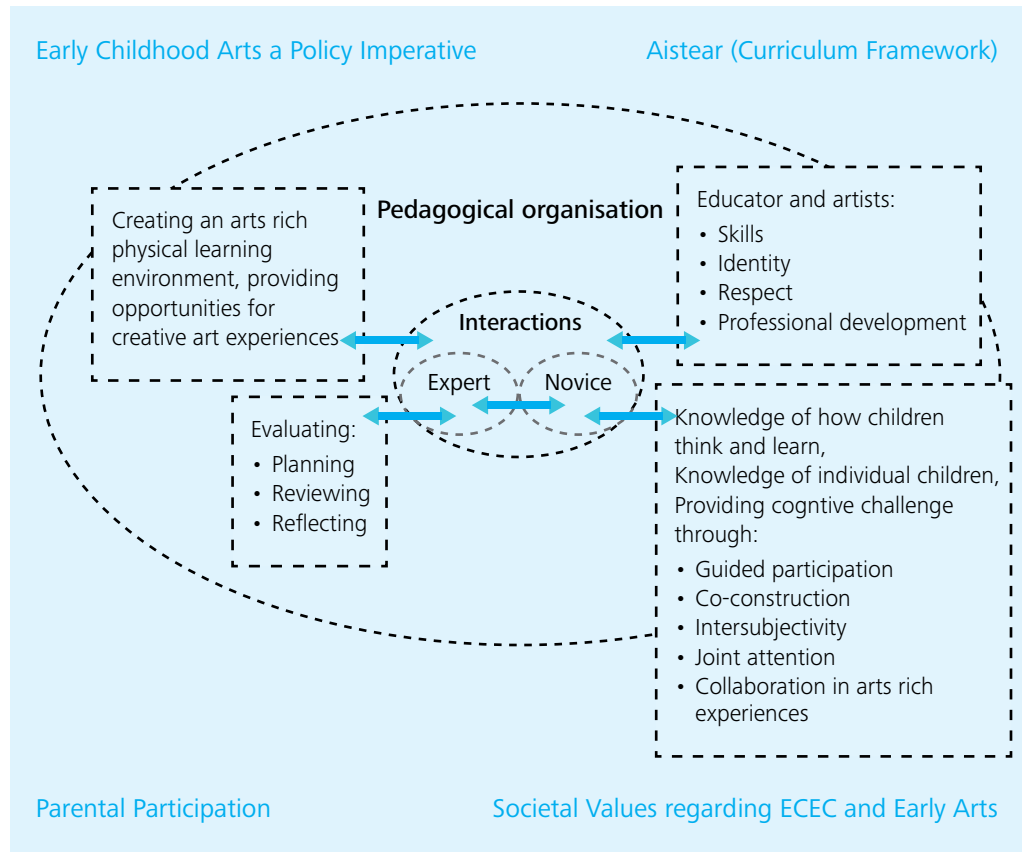


Fig. 3: Model of pedagogical organisation⁵⁷

Interactions between novices and experts are at the core of the process of engagement between educators, artists and children. Some interaction strategies are the focus of the next section.

⁵⁷ Adapted from French, G. (2011). *Towards extended purposive conversations: An exploration of interactions between three educators and young children in early childhood education and care settings in urban areas designated as disadvantaged*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

SPECIFIC INTERACTION STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY

The specific interactions strategies that are considered to enhance children's creativity, thinking, problem-solving and learning generally include establishing a supportive interpersonal environment, active listening, scaffolding, discussing/questioning, and modelling and are now outlined.

Establishing a supportive interpersonal environment

Learning is seen as a reciprocal and collaborative process between the adult and child.⁵⁸ This involves active listening and reflection in order to create a 'pedagogy of listening'⁵⁹ and a 'pedagogy of relationships'.⁶⁰ The literature is clear on the importance of children building positive relationships with an emotionally and physically present adult available in their social context.⁶¹ Children in secure relationships with adults are more likely to explore their environment – thereby enhancing their learning and development. Furthermore, children are more likely to be more sociable and interact better with peers, have verbal acuity, and perform better at cognitive tasks.^{62, 63} Therefore a focus on building relationships with children prior to engaging them in creative arts is important.

Active listening

Learning also grows out of the child's direct actions on the materials. Listening is both an active and a reciprocal verb.⁶⁴ This suggests that adults need sensitivity to the children's current state, a desire to interpret their meaning, and for them to participate in the interaction. In other words adults need to actively listen. These are the characteristics of conversations (at any age) where there is a genuine desire to achieve mutual understanding.⁶⁵ Wells emphasises that such characteristics are particularly important when interacting with a less experienced conversationalist. Otherwise children's learning becomes dominated by educators' directions, thoughts and expectations. Children do not have opportunities then, to direct their own learning. Moss⁶⁶ explains that "*to listen in this way means being open to the Other, recognising the Other as different, trying to listen to the Other from their own position and experience, and not erasing differentness by treating the Other as the same, and by putting our understanding and perspective onto the Other*". What children say

⁵⁸ Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁵⁹ Rinaldi, C. (2005). Pedagogy of listening. Keynote address, European Early Childhood Educational Research Association's 15th Annual Conference, *Young children as citizens: Identity, belonging, participation in 2005*, held at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin, from 31st Aug – 3rd Sept.

⁶⁰ Malaguzzi, L. (1993). For an education based on relationships', *Young Children*, November, 9–13.

⁶¹ Bowman, B., Donovan, S. & Burns, S., eds., (2001). *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers*. Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy, National Research Council. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

⁶² Hart, B., & Risley, T.R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children*. Baltimore, Maryland: Brookes.

⁶³ Lobman, C. (2006). Improvisation: An analytic tool for examining teacher-child interactions in the early childhood classroom. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21, 455–470.

⁶⁴ Rinaldi, C. (2006). *In dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning*. Oxon: Routledge.

⁶⁵ Wells, G. (1985). *Language, learning and education*. Berkshire: NFER-Nelson.

⁶⁶ Moss, P. (2001). The Otherness of Reggio in Abbot, L. and Nutbrown, C. (Eds.) (2001) *Experiencing Reggio Emilia*, Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, p.128.

warrants respect, and authentic acceptance of their diverse family activities, lifestyles and choices, from adults without ridicule or mock surprise.⁶⁷ Rich early arts experiences, children's stories and their home lives can be a rich source for active listening.

Scaffolding

The metaphor *scaffolding* was coined by Wood, Bruner and Ross⁶⁸ to describe the process by which adults or capable peers support and guide children's learning. A significant proportion of children's everyday activities take place in what Vygotsky calls the zone of proximal development, or ZPD.⁶⁹ Rogoff highlights that the idea of scaffolding is often considered in the same breath as the ZPD, whereas they are two distinct concepts.⁷⁰ The ZPD defines the range within which a person with more expertise assists another person to work at a higher level of competence than they could achieve on their own. Vygotsky states that the ZPD is "*the distance between the [child's] actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the [child's] level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*".⁷¹ Vygotsky explains that through social interaction with more expert companions, the child is able to model a variant of action "*which goes beyond the border of its own capacity*".⁷² This suggests that instruction can only be effective if it is one step ahead of children's development.

A range of learning experiences and tasks involved in scaffolding has been identified. These include the need for adults to stimulate interest in the task; to simplify the task yet provide intellectual challenge; to provide time to afford necessary support and maintain the pursuit of the goal within the ZPD.⁷³ Educators and artists decide when children are ready to move from one level of development to another, and reduce their input as the child progresses. Thus, the key challenge for adults is to have sufficient knowledge of children's current level of development, which then becomes the challenge of defining the limits of the zone, and matching or tuning the adult support to a point beyond the child's current capabilities. Furthermore the literature advises that adults have knowledge of general pedagogical strategies, control frustration and risk and encourage self-regulation.^{74, 75}

⁶⁷ MacNaughton, G. & Williams, G. (2004). *Teaching young children: Choices in theory and practice*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

⁶⁸ Wood, D., Bruner, J. & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem-solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17(2), 89-100.

⁶⁹ Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁷⁰ Rogoff, B. (1998). Cognition as a collaborative process. In D. Kuhn & R. Siegler (Eds.). *Handbook of Child Psychology* (pp. 679-744; 5th ed.). New York: John Wiley.

⁷¹ Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p.86.

⁷² Op cite, p.88.

⁷³ Berk, L. & Winsler, A. (1995). *Scaffolding children's learning: Vygotsky and early childhood education*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

⁷⁴ Op cite.

⁷⁵ MacNaughton, G. & Williams, G. (2004). *Teaching young children: Choices in theory and practice*. Berkshire: Open University Press

Discussing/questioning

The term discussing refers to a prolonged conversation with a child about a particular topic.⁷⁶ More than a succession of questions from adult to child, discussion allows for an exchange of ideas with a view to reaching understanding, solving problems, or sharing information. Educators, artists and children in a discussion must be prepared to speak, listen, respond, put forward more than one point of view, and intend to develop their knowledge.⁷⁷ Creating a discussion requires of the educator and artist to take on the various roles of expert, facilitator and participant and, as referred to earlier, creator of meaningful contexts for discussion and enquiry. In the case of young children the topics for discussion could stem from children's own interests, their current activities or importantly from their questions, leading to opportunities for shared thinking.

From the perspective of educators the importance of questioning and attention to children's responses, have long been identified.^{78, 79} It should be noted that some educators' questioning styles may impede rather than stimulate conversation.⁸⁰ Fisher (2001) cited a study where it was found that the more adults asked questions the less likely they were to receive questions, promote elaborate responses and encourage spontaneous contributions in dialogue from children.⁸¹ Similarly, Siraj-Blatchford and Manni analysed and categorised the range of questions asked by educators in the REPEY study which pointed to the preponderance of closed-ended questions. The style of questioning is therefore important. Closed-ended questions did not contribute to extending children's creativity or thinking.⁸²

Cognitively challenging questions are designed to develop children's thinking and responses beyond the immediate to reflect and talk about what they have done, are doing, and plan to do.⁸³ The degree of cognitive challenge can range from low, labelling objects, yes/no responses, locating objects; to medium, describing, recalling, prompting, elaborating; to high, problem-solving, comparing, predicting, evaluating.^{84, 85} Open-ended questions assume the potential variety of responses without having to deduce a right or wrong answer. They support the sharing of theories and understandings, feelings and imaginings and provoke thought. Closed questions are used to recall facts. Children learn quickly to ignore questions that require 'yes' 'no' responses.⁸⁶ In the REPEY project the evidence suggests that open-ended questioning is coupled with better cognitive attainment. However, Siraj-Blatchford et al. reported that

⁷⁶ Fisher, R. (2001). *Teaching children to learn*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes Ltd.

⁷⁷ Op cite.

⁷⁸ Alexander, R. (2008). *Essays on pedagogy*. Oxon: Routledge. *American Educational Research Journal* 35(2), 333–349.

⁷⁹ Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Manni, L. (2008). 'Would you like to tidy up now?' An analysis of adult questioning in the English Foundation Stage. *Early Years*, 28(1), 5–22.

⁸⁰ Op cite.

⁸¹ Fisher, R. (2001). *Teaching children to learn*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes Ltd.

⁸² Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Manni, L. (2008). 'Would you like to tidy up now?' An analysis of adult questioning in the English Foundation Stage. *Early Years*, 28(1), 5–22.

⁸³ Massey, S. (2004). Teacher-child conversations in the preschool classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 31(4), 227–231.

⁸⁴ Durden, T. & Dangel J. R. (2008). Teacher-involved conversations with young children during small group activity. *Early Years*, 28(3), 251–266.

⁸⁵ Massey, S. (2004). Teacher-child conversations in the preschool classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 31(4), 227–231

⁸⁶ MacNaughton, G. & Williams, G. (2004). *Teaching young children: Choices in theory and practice*. Berkshire: Open University Press

"open-ended questions made up only 5.1% of the questioning used in the 14 case study settings".⁸⁷ Learning to use questioning effectively is therefore a challenge but critically important for early childhood educators and artists.

Modelling

MacNaughton and Williams separate modelling and demonstration into two distinctive techniques. Modelling is described as a process by which children learn behaviours by simply copying others. Demonstration supports children's learning by showing children how to use special tools or materials or "*how to accomplish a particular task*".⁸⁸ Wells noted that parents rarely engaged in direct teaching. However, their influence could be seen in the modelling of mature behaviours, taking conversational turns, negotiating meaning, and sustaining interest.⁸⁹ Modelling, according to Bruner is the basis of apprenticeship.⁹⁰ It is an imitative process by which a novice is led into the skilled ways by an expert. However, research demonstrates that to get to deeper level of flexible skill there needs to be a combination of conceptual explanation combined with practice.⁹¹

Fisher referred to modelling as recreating the world as we understand it in words, to talk to ourselves about our experiences.⁹² Through that process, the talking itself can give substance to our thinking. Therefore children should be encouraged to articulate their thinking through dialogue. This means children thinking about their own learning, remembering, evaluating their work and the usefulness of their current strategies.⁹³

The next section conveys an understanding of how children learn and develop in order to support early childhood artists and educators to plan for early learning.

⁸⁷ Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R. & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years*. Research Report No. 356. London: Department for Education and Skills, p.11

⁸⁸ MacNaughton, G. & Williams, G. (2004). *Teaching young children: Choices in theory and practice*. Berkshire: Open University Press, p.55

⁸⁹ Wells. G. (1985). *Language, learning and education*. Berkshire: NFER-Nelson

⁹⁰ Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁹¹ Bowman, B., Donovan, S. & Burns, S., eds., (2001). *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers*. Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy, National Research Council. Washington, DC: National Academy Press

⁹² Fisher, R. (2001). *Teaching children to learn*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes Ltd

⁹³ Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

THE PRINCIPLES OF HOW CHILDREN LEARN AND DEVELOP

Síolta (the Irish word for ‘seeds’) is *The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*, which was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) in 2006. *Síolta* sets the broad context for ensuring quality in early childhood settings within which early learning is best supported. *Aistear* (the Irish word for ‘journey’) is the *Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 2009. *Aistear* is for all children from birth to six years and focuses on planning for the provision of enriching, challenging and enjoyable learning experiences for children. The development of *Aistear* was underpinned by consultation with the early childhood sector, commissioned research papers and portraiture studies of young children. These are all available on the NCCA website www.ncca.ie. The background paper *Children’s early learning and development*⁹⁴ sets out the theory and research underpinning children’s early learning and development in *Aistear*.⁹⁵ These key messages about how children learn and develop are amended and adapted to take into account early childhood arts.

Play

- Play is one of the key contexts for children’s early learning and development (See also *Síolta*, Standard 6 Play⁹⁶).
- Through relationships in play, children develop and demonstrate improved verbal communication, high levels of social and interaction skills, creative use of play materials, imaginative and divergent thinking and problem-solving capacities.
- The most effective play settings have a balance between adult-initiated learning experiences and child-initiated learning experiences.
- Adults need to plan for play and the specific interactions required to appropriately scaffold children’s learning and enrich their creativity.

Communication and language

- Social interaction, language, and scaffolding from adults are central in early learning and development. Children’s development of both receptive (understanding) and expressive (speaking) language is integral to all development particularly intellectual functioning and creativity.
- Some level of language development occurs naturally by children experiencing a language-rich environment; fuller development of children’s language capacities may require targeted teaching and encouragement of children’s verbal expression. Early childhood arts provide rich content for creative experiences to support children language development.

⁹⁴ French, G. (2007). *Children’s early learning and development*. Background paper for *Aistear*, the early childhood curriculum framework. Commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment: Dublin, pp.7–10.

⁹⁵ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. (2009). *Aistear: The early childhood curriculum framework*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

⁹⁶ Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. (2006). *Síolta: The national quality framework for early childhood education*. Dublin: Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education.

- Through language, the child appropriates his/her culture, seeks the cooperation of others in his/her activities, integrates new experiences into an existing knowledge base and reflects on his/her actions.
- In order to provide appropriate scaffolding for the child in learning and developing, a shared context of meaning and experience must be established; the adult often needs to interpret or expand on the child's utterances, gestures and mark-making (See also *Síolta*, Standard 5 Interactions⁹⁷). Through shared creative arts experiences, the child gradually makes sense of the world and of adult meaning. This process requires a close and nurturing relationship between adult and child.

Relationships

- The importance of the role of the adult and the establishment of positive relationships between the adult and child are critical in enhancing and enriching the child's learning and development.
- The child should experience trust, autonomy, initiative, empathy and self-confidence as the foundation for socialisation. The formation of attachment is especially important for the young child's emotional and social development. Emotional wellbeing impacts on young children's ability to concentrate and therefore learn. The loving, cosy, secure intimacy of strong attachments with adults reading stories, playing and engaging in early arts experiences can support relationship development.
- The participation of parents in their children's learning and development improves children's motivation, promotes a sense of partnership in the learning process and enhances children's confidence in all areas of learning.
- Children's evolving membership in their culture begins in the family and spirals outward as children engage with their peers. The child learns and develops in context and as part of his/her community and society. If early arts experiences are valued by family and peers, they will likely be valued by children.

Active learning and meaning making

- The term active learning is defined as learning "*in which the child, by acting on objects and interacting with people, ideas and events, construct new understanding*".⁹⁸ Learning results from the child's attempts to pursue personal interests and goals, goals through first-hand experiences of the world around them and through stories and other creative arts experiences individually, in pairs, in groups, in families and in the community.
- Learning is a continual process of meaning making; it is not a linear input/output process. Active learning, physical and intellectual engagement with people (ideas, stories, visual arts) and materials (experiences of exposure to creative arts, books, mark-making), self and group directed problem-solving and repetition (including rhymes, songs, drama, music, dance and stories) are at the heart of learning and development.

⁹⁷ Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. (2006). *Síolta: The national quality framework for early childhood education*. Dublin: Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education

⁹⁸ Hohmann, M. and Weikart, D., (1995). *Educating Young Children*, USA: High/Scope Press, p.17.

- The educator, therefore, has a responsibility to provide art rich environments where children are able to explore, touch, manipulate and experiment with a variety of real life and diverse materials and where children can ask questions, make hypothesis and develop their thinking.
- Children learn in collaboration with others yet have to construct learning for themselves. True collaborative exploration takes place where all participants influence the direction, timing, and outcome of the investigation.

Equality and diversity

- All children are individuals, unique in their abilities, from a rich diversity of backgrounds, beliefs, cultures and experiences of early childhood arts. Children have the right to be treated with respect, positive regard and dignity.
- Biases develop very early in young children; through participating in everyday activity and play (including art rich experiences), children absorb powerful messages from people, the environment and community regarding their identity, culture and what is valued in reading material, conversation and creative experiences. They also absorb powerful messages about the importance and function of early arts.
- By exploring the attributes of their own and other cultures, including early childhood arts, children come to appreciate their common humanity as well as enjoying an optimal environment for cognitive, emotional and social growth.
- Early childhood artists and educators should enable children to acknowledge, respect and affirm diversity in order to promote equality and to challenge unfair discrimination. Early childhood artists and educators should understand that authentic, democratic relationships support children's development in this regard.

The arts rich learning environment

- Children learn through their senses both indoors and outdoors, in a supportive environment (See also *Síolta*, Standard 2 Environments⁹⁹).
- There is a consequent requirement on early childhood artists and educators to provide a range of challenging and interesting indoor and outdoor arts experiences for children.
- The environment should offer children opportunities to actively explore, to work independently and with others, to make decisions and follow through with their ideas, to solve problems, to engage in real activities and to experience the arts in co-operative, symbolic, dramatic or pretend play.
- The most effective learning comes from simple but versatile materials (bits of soft wood, feathers, cork, string, fabric, stones, clay) stored and accessible to children. The learning environment should extend children's imagination and be adaptable to suit their learning needs and level of understanding.

⁹⁹ Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. (2006). *Síolta: The national quality framework for early childhood education*. Dublin: Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education.

The whole child in context

- Holistic learning and development involves all areas of development and embraces a view of the whole child developing in the context of family, home and community.
- Bruce reported how the basic processes of movement, play, communication, self-esteem, and understanding of self and others, "as well as the symbolic layerings in development (leading to dances, reading, writing, mathematical and musical notations, drawing and model making) support children's learning and development."¹⁰⁰ Therefore, developmental domains such as cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, spiritual and physical cannot be separated out; neither can subjects such as mathematics, science and art. Young children do not learn in discrete units; they make connections across their learning with these connections changing and developing with new experiences.
- A framework which uses themes such as *Aistear* (well-being, identity and belonging, communicating and exploring and thinking) to present children's early learning and development offers a way of moving from thinking about learning and development in discrete developmental domains to thinking about these in a more holistic and integrated way. Within *Aistear* children are supported to grow and develop socially, physically, creatively, cognitively, linguistically and so on, but in a way which is natural, meaningful and enjoyable for children. The themes bridge the developmental and subject domains and move towards a more integrated approach which is more in tune with how children learn and develop.
- Children's interests and learning dispositions (for curiosity, wonder, resilience, and playfulness) are at the centre of what and how they learn. Consequently, the thematic framework supports children's learning and development in a way which is more natural and enjoyable for young children.

Early childhood arts curriculum

- The early childhood curriculum is concerned with the totality of the policies and practices established in the setting, the relationships between all participants, the attitudes skills and knowledge of the staff in relation to early childhood arts, the experiences provided, the resources, the arts rich learning environment, the pedagogical (teaching and learning) styles and the systems of assessment (See also *Síolta*, Standard 7 Curriculum¹⁰¹).
- An appropriate curriculum for young children views learning as a process as opposed to creating a product.
- The child's interests, strengths, culture, needs and learning styles are placed at the centre of planning for his/her learning and development.
- Providing appropriate learning experiences for children requires early childhood educators and artists to have knowledge of child development in order to support children's learning and development and to forward plan for a wide range of appropriate early childhood art experiences.

¹⁰⁰ Bruce, T. (2004). *Developing learning in early childhood*. London: Paul Chapman, p.XV

¹⁰¹ Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. (2006). *Síolta: The national quality framework for early childhood education*. Dublin: Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education.

The curriculum in the schools of Reggio Emilia is not established in advance, but emerges totally through the interests of children.¹⁰² Topics for study are captured from the talk of children, through community or family events, as well as the known interests of children (puddles, shadow, and dinosaurs). They are pursued in depth through projects. Malaguzzi's emphasis is on the child's hundred ways of thinking, of doing, of playing, of speaking.¹⁰³ Educators and artists recognise that it is important to study the ideas expressed in children's words, drawings, and play. They know that this will help them learn how to scaffold further learning. Collaborative group work, both large and small, is considered valuable and necessary to advance cognitive development. Children are encouraged to dialogue, critique, compare, negotiate, hypothesize, and problem solve through group work. Within the Reggio Emilia approach multiple perspectives promote both a sense of group membership and the uniqueness of self. Parker¹⁰⁴ illustrates Reggio's theme of revisiting – or reproposing – children's language and drawings to them over time, allowing children to reflect and transform their words and images should they so wish.

¹⁰² Abbot, L. and Nutbrown, C. (Eds) (2001). *Experiencing Reggio Emilia*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

¹⁰³ Malaguzzi, L (1993) 'History Ideas and Basic Philosophy, in Edwards, C. Gandini, L. and Forman, G., (eds), (1993), *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education*, Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.

¹⁰⁴ Parker, C. (2001). 'She's Back!' in Abbot, L. and Nutbrown, C. (Eds.) (2001) *Experiencing Reggio Emilia*, Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

A PERSPECTIVE ON CHILDREN AND THOSE WHO WORK WITH THEM

The vision of children and of early childhood artists and educators that underpins early childhood practice is centred on a holistic approach to child wellbeing and development, integrating education and care. The vision is focused on the 'here and now' (children's 'being' in the present) rather than only on skills for tomorrow (children's 'becoming' for the future). This perspective is drawn from French.^{105, 106}

Children

- Are communicators, talkers, readers, scientists, artists, explorers, architects, musicians and mathematicians from birth.
- Have a large variation in the rate they develop early childhood art skills, have a unique genius and are inquisitive learners.
- Are active agents in their lives who are able to make choices and decisions, and who can initiate experiences as opposed to being the passive recipients of experiences and ideas created by adults.
- Are co-constructors of knowledge (creators of learning in collaboration with others).
- Are researchers actively making meaning of the world.
- Enjoy all kinds of experiences of early childhood arts learning opportunities (given sufficient space and time).

*"Drawing on centuries of research, the modern day view of the child is one of him/her being a competent learner, capable of making choices and decisions; a young citizen and participator in many contexts; actively learning in reciprocal relations with adults and other children. This new construction of childhood is oriented towards the child's present rather than his/her future."*¹⁰⁷

Early childhood artists and educators

- Understand that creativity development is a result of exposure to an arts rich environment and input from adults as well as the child's cognitive and linguistic competence.
- Are aware of children's creative development and needs, and the implication of these for early intervention, planning, interaction and assessment.
- Enliven children's innate dispositions for wonderment, excitement, curiosity, perseverance and full engagement in language rich experiences.

¹⁰⁵ French, G. (2007). Children's early learning and development. Background paper for Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework. Commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

¹⁰⁶ French, G. (2013). *Early speech and language matters: Enriching the communication environment and language development in early childhood*. Dublin: Barnardos' Training and Resource Service.

¹⁰⁷ French, G. (2007). *Children's early learning and development*. Background paper for Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework. Commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, p.24.

- Hold high expectations for children’s artistic abilities and enable children to become aware of their own unique talents and competences.
- Value play as a pathway to learning, and understand the importance of creating and maintaining high-quality arts rich environments where children are motivated to engage in early childhood arts.
- Model decontextualised language to older children. This means going beyond concrete art experience to imagine situations not present which requires children to engage in abstract thought and to share those thoughts in language with an audience who may not necessarily share the same temporal and spatial context. In other words to encourage discussion including use of sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structures; provide encounters with different styles of language; and scaffold children to engage in language experiences.¹⁰⁸
- Implement a range of strategies that have been shown to enhance language learning in the context of dialogic (two-way) interaction, some of which include: watching, waiting and listening to children – following their communicative lead; planning for and modelling appropriate vocabulary; commenting specifically and accurately on what children are doing thereby affirming children’s work without need for praise; expanding or extending children’s ideas; reflecting back to children what they say (while keeping children’s meaning); encouraging turn-taking; and engaging in extended purposive conversations. Art rich experiences provided the fuel for such conversations and holistic learning and development.
- Are imbued with a sense of passion about children’s creative learning and development.

The Three R’s

In summary early childhood artists and educators underpin their practice by the

Three R’s:

- **Respect** for children’s early childhood arts learning through play
- The provision of **relevant** and meaningful early childhood arts experiences and supportive relationships
- **Reflection** on those experiences and relationships

¹⁰⁸ Shiel, G., Cregan, Á, McGough, A & Archer, P. (2012). *Oral language in early childhood and primary education (3–8 years)*. Commissioned Research Report No. 14, Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This paper began with an exploration of the concept of pedagogy. International research on the importance of effective pedagogy in ECEC was discussed. Pedagogical organisation and the underpinning concepts of supporting children's creativity and thinking relevant to the practice of early childhood arts were then considered. Specific interaction strategies that are considered to enhance children's creativity, thinking, problem-solving and learning generally (establishing a supportive interpersonal environment, active listening, scaffolding, discussing/questioning, and modelling) were identified. The principles underpinning early learning and development were then outlined. Finally, contemporary perspectives on children and those who work with very young children (incorporating both early childhood artists and early childhood educators) were presented. The key findings suggest that:

-
- A pedagogy of listening and relationships should prevail in early arts experiences where children are listened to with intentionality and respect. Children are competent learners who are expert in their own lives and learning and merit active participation. Professional preparation should emphasise artists' and educators' roles as co-constructors of children's learning.
-
- In order to improve the outcomes for children's learning and development, educators and artists need thorough grounding in the theoretical principles underpinning pedagogical and artistic practice and skills in interactions.
-
- Artists and educators need grounding in how to encourage positive dispositions for learning and maintain young children's natural curiosity, creativity, wonder and reflection, in addition to creating "common knowledge" in first-hand early childhood arts experiences.
-
- The understandings in relation to early learning and development that need to be foregrounded are how children can learn and develop through active exploration and participation in early childhood arts experiences, which in turn need to be integrated in the early childhood curriculum (at home and in settings).
-

In conclusion, ECEC is enhanced by theories that foreground the cultural and socially constructed nature of learning. From this perspective, learning and development are inextricably intertwined and are enmeshed within the milieu of social relationships. The child develops not in isolation but in the context of family, early childhood educators and artists, neighbourhood, community, society and public policies. Children's early learning and development, therefore, is a matter for the whole of society. The literature reviewed in this paper elucidates the importance of early childhood arts experiences as a vehicle to provide ideal opportunities to enhance children's learning and development. We know that early childhood is the most critical period for all learning and development and that parents and the home learning environment are key. Early childhood artists and educators are uniquely positioned to positively impact on children's well-being today as the opening quote suggests through enriching creative arts opportunities.



Perspective three:

Supporting the Growth of Early Childhood Arts Practice in Ireland – an International View

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper has been commissioned by Arts Council Ireland to inform the development of a national strategy for early childhood arts in Ireland. This paper brings together an analysis of the early childhood arts environment in Ireland, international perspectives on what has worked well in early childhood arts, evidence of impacts of early childhood arts, and case studies of different practices and approaches. Finally, we put forward considerations on the characteristics of success that might influence an early childhood arts strategy for Ireland.

Definitions

Throughout this paper we refer to 'early years arts' or 'early childhood arts' to cover a wide range of different practices and experiences, including artist workshops, performances and residencies in early childhood settings, the creative practice undertaken in settings by early childhood staff, and creative arts activities taking place in young children's homes and family lives.

By 'early childhood professional' we mean trained professionals in charge of young children's learning and development, including (but not exclusively) educators, practitioners, nursery nurses, child carers and teachers.

By 'artist' we mean creative professionals or companies in all art-forms (music, visual arts, crafts, photography, dance, theatre, sculpture, literature, environmental arts).

By 'creative practice' we mean the artist combining their creative and imaginative disposition with facilitation skills to bring to life children's own ideas and skills, often enhancing the creative learning already taking place in the setting. This is different in primary education which tends to be more subject-oriented, where the artist brings their artistic ability, materials and approach to support children's development in specific art form skills. In many cases these are not exclusive.

Evidence of the impacts of early childhood arts

There is a strong body of evidence pointing to the importance and value of early childhood arts, for children's learning and development, for family and community, and for society in general:

- High quality arts experiences in early childhood have a very significant impact on learning and development, with, in many cases, life-long impact.
- Early childhood arts can have significant positive impacts on parent-child relationships and on engaging families in further arts and cultural opportunities.
- Effective arts interventions can lead to decreased social problems and inequality.
- High quality arts experiences in early childhood can impact the brain's development in other areas: for instance music activities can help language learning.
- Creative, play-based experiences in early childhood can lead to formation of well-rounded personalities with better mental health.
- Early childhood arts can help develop intrinsic human qualities, such as creativity, expression, identity, culture and imagination.
- Early childhood arts can impact positively on confidence, self-esteem, agency and behavioural health.
- Early childhood arts can impact on cognitive development by enhancing a wide range of curriculum foci (e.g. language development, numeracy, literacy, personal/social/emotional/ physical/spiritual development and understanding of people and cultures).
- Early childhood arts can lead to a direct improvement in academic achievements.
- Early childhood arts can help to improve the practice and pedagogy in early childhood settings, including professionals' confidence and understanding of child development.
- When introduced into early childhood training and workforce development, the arts can have an indirect but important effect on children's engagement in learning.
- Early childhood arts can have a strong impact on children's subsequent abilities in the arts.
- Collaborations that encompass the perspective of artists, early childhood professionals, children and parents can result in a much deeper understanding of, and attention to, a child's needs and interests, leading to fulfilment both immediately and later on in life.

Different practices and models for supporting early childhood arts

Looking internationally and historically, a significant number of models have been successfully developed for artists to work with young children, or for children's experiences in the arts otherwise to be enhanced, including:

- short-term projects of creative workshops, installations or performances specifically designed for young children;
- investigative approaches where artists work alongside early childhood professionals and young children to develop creative environments or arts activities in the setting;
- training programmes and other learning experiences for early childhood professionals to develop their skills in arts and creative development;
- long-term residencies where artists become a part of the daily environment;
- whole approaches to early childhood education and care, where artists are recruited as part of the permanent staff team and integrated into nurseries and schools from birth onwards;
- supporting and encouraging parents to engage in arts activities with their children at home, often focussing on parents' own arts and cultural tastes and backgrounds;
- using resources (printed or electronic materials, CDs, DVDs and those available on websites) to help parents and early childhood professionals engage in arts activities with children.

The case studies in **Appendix Two** show how some of these models have been effective. Looking across these models, and several other examples studied, some common ingredients emerge:

- Collaborative working: investigative approaches where professional artists and early childhood professionals are working together to support a child's development.
- Co-constructivism: adults and children working and learning together.
- Training embedded: training in early childhood development for arts practitioners or in creative processes and arts skills for early childhood professionals.
- Six common models: broadly speaking, almost all practices involve specialist performances, participatory partnership projects, artist residencies, support for professionals, support for parents, and/or early arts networks.
- Networking and practice-sharing: access to specialist networks or festivals to strengthen resources, collaboration and understanding between the arts and early childhood sectors.

The early childhood arts landscape in Ireland

Our analysis, conducted through interviews and surveys with key figures in arts and early childhood in Ireland, made the following conclusions about the current situation with regards early childhood arts in Ireland:

- Much practice and experience has built up over recent years, often initiated from the ground up – by artists and arts organisations.
- Of the early childhood organisations who already engage with Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework, working with artists is found to be very relevant to the curriculum.
- There is a call for a more joined-up multi-agency approach, involving agencies with interests, including arts, education, health, children, social care, rural affairs, and local government.
- There is a broad requirement for professional development, both for artists in early childhood development, and for early childhood professionals in the arts. Opportunities to observe and shadow existing practices would be valued, as well as bespoke training, mentoring and other forms of professional support.
- Several significant opportunities exist: for example, looking to capitalise on the economic and societal benefits that early childhood arts can bring; and making use of unused or empty spaces for arts projects that engage with families, particularly in areas of high deprivation.

Future Investment

The report highlights nine characteristics of success for strategic investment in early childhood arts:

- **National endorsement and advocacy** about the important role of the arts in early childhood development and family engagement and why it makes a difference. As well as raising the status of this work, national campaigns enable parents and professionals alike to better understand the important impacts of creativity on their children's learning and the wider community/society, as well as giving them a united focus to become champions for their own children's learning and strive for higher quality arts experiences. Distribution outlets such as the Bounty Packs¹ would be an excellent way to reach parents and facilitate cross-agency collaborations.
- **Strategic partnerships between government departments and national agencies** in the arts, culture, early childhood, health, social welfare and education to ensure cohesive strategies, consultations and programmes that are implemented across all sectors, and maximise the limited resources available. This joined-up approach opens up greater cross-departmental opportunities to support early childhood arts, and ensure cross-agency influence on both the language and content of individual agencies' own policies.
- **Business Development Programmes** focussing on mixed-economy business models that enable arts and early education organisations to develop sustainable practices, to better understand the issues facing their market – children, parents and carers – and to build a family engagement culture into all parts of their organisations, from programme consultation and design to production, marketing, access, content and outreach.
- **Specialist arts performances, participatory projects, or artist residencies** that enable collaborations between artists, cultural organisations and early childhood professionals. These should ideally be based on a co-constructivist approach, have a longer term status and opportunities to introduce a positive arts experience, build relationships and share knowledge.
- **Professional Development** in early childhood development for arts practitioners or in creative processes and arts skills for early childhood professionals to accelerate the spread of expertise; validate arts based or creative approaches within Quality and Qualifications Ireland and increase the drive for high quality practice nationwide. Mentor programmes can also facilitate a high level of improvement in practice due to their bespoke nature. These may take the form of go-and-see visits (level 1), assigned mentor (level 2), written case study / evaluation report (level 3).
- **Accredited Training** to enable the choice of an arts option within the electives in early childhood training, as well as post-training CPD, to reinforce the skills and knowledge required to deliver the creative elements of Aistear in areas where arts professionals are not available.

¹ Bounty Packs are given to mothers of all newborns on hospital maternity wards: <http://www.bounty.com/what-we-do/the-bounty-journey>. Originally covering the UK, Bounty has now expanded its services to Ireland.

- **Access to specialist networks or festivals** to broker relationships, strengthen collaboration, confidence and understanding between the arts and early childhood sectors, help embed creative practices in settings, encourage buddying and mentoring, broaden horizons on expectations of what children can achieve, encourage openness to learning and connect up the growing community of creative practitioners. Networks also enable extensive dissemination for good practice, current issues, latest research, pedagogical models and professional development.
- **Seed funding for cross-agency collaborations** that trigger other funding sources. This could be a joint funding pot across arts, early childhood, health or social care bodies for such projects as:

- Action Research projects based around the interests or needs of staff, parents and children in a setting.
- Academic research that is not otherwise funded, and on a specific field that has a wider interest and potential impact for other organisations in the field.
- Audits and Surveys of provision to develop a strategic plan for joined up, cross sector networks or shared resources.
- Collation and publication of the impacts of creative practice or specific art forms.
- A trial or experimentation of different creative and cultural approaches to support and enhance the learning of children with special needs.
- Visits to explore and learn from organisations with an excellent track record in building a creative curriculum or arts approach to early learning.
- Training, mentoring or professional development programmes.
- Local campaigns to increase skills, knowledge and understanding of how arts, cultural or creative approaches can make a difference to children's outcomes.

- **Quality Assessment or Evaluation framework** enabling the expected outcomes and impacts of an intervention to be mapped out and measured. This should be based on principles of excellent practice and linked to the Aistear assessment framework to break down language barriers and build up a trusted evidence base linked to the curriculum. This will enable professionals to improve their own practice, and children's wider achievements to be documented in terms of their well-being, identity and belonging, exploring and thinking and communicating.

Quality frameworks can be distributed amongst the sectors as Evaluation Toolkits combined with training programmes. The profile of quality frameworks can be raised through awards ceremonies or kitemark programmes giving arts organisations a supported, endorsed and recognised goal to aim for in both quality and impact of provision.

INTRODUCTION

This paper has been commissioned by Arts Council Ireland to inform the development of a national strategy for early childhood arts in Ireland. It brings an analysis of the arts and early childhood landscape in Ireland, identified through interviews with professionals in the field, together with international perspectives on what has worked well. We look at the evidence of impacts arising from creative arts activity in early childhood, plus we explore case studies that highlight different types of activities and creative practices – projects, curriculums, approaches and training – that have been effectively developed to enhance young children’s participation and learning.

We know from evaluations of practice, from cognitive science and neuroscience (to be illustrated further on in this paper), that the impacts on children of creative and arts interventions in early education are significant: a vehicle for their development and learning across the curriculum, helping the growth of their young brains at a critical stage, and nurturing and feeding their imaginations with the material of lifetimes. Yet in parts of the world, it seems, the early years (generally considered to be from birth to six years old) are still considered as a period requiring mainly childcare in preparation for formal education at primary school when the ‘real’ learning begins. In 2009, of the 196 countries in the world, only 37 had formal childcare provision funded to one degree or another by the state, although there are a few more countries whose provision is managed by local authorities and not documented in national statistics.² Only a handful of these countries have arts or cultural policies which include references to education. In the 159 countries where no state funded provision is documented, it seems that neither education nor arts experiences are considered to be an important enough part of early life. However, the case for arts opportunities from the earliest age is substantial, when those experiences have a profound influence on children’s learning, the development of their personalities and their emotional health and well-being.

Our international investigations revealed a dearth of national policies or programmes dedicated to early childhood arts. In Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Denmark, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria and Norway, organisations have been set up to develop arts and cultural education by means of specific initiatives or networks, few of which encompass the early years. In addition, there are a plethora of cultural policies with objectives for children and young people focussing on formal education from primary school upwards. Plus several countries have an overarching childcare or early education policy, some of which make reference to the principles of creative, play based approaches, but not the intrinsic benefits or explicit approaches of arts practices.

Governmental responsibilities are often divided between two or more separate ministries of education and culture, and sometimes between childcare, youth or sport, which can make it difficult to achieve a common understanding of needs and priorities. In Ireland’s case, these discussions are split between the departments of Education and Skills (with an early years unit); Tourism and Sport; Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht (under which the Arts Council is established along with eleven other cultural institutions); and Children Young People and Youth Affairs who are developing a Children and Young people’s Policy Framework, including a National Early Childhood Strategy. In addition, education budgets are often many times higher than those of culture, leaving obstacles of status and scale in the way of joined-up policy making.

² OECD (2004), *Public Spending on Early Childcare and Early Education*, OECD Family database, Social Policy Division Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs: www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3.1%20Public%20spending%20on%20childcare%20and%20early%20education%20-%20181012.pdf

The exceptions to this are the Nordic countries, Austria, the UK and Ireland, each of whom have an arms-length body responsible for arts and culture within which sit dedicated objectives for children and young people's learning. These were the only national policies found with references to the important role of the arts sector within early childhood and family engagement.³ In Ireland's case, the value of early childhood arts is mentioned in the recent Arts in Education Charter which brings together priorities for both the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht.⁴

In Denmark, the Minister for Culture has set up a new agency called the Network for Children and Culture⁵, tasked with coordinating activities for children, culture and the arts and acting as an advisory board to the Ministry of Culture. The network brings together representatives from four of the ministry's institutions and three ministries: the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media, the National Cultural Heritage Agency, The Arts Council, the Danish Film Institute, The Ministry of Culture, The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Welfare. This network ensures that all grants for children, culture and the arts are spent in the most effective and efficient way.

In the Netherlands, Austria, Norway and Sweden, independent national agencies, usually funded by the Department of Culture, collect and disseminate information and knowledge about arts and cultural education and broker relationships across the sector to facilitate activities such as supporting school visits to cultural institutions, cultural school projects, and artist-in-school programmes (including pre-school). In Norway, this agency is also responsible for implementing the strategic plan for creative learning and coordinates the national network of universities and higher education establishments which offer teacher training in the arts and which are linked to university museums and the cultural rucksack.⁶

Otherwise, most other countries appear only to have local initiatives to encourage partnerships between schools (not including pre-school) and professional artists and/or arts organisations. The Czech Republic, Spain, Italy, Poland, Sweden and Iceland report that these initiatives are usually organised at the local authority and/or school level rather than at the national level.⁷

In addition, some countries have national manifestos for arts or cultural education, within which sit objectives for developing arts opportunities for the very young and their families. Unlike Ireland's Arts in Education Charter, these are often designed by consortia of cultural and educational organisations for lobbying purposes and hence do not carry the status of being enshrined in state policy with appropriate strategies and budgets attached (see **Appendix Three** for examples).

Particularly given the high level of interest in early childhood arts on the ground, and also the challenges of identifying significant new national funding streams, what is

³ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/113EN.pdf

⁴ Ireland's Arts Education charter: <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Arts-In-Education-Charter.pdf>

⁵ Denmark's Cultural Education strategy: www.boerne-kultur.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/billeder_og_publicationer/BKN_strategi_2010-2012_UK.pdf

⁶ The Cultural Rucksack enables local authorities to receive annual funding for placing artists in every Norwegian primary school: <http://kulturradet.no/the-cultural-rucksack>, funded by surplus from the state owed gaming company, Norsk Tipping.

⁷ Bamford, A. (2006), *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education*, Waxmann Verlag

clear is that much can be achieved by ensuring the minimum level of obstruction for art and early childhood collaborations to take place. As former Culture Minister for England, David Lammy, wrote:

What government must do, if it is not going to have the money actively to encourage more artists, poets and drama groups to come into schools, is to make sure it does not stand in the way of them. Too often this has been the case, in a legalistic culture that has made schools fortresses, making all outsiders de facto suspects.⁸

There are a great many ways in which children's learning and development in the arts and through the arts can take place from birth. However, partly due to the size of the early childhood sector in Ireland, the sheer number of children involved and the on-going challenge to make funding go further, many early childhood settings develop their creative practice without significant input from artists face-to-face.

Nevertheless, looking internationally and historically (see the case studies in **Appendix Two**), a significant number of models have been successfully developed for artists and early childhood professionals to work creatively and collaboratively with young children, recognising the equal weight of expertise each one brings, including:

- Short-term projects of creative workshops, installations or performances specifically designed for young children.
- Investigative approaches where artists work alongside early childhood professionals and young children to develop creative environments or arts activities in the setting.
- Training programmes and other learning experiences for early childhood professionals to develop their skills in arts and creative development.
- Long-term residencies where artists become a part of the daily environment.
- Whole approaches to early childhood education and care, where artists are recruited as part of the permanent staff team and integrated into young children's learning environments from birth onwards.
- Supporting and encouraging parents to engage in arts activities with their children at home, often focussing on parents' own arts and cultural tastes and backgrounds.
- Using resources (printed or electronic materials, CDs, DVDs and those available on websites) to help parents and early childhood professionals engage in arts activities with children.

⁸Demos (2010), *Born Creative*, London: Demos, p. 111.

Looking across these models, and other examples studied, some common ingredients emerge:

- Collaborative working: investigative approaches where professional artists and early childhood professionals are working together to support a child's development.
- Co-constructivism: adults and children working and learning together.
- Training embedded: training in early childhood development for arts practitioners or in creative processes and arts skills for early childhood professionals.
- Six common models: broadly speaking, almost all practices involve specialist performances, participatory partnership projects, artist residencies, support for professionals, support for parents, and/or early arts networks.
- Networking and practice-sharing: access to specialist networks or festivals to strengthen resources, collaboration and understanding between the arts and early childhood sectors.

Whilst some early childhood approaches are designed to be replicated through evidence based frameworks (such as HighScope), other approaches are not directly transferable, mainly due to the specific cultural basis on which they have been developed (such as Reggio Emilia or Te Whariki). In these cases, whilst the principles of practice can be commonly shared across different cultures, it is often not possible to achieve the same outcomes by analysing what has been effective in one place and seeking to replicate it in another place. The cultural context, perspectives, resources, skills, demographics, timing, infrastructure, policies and people will all be different. In lieu of this, this paper seeks to learn from what has worked, and what has not, in different places and at different times, and use that wisdom to enrich new development.

In this paper, we have attempted to outline a broad range of different early childhood arts approaches to present evidence of their impacts on young children's learning and development, or engagement with their families. This report does not present an authoritative consultation on the views of all stakeholders but we have tried to canvas a broad perspective on current realities from those working in early childhood arts in Ireland.

We hope that the insights this report brings, and the action that follows it, will help to make high quality arts in early childhood a reality for all settings and families with young children – enriching their lives now, and their futures to come.

Definitions

Throughout this paper we refer to 'early years arts' or 'early childhood arts' to cover a wide range of different practices and experiences, including artist workshops, performances and residencies in early childhood settings, the creative practice undertaken in settings by early childhood staff, and creative arts activities taking place in young children's homes and family lives.

By 'early childhood professional' we mean trained professionals in charge of young children's learning and development, including (but not exclusively) educators, practitioners, nursery nurses, child carers and teachers.

By 'artist' we mean creative professionals or companies in all art-forms (music, visual arts, crafts, photography, dance, theatre, sculpture, literature, environmental arts).

By 'creative practice' we mean the artist combining their creative and imaginative disposition with facilitation skills to bring to life children's own ideas and skills, often enhancing the creative learning already taking place in the setting. This is different in primary education which tends to be more subject-oriented, where the artist brings their artistic ability, materials and approach to support children's development in specific art form skills. In many cases these are not exclusive.

METHODOLOGY

In compiling this report, we have drawn principally on five sources:

- An analysis of key international literature, including peer reviewed publications, around early childhood arts and related fields (including psychological and neuro scientific research around early childhood).
- Published evaluations of early childhood arts practice.
- Policies and strategies for early education, cultural learning, arts access and engagement.
- Interviews and surveys with key figures in early childhood arts both internationally and in Ireland.
- Interviews and surveys with Arts Council Ireland funded clients working in this field.

A list of the sources consulted as part of this review is provided in **Appendices One to Four**.

Interviews and surveys with key figures in early childhood arts

We circulated an online questionnaire to 57 key figures in early childhood arts both internationally and in Ireland. The surveys asked about which activities, approaches, projects and programmes had been most effective for supporting their practice, and what lessons could be learnt from these. Seven responses were fully completed, whilst 21 requested further information and provide further research and information by email and telephone.

Following the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted by phone, following up responses to those who had completed the survey, and interviewing others who had not responded to the survey. Nine interviews were undertaken with people in Ireland, and four with people in other countries, and a further six email surveys were conducted with Arts Council funded clients. The survey questions, respondents and interview participants are listed in **Appendix One**.

Literature, evidence, policy, practice

Due to the dearth of national policies on early childhood arts, we also investigated a selection of national or regional arts education policies that included a focus on young children and families, together with some smaller scale, but highly successful, longer term collaborative programmes. As a result of the localised nature of much

work in this area, the documentation of impacts and benefits is often lacking in rigour or longevity, measured against non-comparable benchmarks, and geared towards the funding objectives that have enabled the work to take place in the first place.

Therefore, we have taken the approach of identifying common characteristics leading to the success of these programmes, bearing in mind the geographic, scale and structural differences. We have also focussed mainly on work that is well documented by independent researchers to ensure its validity. Whilst we have set out a strong evidence base showing the impacts attributed to arts interventions in early childhood, we would also caution against claims of direct cause and effect when these interventions are but one facet of a highly complex set of influences on any child's development.

EVIDENCE AND ARGUMENTS FOR THE IMPACTS OF ARTS ACTIVITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Significant bodies of evidence now exist, from neuroscience, cognitive science, developmental psychology, nursery or school inspections, pedagogical assessments and practice evaluations of the impacts that arts interventions can have on children, adults and early childhood practice in general. The following section sets out the evidence of impact in nine key areas.

General impacts of early interventions on children and on society at large

In her review of the English Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, Dame Clare Tickell surveyed a comprehensive body of evidence and concluded that:⁹

Investment and interventions in the early years are generally more effective in improving outcomes than investments and interventions later in life.¹⁰ The return on public investment in high quality early years education is substantial,¹¹ leading to decreased social problems, reduced inequality and increased productivity and GDP growth.¹²

The evidence shows that high quality early years interventions provide lasting and significant long-term effects on young children's development.¹³ Specific international examples provide concrete examples of these effects. In the USA, children aged from birth to age 3 participating in the Early Head Start programme showed very positive and long-lasting effects in terms of better cognitive and language development. In France, research shows that attending a pre-school had a lasting positive effect on achievement in primary education, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In Sweden, early childhood education and care has been linked to improvement in academic performance at the age of 13.¹⁴

However, in a child's earliest years, involved parenting is a bigger influence on their future achievements than wealth, class, education, cultural intervention or any other common social factor¹⁵. What parents do with their children is even more important than their income, occupation or education.

In fact, the Millennium Cohort Study commissioned by the Review from Bristol University showed that the key drivers for children's life chances – positive and

⁹ Tickell, C. (2012), *The Tickell Review – evidence collation*, London: Department for Education, p4.

¹⁰ Doyle, O., et al., (2007), *Early Childhood Intervention: Rationale, Timing and Efficacy*, UCD Geary Institute Discussion Paper Series.

¹¹ Calman, L. and Tarr-Whelan, L. (2005), *Early Childhood Education for All. A Wise Investment*. New York: Legal Momentum.

¹² Barnett, S. and Ackerman, D. (2006), *Costs, Benefits and Long-term Effects of Early Care and Education Programs: Recommendations and Cautions for Community Developers*. Community Development: Journal of the Community Development Society, 37 (2), Summer 2006.

¹³ Barnett, S. (2008), *Preschool Education and its Lasting Effects: Research and Policy Implications*, Boulder and Tempe: EPIC and EPRU.

¹⁴ UNICEF (2008), *The child care transition, 'Innocenti'*, Report Card 8. Florence: UNICEF.

¹⁵ Field, F., (2010) *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*, London: HMG.

authoritative parenting, the home learning environment, and other home and family related factors, measured at the age of 3 – are predictive of children’s readiness for school and later life outcomes. Most importantly, narrowing the gap on each of the key drivers was found to predict virtually all of the difference in children’s outcomes at age five.¹⁶

Children need nurturing far longer than any other species and the quality of this nurturing has a major impact on how well children develop and then fulfil their potential. This task is not primarily one that belongs to the state. We imperil the country’s future if we forget that it is the aspirations and actions of parents which are critical to how well their children prosper.¹⁷

A great deal can be achieved simply through the messages and values that come across from significant influential bodies. The evidence review shows that Arts Councils who have supported national campaigns or charters that clearly promote the importance of engaging with children and families from the earliest stage have significantly increased the status of this work over time, attracting people to engage in early childhood arts, and increasing expectations of standards.

Senior management buy-in is often chiefly motivated by their experiences of what works or by local or central government endorsement through policy and, especially, from the inspectorate and the assessment regime. Therefore high level campaigns of this nature can often ensure a deeper awareness and buy-in from arts and early childhood leaders, which can have a significant impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of any arts intervention. One example of this is the Charter of Children’s Rights to Arts and Culture, brought together through a global collaboration led by *La Baracca* theatre (Italy) and the *Smallsize* network of children’s theatre producers, arts venue managers, educationalists, policy makers and national cultural agencies across 27 countries (see *Case Study 1* in **Appendix Two**).

Impacts of arts interventions on family and parent-child relationships

It is widely accepted that a significant proportion of learning in a child’s life takes place at home with families, parents and carers.¹⁸ These are the first holders and protectors of children’s trust; the first people who shape and influence the majority of children’s early experiences. The attitudes, aspirations and actions of family members can either support or thwart a child’s belief in their own creativity which, in turn, can transform or restrict their life chances.

¹⁶ Field, F., (2010), *The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children becoming Poor Adults*, HM Government. <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/ifssoca/outputs/ffreport.pdf>

¹⁷ Field, F., (2010) *The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children becoming Poor Adults*, HM Government, p. 11.

¹⁸ The **Home Learning Environment** is measured as: Activities that parents undertake with their child(ren) which have a positive effect on their development, such as reading with their child, teaching songs and nursery rhymes, painting and drawing, playing with letters and numbers, visiting the library, teaching the alphabet and numbers, and creating regular opportunities for them to play with their friends at home. Sylva, K., et al. (2012) *The effective provision of pre-school education (eppe) project: Findings from pre-school to end of Key Stage 1*, London: Institute of Education, <http://eppe.ioe.ac.uk/eppe/eppepdfs/RBTec1223sept0412.pdf>

Children's own attainment, social and emotional development and aspirations also have a significant impact on their future attainment. High achieving children reinforce the achievements that are formed by their background. For low achieving children the opposite is true as by this stage they do not have the resources to grow their achievements in a similar way.¹⁹

In recognition of their overwhelming influence on young children's lives, it is imperative that early childhood arts programmes specifically work alongside parents, usually in the early childhood setting or the arts and cultural venue. Many arts venues focus on reach, comfort, access and engagement for families, in an attempt to overcome barriers of price, social or cultural inhibitions. The more enlightened arts providers have moved from a culture that considers family engagement an 'audience development' issue, driven by business development objectives, to one that considers it a 'children's rights' issue, driven by social, educational and cultural entitlement objectives.

Many arts sector leaders would recognise they have a role to play in ensuring all children can access their cultural entitlement, as set out in Article 31 of the *UN Convention of Children's Rights*.²⁰ However, carrying this role out in a meaningful, sustainable way can only happen if the social, cultural and economic influences on a young child and their family are more widely debated and understood across the sector, therefore developing a realistic concept of how to tailor their programme, environment, partnerships and provision most effectively. In meeting the needs and aspirations of families, arts organisations will engender positive experiences, strong relationships and return visits which can, in turn, lead to better economic outcomes.

In a policy-driven culture, the biggest challenge is to resist using the jigsaw of cross-referenced policy objectives as the starting point for defining the place of culture in young people's lives. A true entitlement model keeps the child at the heart rather than trying to find the 'best fit'. The child's needs, aspirations, ideas and potential should be the starting points for all provision (i.e. cultural, social and health care, community, transport, employment, and so on) in ways which add value to the child's life and that of their families and peers.²¹

Healthy relationships between arts organisations and parents can help extend the parent's knowledge of, and bonds with, their own child, and enhancing what they already do to support their child's best interests. By providing a positive focus for shared experience, expression and communication between parent and child, arts organisations can play a valuable role in supporting the quality of those parent-child relationships from birth. This might happen through cultural visits, reading, singing, role playing, making music or sharing memories in photographs, when parents can help to extend their children's knowledge, understanding and meaning of their relationships²². One example of this is the *Dream Catcher* project (see *Case Study 2* in **Appendix Two**) which documented both expected and unexpected impacts on the child-parent and child-child relationships through the use of video and photographic cameras to share and understand their children's stories.

¹⁹ Field, F., (2010), *The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children becoming Poor Adults*, HM Government

²⁰ UN Convention of Children's Rights: *Article 31- Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.* http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf

²¹ Churchill Dower, R (2012), *Cultural Entitlement in a Nutshell*, Revised version, Earlyarts: <http://bit.ly/12uQt4P>

²² Ipsos Mori (2009), *Parents' views on creative and cultural education*, London: CCE. <http://www.creativity-cultureeducation.org/parents-views-on-creative-and-cultural-education>, accessed 21 Apr. 13.

In addition, evidence shows that arts experiences can lead to breaking down the barriers of language, culture, fear of authority, prejudices or societal differences.²³ Stimulating and compelling experiences at museums, galleries, theatres, libraries, dance, arts or music venues will offer many parents from different backgrounds the ideas, confidence and resources to make play with their children a feature of everyday life.²⁴ Some parents have reported gaining employment and skills development leading to an increase in both aspirations and economic well-being, simply by being invited to engage with their children's creative projects in nurseries and children's centres.²⁵

The former national Renaissance Museums programme in England²⁶ set the bar high for museums to consider family learning a priority in everything they provided from programming and marketing to access and leadership. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council encouraged the creation of family learning forums to provide expert consultants, in the form of parents and carers, on all aspects of museums provision. Progress was measured through a complex but innovative quality assurance framework, Inspiring Learning for All²⁷, which has informed the development of many quality frameworks since. Similarly, the national, state funded *Creative Connections* programme placed experienced artists in several Child and Family centres across Tasmania to increase the confidence of parents in using arts approaches with their children at home (see *Case Study 3* in **Appendix Two**).

Impacts of arts experiences on early brain development

The study of brain development is still in its infancy but with the help of MRI scanners, neuroscientists are starting to discover links between high quality experiences in the early years and the developing brain. Emergent research²⁸ shows that babies are born with around 100 billion neurons but only about a quarter of the connections – synapses – already made between them; approximately 10,000 per neuron. It is thought that the majority of synaptic connections that a person will use in their lives are made by the age of around five, although windows of 'plasticity' – when the neuron or synapse is able to change its parameters in response to an experience – allow for new learning to happen throughout life. Synaptic connections are strengthened or 'pruned' depending on what the person experiences, i.e. what they do, think, see, hear, perceive, smell, touch, who they interact with and how, combined with their genetic predispositions towards certain strengths or interests.

The process of pruning, chiefly from age three to sexual maturity in adolescence, ensures that the connections that are regularly used get stronger, and those that

²³ Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (1999), *Seeing, making, doing: creative development in early years*, p. 37; National Children's Bureau (2010), *Principles for engaging with families: A framework for local authorities and national organisations to evaluate and improve engagement with families*.

²⁴ Oskala, A., et al., (2009), *Encourage children today to build audiences for tomorrow, Evidence from the Taking Part survey on how childhood involvement in the arts affects arts engagement in adulthood*. Arts Council England. http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/encourage-children-today-to-build-audiences-for-tomorrow/.

²⁵ Safford, K., et al. (2008), *Their learning becomes your journey: parents respond to children's work in creative partnerships*, <http://www.clpe.co.uk/research/creativity-projects/creativity-and-parents>

²⁶ Museums, Libraries and Archives Renaissance programme: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/archive/renaissance>

²⁷ Inspiring Learning for All: <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/>

²⁸ David, T., Goouch, K., Powell, S. and Abbott, L. (2003) *Young Brains*, DfES Research Report Number 444: Birth to Three Matters: A Review of the Literature, Nottingham: Queen's Printer.

aren't used are cut back. The brain effectively becomes more efficient. It is thought that the emerging web of synaptic connections holds the key to our personalities – it is what makes us uniquely who we are, mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally, in the same way that DNA makes us uniquely who we are genetically. This web of synaptic connections formed in the womb and the early years, pruned in childhood, and refined thereafter make up our individual intellects, souls, minds, and memories.

The literature review of early brain development [*footnote 28*] suggests that high quality experiences are more critical in the early years for the development of healthy brains and well-rounded personalities than at any other time during the rest of childhood and adulthood. These critical experiences include imaginative, creative and cultural opportunities which can help children to build contexts, make meaning and deepen their understanding.

By encouraging creativity and imagination, we are promoting children's ability to explore and comprehend their world and increasing their opportunities to make new connections and reach new understandings.²⁹

In addition, neuroscientists Shonkoff and Philipps³⁰, demonstrate that, despite the enormous potential for all kinds of knowledge that all children have at birth, the development of specific knowledge, skills and competencies is as largely influenced by their family's social and cultural experiences as by their genetic predispositions. In that period, neglect and other adverse experiences can have a profound effect on how children are emotionally 'wired'. This will deeply influence their emotional responses to events and their ability to form attachments or to empathise with other people.³¹

Given the impact on brain development that early experiences have, it is not surprising that several studies have uncovered significant long-term impacts of creative environments.³² They highlight how creative activities that encourage positive relationships have a direct bearing on helping a rapid blooming of synapses, leading to the formation of well-rounded personalities, good attachment, self-esteem and better mental health.³³

More specifically, research based on studies from positron emission tomography (PET) scans and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans³⁴ shows how some music activates the same areas of the brain that are also activated during mathematical processing. It appears that early musical training begins to build the same neural networks that are

²⁹ Duffy, B. (2006), *Supporting Creativity and Imagination in the Early Years*, Oxford University Press.

³⁰ David, T., Gooch, K., Powell, S. and Abbott, L. (2003) *Young Brains*, DfES Research Report Number 444: Birth to Three Matters: A Review of the Literature, Nottingham: Queen's Printer. pp. 117–127.

³¹ Zeedyk, S (2007), *Building babies brains through parents' love*: <http://suzannezeedyk.com/resources/publications/building-babies-brains-through-parents-love/>

³² David, T., Gooch, K., Powell, S. and Abbott, L. (2003) *Young Brains*, DfES Research Report Number 444: Birth to Three Matters: A Review of the Literature, Nottingham: Queen's Printer. pp. 117–127. Also: <http://www.earlyarts.co.uk/ruths-blog/entry/2011/10/18/babies-brain-architecture>.

³³ *Zero to Three: Brain Development*: <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/brain-development/brain-development.html>

³⁴ A positron emission tomography (PET) scan helps doctors see how the organs and tissues inside the body are actually functioning by measuring vital functions such as blood flow, oxygen use, and glucose metabolism. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) uses strong magnetic fields and radio waves to diagnose health conditions that affect organs, tissue and bone, and produces very detailed pictures of the human body, especially soft tissues, without the use of x-rays. A PET scan can often detect very early changes whereas a CT or MRI scan detects changes a little later as the disease begins to cause changes in the structure of organs or tissues.

later used for numerical tasks.³⁵ Similarly, drama and role play can stimulate the same synapses that focus on spoken language; painting can stimulate the visual processing system that recalls memory or creates fantasy; movement, drawing and modelling link to the development of gross and fine motor skills.

Even dance can increase the number of capillaries in the brain, which facilitates blood flow and therefore oxygen to the brain, thereby impacting on cognitive performance. *Ludus Dance Company* from Lancashire, England, have designed a co-construction model of dance and movement, to specifically explore the elements of movement that better enable the fulfilment of physical development in three to five year olds (see *Case Study 4* in **Appendix Two**).

In fact, a large body of evidence suggests that music-making in early childhood can develop the perception of different phonemes and the auditory cortex and hence aid the development of language learning as well as musical behaviour.³⁶ Because of this, several music education methods, including Suzuki, Kodaly, Orff and Dalcroze are designed to give children stage (not age)-based, structured musical activities from very young ages. The *In Harmony* programme (based on Venezuela's *El Sistema* programme) illustrated how a large scale approach to music-making in the foundation years can lead to enhanced academic achievement and engagement in learning, especially for children with special educational needs or those for whom music opportunities would not otherwise have been available (see *Case Study 5* in **Appendix Two**).

If children are denied these experiences, for whatever reason (entitlement, economics, cultural, societal), the synapses that are predisposed to imagination, auditory, linguistic, physical or creative thinking skills will be pruned, making it difficult to reconnect those synapses further down the line, although not impossible.

Development of innate human qualities, such as creativity, expression, identity, culture and imagination

On the one hand, there is a strong scientific and empirical evidence base behind the 'instrumental' impacts of early childhood arts experiences: impacts on society, on brain development, on parent—child relationships, on children's personal, social and emotional development. A second set of arguments for arts activity looks at how arts appear to be an innate part of humanity: with evidence that some art forms (such as music and dance) existed long before writing,³⁷ alongside other findings, several studies have also pointed to the innateness of various artistic qualities – e.g. communication and expression through movement, sound and image – pointing out that a lack of these in education may constitute a denial of human nature.³⁸

Franz Cizek believed that every child had a natural tendency towards creative and artistic expression, which should be fostered through imaginative learning

³⁵ Sousa, D (2006), *How the arts develop the brain*, School Superintendents Association, <http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=7378>

³⁶ Lonie, D. (2010), *Early Years Evidence Review: Assessing the outcomes of early years music making*, London: Youth Music, p. 13.

³⁷ Bamford, A. (2006), *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education*, Waxmann Verlag, p. 19

³⁸ e.g. Sacks, O. (2008), *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, Vintage.

environments, saying ‘art is a natural aspect of human development from birth, the absence of which impairs mental growth and social fitness’³⁹ This idea has been supported by other early childhood theorists, including Dewey⁴⁰, Lowenfield,⁴¹ Bruner⁴² and Rogoff,⁴³ particularly in reference to the cultural aspects of collaboration.

Barbara Rogoff in particular supports approaches to learning that enhance innate human and creative aptitudes, through observation of children’s interests and keen attention to on-going events; through specifying the roles of adults as guides and facilitators rather than didactic experts, and through prioritising children’s opportunities to participate in cultural activities or in age-specific child-focused settings. Through the cumulative influence of these theorists, arts education has become focussed on ensuring children achieve certain developmental stages in their growth, before formal education builds on this with discipline, knowledge and skills.⁴⁴

A third set of arguments, based principally on cultural beliefs and practical experiences suggest that the arts express a fundamental part of who we are as humans. They provide a way of forming cultural contexts that create and preserve our cultural heritage, and enable young children to develop their own cultural languages which contribute to their individual, community and global identity.⁴⁵ As identified in Ireland’s *Aistear* framework:

*By embracing difference, by exploring their own attitudes in relation to equality and diversity, and by realising that their attitudes and values influence children, adults can develop the insights, self-awareness and skills that are needed to help children develop a strong sense of identity and belonging... When children feel a sense of belonging and sense of pride in their families, their peers, and their communities, they can be emotionally strong, self-assured, and able to deal with challenges and difficulties. This creates an important foundation for their learning and development.*⁴⁶

The Cultural Learning Alliance⁴⁷ supports this view:

There is no single culture, no uniform set of aesthetic principles or creative practice that defines cultural learning. What it offers is an opportunity for all communities to understand the evolution of their own identity, and so become better able to understand the customs and cultures of others. By exploring the culture that shapes individual and collective identity, we become surer of ourselves.

³⁹ Franz Cizek (1865–1946), an Austrian genre and portrait painter, who was best known as a teacher and reformer of art education, opening the Child Art Movement in Vienna in 1897.

⁴⁰ Dewey (1859–1952) was an American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer whose ideas have been influential in education and social reform. *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Art as Experience* (1934) and *Experience and Education* (1938) are Dewey’s major writings on education and aesthetics.

⁴¹ Lowenfield (1903–1960) a professor of art education at the Pennsylvania State University, best known for *Creative and Mental Growth* (1947) – the single most influential textbook in art education, and for his theory of stages in artistic development.

⁴² Bruner, J (1996), *Culture of Education*, Harvard University Press. www.infed.org/thinkers/bruner.htm

⁴³ Barbara Rogoff is an educator whose interests lie in understanding and communicating the different learning thrusts between cultures, especially within her book *The Cultural Nature of Human Development* (2003). Her work bridges psychology with anthropology, drawing on Vygotsky.

⁴⁴ Bamford, A. (2006), *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education*, Waxmann Verlag, p. 33 for details.

⁴⁵ Bamford, A. (2006), *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education*, Waxmann Verlag, pp.17-18.

⁴⁶ NCCA (2009), *Aistear; The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework – Principles and Themes*, Dublin: National Council For Curriculum and Assessment, p. 25

⁴⁷ *ImagiNation – A Case for Cultural Learning* (2012), Cultural Learning Alliance: www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/userfiles/files/FINAL_ImagineNation_The_Case_for_Cultural_Learning.pdf

The *Media Initiative for Children* in Northern Ireland was established to encourage young children to respect differences within a deeply divided society that is emerging out of a prolonged period of violent conflict in Northern Ireland. It is led by a partnership between US-based Peace Initiatives Institute and NIPPA – The Early Years Organisation, and has had hugely positive impacts on the communities involved (see *Case Study 6* in **Appendix Two**).

The *Kids Own Publishing Company* (originated in Ireland in the 1990s and extended to Australia in 2003) is another example of where the arts can enhance inter-cultural understanding. By working with pre-school children and families from low socio-economic areas and from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, specifically indigenous communities and new migrants, *Kids Own* aims to build more equitable and respectful relationships between children and caregivers by giving children their own cultural voice (see *Case Study 7* in **Appendix Two**).

Clearly, the arts helps children make sense of the world by connecting symbols, patterns, facts and concepts, forming positive self-perceptions and understanding cultural differences.⁴⁸ However, arts approaches can also provide opportunities for unexpected outcomes. The notion of the ‘wow factor’ has been adopted to encompass the excitement and unexpected results of arts interventions that can be difficult to define, but have enormous impact on the teachers, artists, children involved. The term has been used when a child makes a new discovery, opens their eyes visually, musically or through movement or drama for the first time, or produces some new and innovative response was the engine that fuels the continuation of many arts-rich education programmes.⁴⁹ Eisner (1994, 2002) and Greene (1995) note the importance of the arts for experiencing the joy of creating, developing attention to detail, and learning ways to express thoughts, knowledge, and feelings beyond words.⁵⁰ However, we would caution that this response can sometimes be due to a lack of clear evaluative measures and an articulate language with which to describe and explain these outcomes, which could be the result of a number of causes coming together at that particular moment in time, of which the arts intervention was one.

There is no doubt, however, that the arts can feed the inner world of children’s imaginations. Robert Witkin described humans as living in two worlds:⁵¹ an outer world, of people and things that exist whether or not we exist; and an inner world, which is unique to each person and stops when we do. Various commentators⁵² have pointed out that the arts play a crucial role in connecting these two worlds. But whereas mainstream education tends to focus on the outer world, the arts have a key role in feeding the inner world of our imaginations, thoughts and ideas – the world that is perhaps most critical to developing our individual roles in the outer world.

Inspired by Reggio Emilia’s *Remida*⁵³ programme, the House of Objects project enables ‘intelligent’ materials thrown away by local industry and other sources to be repurposed through artistic activities. Children are invited to explore and express their inner worlds through these materials, resulting in highly imaginative sculptures, objects, and even functional machines being brought to life (see *Case Study 8* in **Appendix Two**).

⁴⁸ Duffy, B. (2006), *Supporting Creativity and Imagination in the Early Years*, Oxford University Press.

⁴⁹ Bamford, A. (2006), *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education*, Waxmann Verlag, p. 19

⁵⁰ Smithrim, K & Uptis, R 2005, *Learning Through The Arts: Lessons of Engagement* Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l’éducation, Vol. 28, No. 1/2 pp. 109–127.

⁵¹ Witkin, R. (1974), *Intelligence of feeling*, Heinemann Educational Publishers.

⁵² Ken Robinson, speaking at Earlyarts UnConference, 2012, accessible at <http://vimeo.com/53456183>

⁵³ www.reggiochildren.it/atelier/remida/?lang=en

Impacts of early childhood arts on personal, social and emotional development

Where arts interventions support children's sensory faculties, many projects report significant impacts on personal, social and emotional development and early childhood settings, such as:

- Increasing children's self-confidence, motivation and self-expression.⁵⁴
- Improving children's behavioural health and well-being.⁵⁵
- Improving interaction between looked after children or children with special needs.⁵⁶
- Becoming better adapted to live and learn with others.⁵⁷
- Building positive and respectful relationships.⁵⁸
- Growing into active and critical learners, asking meaningful questions, solving their own problems, making judgements and choices.⁵⁹
- Engaging in sustained shared thinking and articulating ideas.⁶⁰
- Better at communicating, expressing their feelings, emotions, thoughts and ideas.⁶¹
- More aware of their own sense of identity and individuality.⁶²
- Heightened feelings of being validated, taken seriously and belonging to the community.⁶³
- Deeper level play experiences and shared understandings with important adults.⁶⁴

Many of these outcomes could also be achieved through play-based approaches which are at the heart of many creative pedagogies as an important medium not only for children to explore and demonstrate the personal, social and emotional meaning of their worlds but also for adults to facilitate and contribute to their learning.

⁵⁴ Lonie, D. (2010), *Early Years Evidence Review: Assessing the outcomes of early years music making*, London: Youth Music, p. 13.

⁵⁵ Churchill Dower, R. (2010), *Measuring the impact of cultural experiences in Early Years: A report for Find Your Talent – Liverpool City Region Team*, p.13

⁵⁶ Creative Connections (2012), *Creative Connections in the Early Years: Phase one Report*, Creative Connections

⁵⁷ Churchill Dower, R, Hogan, Hoy, C, S, Sims, H, (2006) *Search for Meaning – The Children's Curriculum*, Bradford, Canterbury Nursery School and Centre for Children and Families

⁵⁸ Hay, P. (2012) *5x5x5=creativity 2011–12 Annual Report*, Bath: 5x5x5=creativity

⁵⁹ Perkins, S, (1998) *Seeing, Making, Doing – Creative Development in Early Years Settings*, Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum

⁶⁰ Piscitelli, B. (1988), *Preschoolers and parents as artist and art appreciators*, *Art Education* 41:4 pp. 48–55.

Renaissance North West (2008), *Close Encounters with Culture – Museums and Galleries and the Early Years*

⁶¹ Rinaldi, C. (2001). *The Courage of Utopia in Making Learning Visible. Children as individual and group learners*, pp. 148-151. Reggio Emilia, Italy: Reggio Children and Project Zero

⁶² <http://www.early-years.org/mifc/research.php> and Coral (2007), *Evaluation of the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme*, Coral: Belfast: <http://www.early-years.org/coral/mifc.php>.

⁶³ Hague, C. and L. Grant (2009), *Dream Catcher Evaluation*, Futurelab, accessed from <http://archive.futurelab.org.uk/projects/dream-catcher>

⁶⁴ Belloli, J, Woolf, F, (2005) *Reflect and review: the arts and creativity in early years* (p28), Arts Council England: <http://bit.ly/12uXanD>

The *Mus-e* programme run by the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation across Europe and Israel shows how significantly reduced levels of violence, racism and social exclusion can be achieved through arts interventions that enable young children to work in mixed groups across towns and cities. The outcomes have included increased sensory skills, bodily awareness, creativity, attention span, emotional intelligence, confidence, self-expression, communication, self-esteem, and respect for others (see *Case Study 9* in **Appendix Two**).

The powerful outcomes of the arts approaches identified above are very close to outcomes of play in early learning, described in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence⁶⁵ as helping children to:

- Make sense of real-life situations.
- Develop awareness of themselves and others.
- Explore, investigate and experiment.
- Be actively involved in learning.
- Draw and test their conclusions.
- Develop self-confidence.
- Express their ideas and feelings in many different ways.
- Inhabit imagined situations.
- Act out and come to terms with experiences at home or with friends.
- Be solitary, quiet and reflective.
- Collaborate with others.
- Take the initiative on their own terms.
- Develop relationships.
- Practise skills.
- Consolidate previous learning.
- Be challenged in new learning.

Stimulating and compelling experiences at museums, galleries, theatres, libraries and arts venues will offer the ideas, confidence and resources to make playful learning a more permanent feature of everyday life. This is important to help both professionals and parents realise the importance of play in unlocking the creative potential of both children and adults, and in extending the purposefulness of cultural provision.

An example of this is *ArtPlay* – a permanent home for children’s art and play in Melbourne, Australia, inspired by *The Ark* in Dublin. Open to children aged 3–12 years, it offers a wide range of artist-led, play-based programs across diverse art forms. Their recent research has shown that a playful environment attracts engagement from a very diverse set of different participant ethnicities and backgrounds. Through the emotional and social relations that have been developed at *Artplay*, a sense of ‘cultural citizenship’ has emerged amongst the families that attend (see *Case Study 10* in **Appendix Two**).

⁶⁵ A Curriculum Framework for Children 3 to 5, Scottish Executive: www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/curriculum/index.asp

However, the relationships between play, creativity and learning can be confusing. Creativity is often associated with the arts and the creation of an aesthetic product, whereas play is often associated with the processes of learning.⁶⁶ Understanding the connections can help focus the adult's role on creating the most effective environment for personal, social and emotional development.

*Play is freely chosen by the child, and is under the control of the child. The child decides how to play, how long to sustain the play, what the play is about, and who to play with. There are many forms of play, but it is usually highly creative, open-ended and imaginative. Play engages children's bodies, minds and emotions. Children can learn to interact with others, to experience and manage feelings, and to be in control and confident about themselves and their abilities... Practitioners cannot plan children's play, because this would work against the choice and control that are central features of play. Practitioners can and should plan **for** children's play, however, by creating high quality, creative learning environments, and ensuring uninterrupted periods for children to develop their ideas.⁶⁷*

In our view, an integrated approach can be the most beneficial for children – playfulness often begets creativity and vice versa, and both are effective routes to personal, social, cognitive and emotional development, especially if the starting points revolve around the child's interests. However, what is clear is the need to develop skills to support both, as we will discuss below.

Another example of this is the *Babelut* programme, run by the Impact Centre for Music in Belgium for local families. Experienced early childhood musicians create environments where babies and young children are encouraged to play with sounds. The musicians facilitate playful exchanges with the children in a way that centralises the importance of their own responses. Their action research has led to some important discoveries about how the children's music enhanced self-awareness, better group interactions and communication skills (see *Case Study 11* in **Appendix Two**).

Impacts of early childhood arts on improving pedagogy and learning outcomes

Given the integrated way in which very young children learn, early education frameworks of the highest quality are generally considered to be ones that take a child-centred approach.⁶⁸ That is, frameworks that are based on agreed core principles leading to general outcomes based on societal norms and values (with different levels of complexity at different stages) – rather than specific art form or teaching approaches or prescribed learning content. According to the BERA-SIG⁶⁹ findings, the core principles in supporting meaningful approaches to early learning include:

⁶⁶ Churchill Dower, R, (2012); *Creativity or Play – why early arts professionals should not have to choose*. The Guardian Online <http://bit.ly/Mbpq3A>

⁶⁷ *Learning, Playing and Interacting – Good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage*, p10-11 (2009) Department for Children, Schools and Families: www.keap.org.uk/documents/LearningPlayingInteracting.pdf

⁶⁸ OECD (2004), *Five Curriculum Outlines in Starting Strong, Curricula and Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD, p. 27, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/36/31672150.pdf

⁶⁹ British Educational Research Association – Special Interest Group (2003) *Early Years Research: Pedagogy, Curriculum and Adult Roles, Training and Professionalism*. www.bera.ac.uk/pdfs/BERAEarlyYearsReview-31Mao03.pdf

- A focus on individual development.
- An emphasis on child-oriented not adult-directed learning.
- Learning that is co-constructed with adults and peers.
- Children as active agents not passive recipients.
- A view of children as competent learners rather than immature adults.
- Listening to and respecting children and their choices.
- Learning that is shaped by context and community.

Open-ended approaches are generally considered more successful as the artist or educator gives the child richer opportunities to think and reflect, to explore, challenge, fantasise, be creative and make meaning, to accommodate for different learning styles, and by that to develop his or her understanding.⁷⁰ In addition, there is general acceptance that the development of the imagination is integral to learning⁷¹, and that arts approaches can create life-long dispositions for learning about relationship building and attachment, empathy and understanding.⁷²

Sir Ken Robinson expands on this:

*Imagination lies at the heart of every human achievement and becomes most effective when we are in our element. Being in your element is about finding thing you're naturally good at, your aptitudes and your own natural talents. We all have very different talents and the more we homogenise education, the more we bleach out this crucial factor of diversity which characterises human ability.... It's the culture of education rather than the formal content of the curriculum that will help to bring about the change we want to see.*⁷³

Several approaches to early education, most notably Reggio Emilia (Northern Italy)⁷⁴ and Te Whāriki (New Zealand)⁷⁵, treat arts and culture as a set of creative and expressive opportunities which are an integral part of the learning experience itself, as opposed to being a vehicle for delivering a curriculum. In Northern Italy, children and adults co-construct their own understanding of the world through their relationships with people, the environment and ideas. The early childhood educators – *Pedagogista* and *Ateliarista* – are professionally trained to use creative processes in order to identify, observe and document children's cognitive, social, cultural, spiritual and democratic aptitudes, within and through the arts.⁷⁶

Similarly, in New Zealand, early educators create festivals, puppetry, stories, music, theatre and song to help children develop respect for, and deep understanding

⁷⁰ Siraj-Blatchford, I., et al., (2002). *Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years*. London: Department for education and skills

⁷¹ *ImagiNation – A Case for Cultural Learning* (2012), Cultural Learning Alliance: www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/userfiles/files/FINAL_ImagineNation_The_Case_for_Cultural_Learning.pdf

⁷² Jayatilaka, G., (2010) *Creative futures: a new deal for the early years sector in Born Creative*, London: Demos, pp. 71-82.

⁷³ Sir Ken Robinson (2012), presentation to Earlyarts UnConference: <https://vimeo.com/53456183>

⁷⁴ Details on Reggio Emilia at: <http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/index.htm>

⁷⁵ Details of Te Whāriki at: www.educate.ece.govt.nz/EducateHome/learning/curriculumAndLearning/TeWhariki.aspx

⁷⁶ Rinaldi, C. (2001). *The Courage of Utopia*, in *Making Learning Visible. Children as individual and group learners*, pp. 148-151. Reggio Emilia, Italy: Reggio Children and Project Zero.

of, their indigenous cultures. In both examples, children are helped to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society. The holistic nature of the learning environments in Te Whāriki makes assessment difficult. Learning is therefore measured using reflective questioning and a *Learning Story* approach which helps to describe, document and evaluate children's learning, enabling professionals to make decisions about supporting each child's development.

In other cases, for example in the Thomas Coram Centre (a nursery school in London), Head of Centre, Bernadette Duffy describes how they support the delivery of the whole curriculum (the Early Years Foundation Stage in England) through arts activities:

- **Communication, language and literacy** are supported through creating shared dances, exploring speaking and listening in the arts, and developing fine motor skills for writing through arts activities
- **Problem solving and numeracy** are supported through visual arts around concepts of shape, size, line and area, and through dance around spatial concepts, sequencing events, and through model-making with clay to develop pattern-making for understanding mathematics
- **Knowledge and understanding of the world** is supported through investigating unfamiliar materials and resources from different cultures and societies
- **Physical development** is supported through sculpting, and play with materials for fine motor skills, and through music, dance and movement for gross motor skills.⁷⁷

In addition, evidence reviews for the impacts of music-making in early childhood have attested to how music can be used to support the majority of areas for learning covered in virtually any early childhood curriculum, including mathematics, languages, health and well-being, literacy, physical dexterity, understanding the world, cooperation and collaboration, and personal and social development.⁷⁸

Interestingly, nine countries (Belgium (Flemish Community), Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Latvia, Austria, Slovenia and Finland) report the use of arts approaches as one of the main ways to deliver cross-curricular themes as part of the aims for their foundation and primary curriculums, or to explore other core curriculum subjects, such as numeracy and literacy.⁷⁹ In Spain, legislation stipulates that all students from nursery school upwards have to acquire basic competences, one of which is 'Cultural and Artistic Competence'. In Austria, 'Creativity and Design' is one of the five cross-curricular educational areas (Bildungsbereiche) relevant for all subjects. In Scotland, encouraging creativity among children from the age of three upwards is one of the five national priorities in the Curriculum for Excellence.

⁷⁷ Duffy, B. (2010), *Using creativity and creative learning to enrich the lives of young children at the Thomas Coram Centre* in Born Creative, London: Demos, pp. 21-22.

⁷⁸ Lonie, D. (2010), *Early Years Evidence Review: Assessing the outcomes of early years music making*, London: Youth Music, and Fawcett, M. (2012), *Music matters in early years settings*, TACTYC.

⁷⁹ Bamford, A. (2006), *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education*, Waxmann Verlag

A good example of the curriculum being delivered through arts practices is the *Delta* project: *Developing Literacy Through the Arts*, run by Cape USA. By placing artists with specific skills that related to supporting literacy needs in several school across Chicago, and documenting the progress of students and teachers working in controlled conditions with these artists, CAPE were able to measure a significant impact of the intervention on literacy assessment scores (see *Case Study 12* in **Appendix Two**).

Another great example is the Royal School of Music in Canada, whose whole-school intervention project, *Learning Through the Arts*, stimulated major changes in the progress of students' academic learning, particularly in maths. This led to a significant increase in teaching strategies using the arts in non-arts subjects, as teachers became more confident with this intervention as a tool for engagement in learning and focussed outcomes (see *Case Study 13* in **Appendix Two**).

Impacts of early childhood arts networks on engaging parents and professionals

The key to successfully engaging professionals, parents and communities lies in low-cost, wide reaching partnerships. Organisations in non-arts sectors working with socially excluded families recognise how cultural sector initiatives can support their own objectives, and are often the drivers of such partnerships. *Sure Start*⁸⁰ in England has been a forerunner in enabling the arts and cultural community to come alongside families in designated areas of disadvantage by offering cultural resources and activities that enhance their experience as children's carers, rather than alienate them with an intellectual focus on the art or cultural form. Partnerships between cultural, early education, health, social, parenting agencies encourage new ways of working and are often key to the success and sustainability of projects. The benefits of networks include:

- Shared knowledge, ideas and inspiration.
- Sense of confidence and connectedness with others who share your passion.
- Secure critical friends for sharing issues and testing ideas.
- Gives children and professionals a voice – network champions raising issues on your behalf.
- Builds bridges between policy, research and practice.
- Enables multi-agency dialogues and languages to be developed.
- Increased awareness of developing a creative pedagogy.
- Access to stronger, more comparable evidence base.
- Develops creative skills and changes practice.
- Builds trusted connections between artists and early childhood professionals.
- Opportunity to find out about (or create) potential partnerships.
- Challenges misconceptions about creative practice being too messy, scary, meaningless or academically unfounded.

⁸⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sure_Start

One example of this is the *Shared Practice Networks*⁸¹, run by Earlyarts, to give arts and early childhood professionals a chance to showcase, celebrate and share their work. Most *Shared Practice Networks* are hosted by a local arts venue or an early childhood setting, giving professionals an opportunity to see behind the scenes of a theatre, a gallery, a museum, a nursery or a children's centre. The networks result in the exchange of contacts, resources and knowledge of good practice, which may not otherwise happen outside of a trusting, friendly community of practice (see *Case Study 14* in **Appendix Two**).

In a similar way the programme *ArtsSmarts* operates a network of education and arts partners and projects across Canada to support, promote, and demonstrate the positive impact of the arts as a way of engaging students in 21st Century life and learning. As well as some of the academic and social benefits experienced by the children involved, the adults have also reported huge benefits from the shared resources, knowledge, visibility, connections and skills through extensive networks (see *Case Study 15* in **Appendix Two**).

Impacts of workforce development and a high quality workforce

The *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education* study⁸² has shown the strong relationship between the quality of early childcare and outcomes. A key finding on the impact of nurseries and schools on a child's life chances is that teaching quality in particular matters. High quality, pre-school education for children at age three and four has a positive effect on a child's skills, especially on enhancing the abilities of the poorest children. We also know that the higher the quality of this provision, the longer its impact can be seen on a poor child's education trajectory.⁸³

Workforce development is critical and evidence clearly shows that quality matters to child outcomes and narrowing the gap in learning and development.⁸⁴ Nursery staff (particularly those working in early education, outreach or family support) need to be well qualified and well supervised, and to have opportunities to develop skills that enable them to use evidence-based approaches.

From the interviews conducted for this paper, we know that early childhood professionals' own lack of arts or creative experiences can contribute to their lack of confidence. In fact, many adults have been 'educated out' of being imaginative and can quite often forget what it is like to let their imagination take flight.

⁸¹ <http://www.earlyarts.co.uk/meet-the-network/shared-practice-network-events>

⁸² Sylva, K., et al. (2012) *The effective provision of pre-school education (eppe) project: Findings from pre-school to end of Key Stage 1*, London: Institute of Education, <http://eppe.ioe.ac.uk/eppe/eppepdfs/RBTec1223sept0412.pdf>, accessed 21 Apr. 13.

⁸³ Field, F., (2010) *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*, London: HMG.

⁸⁴ Nutbrown, C., (2012) *Foundations for Quality: The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications final report*, London: Department for Education.

Hand in hand in the child's world go imagination and reality, light and shadow, dance and music, near and far, black and white. For adults, reality has become fragmented and complex ... but the small child examines the world as many large wholes.⁸⁵

Artists often strive to recapture this childlike creativity, to feel and experience their art and to represent true expressions, but perhaps lack the experience or knowledge of how to apply this within early childhood environments. Both sectors have legitimate knowledge and skills to offer each other and both have a responsibility to listen to children's own contributions and ideas. Together, early childhood and arts professionals can help each other to:

- Gain confidence in arts activities and in general.
- Express their emotions, feelings, thoughts and ideas.
- Experiment with new techniques and materials and expand what they already know.
- Collaborate with others through participation, negotiation and shared conversation.
- Exercise their imaginations, hopes, wishes, flights of fancy.
- Get excited by something, get involved, absorbed or engaged.
- Become less self-conscious and more open to every sensation.
- Develop a deeper understanding of childhood development, how children think, play, create and learn.
- Understand how to learn from everything they see and hear in the environment around them, just as their children do, and move intuitively in response to the environment.
- Explore a topic or idea that is picked up from one of the children's ideas.

Higher level skills in the early childhood workforce can lead to deeper confidence in using creative approaches in the setting, which are fundamental to children's well-being and learning.⁸⁶ This also applies to arts professionals having greater confidence in proportion to their depth of early childhood knowledge and understanding. Therefore, we would suggest that professional development partnerships between early childhood and arts professionals, whether through networks, conferences, self-directed learning or training courses, can have a direct impact on raising the quality of children's outcomes.

Professionals who teach using the arts play a fundamental role in developing the creative skills of children and parents. A recent study on the Impact of Culture on Creativity (KEA European Affairs 2009) identified teacher training as one of the main areas that needs to be improved in order to generate a creative learning environment in schools and settings.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Pre-school education, STAKES/The National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (Finland), 1996

⁸⁶ OECD (2004), *Five Curriculum Outlines in Starting Strong, Curricula and Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD, p. 28, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/36/31672150.pdf accessed 21 Apr. 13.

⁸⁷ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/113EN.pdf (p65)

Graffiti Theatre in Cork take the quality of their professional development very seriously, knowing the difference it can make to have well trained, experienced arts and early childhood professionals supporting a child's growth and development. Not only has their training been shown to increase the confidence of the early childhood professionals in using creative environments and approaches, but Graffiti have also documented the positive impact on improving children's attention and behaviours (see *Case Study 16* in **Appendix Two**).

In another example, CAPE USA, a multi-arts organisation running arts education programmes inspired by Reggio Emilia, invests a large proportion of each project budget in professional development for teachers. The results, which are rigorously evaluated and documented, show an increased understanding of arts impact in literacy for teachers as well as improved engagement, resilience and depth of learning for children (see *Case Study 12* in **Appendix Two**).

Impacts of involving artists in early childhood development

In the majority of cases, early childcare professionals in settings can significantly support children's development in and through the arts. In many cases, particularly with music and dance, they may need support with skills and confidence, through training and experiences. However, a wide range of sources and programmes point to the particular value brought to early education by professional artists,⁸⁸ and the majority of early childhood arts initiatives are built on this. The involvement of professional artists in arts education has been recommended in several studies (Bamford 2006; Robinson 1999; Sharp and Le Métails 2000) to raise the quality of teaching and learning, encourage greater creativity, improve teachers' skills and confidence, and provide access to a wider range of cultural resources.⁸⁹

Partnerships with artists appear to be more established and formalised in certain countries (Denmark, Ireland, Hungary, Austria, the United Kingdom (England) and Norway). In Denmark, the Network for Children and Culture runs an invite-an-artist scheme which gives children and young people the chance to meet artists, providing financial support to day-care institutions and primary and secondary schools to engage artists to come into schools to work for specific periods. In Ireland, Local Authority Arts Offices run artists-in-schools schemes, and Poetry Ireland⁹⁰ runs the Writers-in-Schools scheme. These mainly consist of inviting artists and poets to work with teachers and pupils in schools, and many arts organisations are already building successful collaborations and residencies within early childhood settings.

In Hungary a successful partnership between primary art teachers and professional artists was established in 2004. A training course was organised for teachers working with large numbers of disadvantaged Roma children, delivered by a number of

⁸⁸ For example, Young, S., (pending), *Evaluation of the Association of British Orchestras Early Years Cluster Programme*, London: Youth Music; Demos (2010), Born Creative, London: Demos.

⁸⁹ *Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe*, published by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA P9 Eurydice), ISBN 978-92-9201-061-4 (p11) http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/113EN.pdf

⁹⁰ <http://www.poetryireland.ie/>

professional artists, followed up by the active involvement of the artists as resident practitioners in their respective schools. Due to the successful impacts on both teachers and children's engagement, the Hungarian Society of Creative Artists and the Young Artists' Studio, created a region-wide series of visits to schools by professional artists, but for financial reasons this has not been sustained.⁹¹

The first national initiative in England was *Creative Partnerships*⁹², which aimed to encourage partnerships between nurseries, schools and artists as well as scientists, architects, engineers, designers and curators. Funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the initiative was set up in 2002 to give young people in disadvantaged areas the opportunity to develop their creativity and realise their ambitions. The programme reached over 1 million children, 90,000 teachers in more than 8,000 projects, and was closed in summer 2011 due to funding cuts.

Out of the *Creative Partnerships* programme, one particular organisation emerged called Cre8us, which focused on artist-led early years projects designed to address diverse learning goals. Through an enquiry-based approach, young children were able to make discoveries, solve problems and build shared understandings of their own creativity by looking at problems through the eyes of an artist. They used performance and visual arts to explore the geography of a river, investigate fractions, explain the use of commas and understand the processes of the water cycle, developing a whole-school, kinaesthetic maths curriculum. In doing so, they significantly improved both artists and early childhood professionals' knowledge of successful learning approaches, as well as engaging younger children in complex learning themes (see *Case Study 17* in **Appendix Two**).

Another example is the action research based organisation, 5x5x5=creativity, who developed a theory of collaborative learning which places the artist in a triangulated relationship with the child and the early childhood professional. The original theory of a three-way relationship has since been extended to a five-way relationship including the parents and local cultural institutions, reflecting the various influences on a child's learning. Children are seen as innate and creative knowledge builders, explorers and co-constructors of their learning, whilst educators and artists are enablers and companions in the children's learning within a culture of listening and action research. As a result of this approach, professionals are better able to spot, scaffold and extend children's creativity and use action research processes (see *Case Study 18* in **Appendix Two**).

From these, and many other evaluations, it is clear that successful and sustainable partnerships with artists happen when:

⁹¹ Bamford, A. (2006), *The Wow Factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education*, Waxmann Verlag

⁹² <http://www.creative-partnerships.com/>

- The recruitment of artists is based on shared professional interests, i.e. artists ideas coinciding with / responding to the interests of the children and staff in the setting.⁹³
- Artists work as part of the early childhood team, having clear expectations and adding value to each other's roles.⁹⁴
- Artists can explore approaches that help us listen to children, tune in to their play, facilitate their lines of enquiry, and trust the richness of children's ideas.
- Artists are able to be flexible, present and responsive to the children and staff, no matter how meticulous their planning.⁹³
- Artists have the ability to scaffold creative environments that enable children and staff to enter their 'zone of proximal development'⁹⁵ or their greatest state of flow rather than rely on prescribed or directed learning.⁹⁶
- Reflection, preparation and planning time is shared between early childhood and arts professionals to ensure that their practice is responsive and designed to progress children's learning in the most optimal and relevant ways (*case study 18*).

For artists, the learning experience is crucial in order to develop their own aesthetic skills, ideas and quality of practice. As renowned early childhood Danish musician Sille Grønberg⁹⁷, relates;

One of my greatest experiences through the years is that art is simply about being present in the moment and feeling the natural flow of being a human being. It's not enough for us musicians to play our songs as good as we can. We have to meet them in an eye to eye or should I say heart to heart communication and loosen up our control 'cause anything can happen in a concert for small children... maybe there is this little girl so occupied by the things going on, on the stage, that she needs to dance or talk all the time. Then we have to involve and play with her in the common space. We need to always to be open and connected to the situation and the audience we play for.

This growth of quality practice is evident in the artists residencies run by Starcatchers, a Scottish network dedicated to producing early childhood theatre with local artists and nurseries. Residencies are designed to provide enough time, space and resources for artists to experiment and play, and to tailor their work for specific audiences, running for around a year, mainly in areas of multiple deprivation. This has resulted in artists developing a keener understanding of early childhood issues, which have become more deeply reflected in their own practice (see *Case Study 19* in **Appendix Two**).

⁹³ Churchill Dower, R, Hogan, Hoy, C, S, Sims, H, (2006) *Search for Meaning – The Children's Curriculum*, Bradford, Canterbury Nursery School and Centre for Children and Families

⁹⁴ Clark, J, Griffiths, C. and Taylor H. (2003) *Feeding The Mind, Valuing the arts in the development of young children*. Arts Council England, North East.

⁹⁵ A concept introduced by educational theorist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) to encourage and advance an individual's learning – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zone_of_proximal_development

⁹⁶ OECD (2004), 'Five Curriculum Outlines' in *Starting Strong, Curricula and Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/36/31672150.pdf accessed 21 Apr. 13.

⁹⁷ A concept introduced by educational theorist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) to encourage and advance an individual's learning – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zone_of_proximal_development

ARTS COUNCIL-FUNDED CLIENTS' PRIORITIES FOR SUSTAINING EARLY CHILDHOOD ARTS PRACTICE

The following key issues and findings arose from the surveys and interviews conducted with figures from arts and early childhood organisations in Ireland. Twenty four figures were targeted for interviews, taken from the Arts Council's list of strategic partners and funded clients, whose work in early childhood was established or the person had significant expertise in the field of early childhood development within the cultural context. Of these, six responded with full interviews and three with further information by email.

In addition, six further surveys were conducted with funded clients to ascertain clear priorities for future funding and strategic development within the field. Of these, three had already been interviewed about their own practice, resulting in a total of eleven consultees overall. The summary below is taken from this small but important sample of responses to the Irish context (see **Appendix One** for full list of respondents to surveys and interviews).

The arts and early childhood landscape in Ireland

As the landscape has been growing organically over the last ten years, much of **the current practice is grass roots, ground up – initiated by artists and arts organisations**. Artists who have had an initial foray into working with very young children have experienced the positive results first hand, which has inspired a desire for more sustainable work. In addition, the recent introduction of the first Early Childhood Curriculum Framework for Ireland has highlighted a greater potential for the arts sector to have a more strategic role in supporting early childhood development. Provided it is universally implemented, the core messages within Aistear of support for creative early childhood practice that facilitates and extends learning and development, will reinforce the work that has grown organically, and are likely to stimulate an increased interest in artists wanting to develop new early childhood practice / experiences.

Interestingly many practising **artists in Ireland are keen to work with much younger ages**,⁹⁸ possibly more so than in other areas of Europe, including the UK, with interviewees talking about their core focus being on babies and under twos. One interviewee described arts venues as being very positive about developing new activity in early childhood.⁹⁹ So there is likely to be potential for a better range and balance of work in Ireland, with longer lasting and more embedded impacts by having started earlier. This is a clear opportunity for Arts Council Ireland to champion and advocate for the benefits of birth-up approaches on children's life chances as well as their creative potential.

Interviewees were positive about the Aistear curriculum and the potential impact it could have.¹⁰⁰ Its emphasis on creativity, play and processes of learning, aligns well with the enquiry, observation, reflection, facilitation and documentation processes that artists understand and use.

⁹⁸ *Common Ground* (SG)

⁹⁹ *Acting up Arts* (CN)

¹⁰⁰ *Acting up Arts* (CN), *Early Childhood Creativity* (HB), St Patrick's College (PF), *Common Ground* (SG)

In some cases, **early childhood settings, especially crèches, are finding working with artists very relevant**, helpful and inspiring for their own practice and professional development. They are able to understand and learn from the different perspectives brought by artists, as well as new ideas for making and creating, and can see directly why and how these approaches are useful for them in applying the principles that Aistear advocates.

That all said, interviewees¹⁰¹ expressed a feeling that early childhood arts is under-developed in Ireland, without a history of policy emphasis and national initiatives to support it. There are exceptions, for example in Cork, Tipperary and Dublin.¹⁰² In general, though the potential and the will are there, along with a potential supporting framework (in the form of Aistear), any strategy will need to consider that in many places there is little past experience to build on.

The complexity of each sector's policy frameworks and agencies can be overwhelming, however, and can lead to **a cultural language barrier for many settings and arts organisations**. The opportunity to network before building closer working partnerships is welcome in order that professionals can learn each other's languages to describe common objectives, processes and outcomes such as play, movement, creativity and the impact of all these on early learning.

The artists we consulted with talked about the need to **avoid 'parachute' practice**, i.e. one-off experiences, but rather to explore ideas to enable the work they have begun to become sustainable and embedded in daily practice. This may be either through longer term relationships and sustained contact, or by way of what they leave behind as a legacy – whether this is materials and ideas or the development of professional skills and confidence in early childhood professionals.

The need for cross-sector partnerships

The interviews and surveys completed have demonstrated an appetite for, and interest in, early childhood arts. However, practicing artists expressed concern to have a **more joined up multi-agency approach** where strategy and development is clear, and shared across the arts, education and health sectors. In all our interviews with artists, every one currently operates through, and relies on, cross-sector partnerships. This may be as a result of funding criteria incentivising them to do so, but there are several examples of arts professionals working with education, social, welfare or health professionals in different counties of Ireland who are interested and well placed to programme this work in a more strategic way.

Several agencies exist with good intentions towards creative early interventions. Most do not have specific policy or funding drivers to underpin or even instigate this work and would therefore respond well to the Arts Council taking the driver's seat in identifying and connecting them up with a more strategic and sustainable purpose.

Interviews noted that **other types of agencies and organisations can be equally interested** / supportive of early years practice, as well as those in the arts, education

¹⁰¹ Graffiti Theatre Company (EF)

¹⁰² West Cork Arts Centre (JF), Common Ground (SG), Early Childhood Creativity (HB), Acting up Arts (CN)

and health sectors. One interviewee¹⁰³ suggested joint funding schemes, e.g. between Arts Council Ireland and the Education Department, for early childhood arts work. It is worth considering the interests of children's charities, the potential around working with the cultural diversity agenda, and the potential to support rural and agricultural agencies.

The need for professional development

However, whilst this type of partnership work is on the cusp of growing, many artists feel they do not know enough about early childhood development to do the best work possible. Whilst early childhood professionals are doing well in terms of creative skills development with artists, there is a **need for artists to be able to access child development knowledge and experience** in order to create appropriate practices and approaches (be it in early childhood settings or in work for audiences and visitors).¹⁰⁴

There is already a lot of progressive practice happening in Ireland. Some of this has been developed through on-the-job experience; some comes from a knowledge of international practice. **A go-and-see fund** would be an effective way in which emerging professionals could experience the work of those already more established, either within or outside of Ireland.

In general **professional development is needed for artists to better understand the landscape of early childhood**; how young children learn and respond to creative, playful interventions, how to engage with children and families through their own interests and cultures, and the reality of working with young children's needs (feeding, sleeping, crying, running around during workshops or performances, and so on).

Informal Go-and-See visits, seminars and networks will encourage ideas, inspiration, practice sharing¹⁰⁵ and an increased awareness of what is possible within the early childhood setting.

However, there is also a **need for a more bespoke training opportunity** on early childhood development specifically aimed at artists and arts organisations. A number of training opportunities exist either physically or online, from accredited courses on early childhood development to webinars on specific pedagogical subjects such as *early language development or physical literacy, sensory and motor development*. However, artists interviewed expressed less interest in accessing formal training to support their own professional development.

Their perceptions of what current early childhood training could offer them were mixed (i.e. non-graduate level, un-stimulating, irrelevant to their artistic practice, expensive, uncreative, etc.) and sometimes inaccurate due to their lack of familiarity with the language of this sector (for instance, the two courses quoted above could be ideal for theatre / story tellers and for dance and movement artists, were they more tuned in to the opportunities for their practice in this field). The development of a bespoke arts and early childhood training package, presented in a familiar language, together with increased advocacy of the importance and benefits for artists working in early childhood, would help to underpin cross-sector partnerships and quality, sustained practice.

¹⁰³ *Acting up Arts* (CN)

¹⁰⁴ *Acting up Arts* (CN), *Common Ground* (SG)

¹⁰⁵ *Early Childhood Creativity* (HB)

New opportunities to impact on the arts economy

Interviewees quoted examples of **investments in early childhood arts development also benefitting the arts economy**. For instance, using small spaces for young children and families in theatres, libraries, museums and community centres who already have good relationships with their local early childhood settings. This approach requires little set up and technical support but can bring increased income through ticket sales, publications and café purchases.

The same approach could be taken to repurpose unused or empty spaces, especially in areas designated as disadvantaged, to enable artists, settings and families to have a space to create and share practice together, although the costs involved in making spaces safe for this purpose may be prohibitive.

As far as the arts economy and broader economy are concerned, there could be some interesting considerations for Arts Council Ireland in terms of where investment might bring other returns as children develop, and within their communities. Creative industries account for 3.3 % of total EU GDP and 3 % of employment, and are among the most dynamic sectors in the EU. Overall employment in the creative industries increased by an average of 3.5 % a year in the period 2000-2007, compared to 1.0 % a year for the EU economy as a whole¹⁰⁶. Creativity was also rated the most crucial factor for future success according to the IBM 2010 Global CEO Study, which states:

More than 1,500 Chief Executive Officers from 60 countries and 33 industries worldwide believe that – more than rigor, management discipline, integrity or even vision – successfully navigating an increasing complex world will require creativity.

Priorities for investment



¹⁰⁶ MandagMorgan consulting: www.boernekultur.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/billeder_og_pdf/Internationalt/Morten_Fisker.pdf

It is no surprise, perhaps, to see funding as the top priority. Thereafter, all of the professional development options are fairly evenly prioritised, with the notable exception of formal training in child development, as distinct from informal training opportunities, resources, and so forth. Yet, ironically, this is often one of the main areas in which artists working in early childhood stated a need for more knowledge and understanding.

Obstacles to creative and arts practice in early childhood were summarised as:

- Isolation of smaller early childhood settings or arts education organisations, not connected in to creative early childhood networks.
- Gap between policy development and implementation in order to support early childhood arts practice.
- Inability to find funding for action research for the development of creative ideas as opposed to specific, short term projects.
- Poor early childhood professional training – token coverage of creative skills in both initial training and on-going professional development
- Lack of confidence of early childhood professionals in working with artists, and vice versa.
- Lack of strategic partnerships or networks in place to enable greater access to cross-agency collaborations.
- Safe but regimented approach to delivery of core subjects, e.g. literacy and numeracy, squeezing out room for creativity.
- Lack of leadership to move forward a culture of creativity in the early childhood setting.
- Targets driven culture: producing evidence for parents or assessment bodies.
- Competing demands on time, spaces, resources, staff in early childhood settings.
- Inability to attract enough funding to sustain longer term collaborations, resulting in wheels being reinvented.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL EARLY CHILDHOOD ARTS MODELS

-
- **National endorsement and advocacy** about the important role of the arts in early childhood development and family engagement and why it makes a difference. As well as raising the status of this work, national campaigns enable parents and professionals alike to better understand the important impacts of creativity on their children's learning and the wider community / society, as well as giving them a united focus to become champions for their own children's learning and strive for higher quality arts experiences. Distribution outlets such as the Bounty Packs¹⁰⁷ would be an excellent way to reach parents and facilitate cross-agency collaborations.
-
- **Strategic partnerships between government departments and national agencies** in the arts, culture, early childhood, health, social welfare and education to ensure cohesive strategies, consultations and programmes that are implemented across all sectors, and maximise the limited resources available. This joined-up approach opens up greater cross-departmental opportunities to support early childhood arts, and ensure cross-agency influence on both the language and content of individual agencies' own policies.
-
- **Business Development Programmes** focussing on mixed-economy business models that enable arts and early education organisations to develop sustainable practices, to better understand the issues facing their market – children, parents and carers – and to build a family engagement culture into all parts of their organisations, from programme consultation and design to production, marketing, access, content and outreach.
-
- **Specialist arts performances, participatory projects, or artist residencies** that enable collaborations between artists, cultural organisations and early childhood professionals. These should ideally be based on a co-constructivist approach, have a longer term status and opportunities to introduce a positive arts experience, build relationships and share knowledge.
-
- **Professional Development** in early childhood development for arts practitioners or in creative processes and arts skills for early childhood professionals to accelerate the spread of expertise; validate arts based or creative approaches within Quality and Qualifications Ireland and increase the drive for high quality practice nationwide. Mentor programmes can also facilitate a high level of improvement in practice due to their bespoke nature. These may take the form of go-and-see visits (level 1), assigned mentor (level 2), written case study / evaluation report (level 3).
-
- **Accredited Training** to enable the choice of an arts option within the electives in early childhood training, as well as post-training CPD, to reinforce the skills and knowledge required to deliver the creative elements of Aistear in areas where arts professionals are not available.
-
- **Access to specialist networks or festivals** to broker relationships, strengthen collaboration, confidence and understanding between the arts and

¹⁰⁷ Bounty Packs are given to mothers of all newborns on hospital maternity wards: <http://www.bounty.com/what-we-do/the-bounty-journey>. Originally covering the UK, Bounty has now expanded its services to Ireland.

early childhood sectors, help embed creative practices in settings, encourage buddying and mentoring, broaden horizons on expectations of what children can achieve, encourage openness to learning and connect up the growing community of creative practitioners. Networks also enable extensive dissemination for good practice, current issues, latest research, pedagogical models and professional development.

- **Seed funding for cross-agency collaborations** that trigger other funding sources. This could be a joint funding pot across arts, early childhood, health or social care bodies for such projects as:

- Action Research projects based around the interests or needs of staff, parents and children in a setting.
- Academic research that is not otherwise funded, and on a specific field that has a wider interest and potential impact for other organisations in the field.
- Audits and Surveys of provision to develop a strategic plan for joined up, cross sector networks or shared resources.
- Collation and publication of the impacts of creative practice or specific art forms.
- A trial or experimentation of different creative and cultural approaches to support and enhance the learning of children with special needs.
- Visits to explore and learn from organisations with an excellent track record in building a creative curriculum or arts approach to early learning.
- Training, mentoring or professional development programmes.
- Local campaigns to increase skills, knowledge and understanding of how arts, cultural or creative approaches can make a difference to children's outcomes.

- **Quality Assessment or Evaluation framework** enabling the expected outcomes and impacts of an intervention to be mapped out and measured. This should be based on principles of excellent practice and linked to the Aistear assessment framework to break down language barriers and build up a trusted evidence base linked to the curriculum. This will enable professionals to improve their own practice, and children's wider achievements to be documented in terms of their well-being, identity and belonging, exploring and thinking and communicating.

Quality frameworks can be distributed amongst the sectors as Evaluation Toolkits combined with training programmes. The profile of quality frameworks can be raised through awards ceremonies or kitemark programmes giving arts organisations a supported, endorsed and recognised goal to aim for in both quality and impact of provision.

The process should be developmental and responsive to individual children, as early childhood theorist, Professor Tina Bruce, explains:

Quality, like beauty, can be said to be in the eye of the beholder. There can be no clear cut, universally accepted definition because it is culturally determined and will mean different things to different people, depending on their own experiences, interests, beliefs and values. It cannot therefore be captured as a specific outcome that can be measured, or a goal that can be achieved. If 'quality' can be viewed as a destination that can be reached once and for all, arrival would signal the end of the journey and imply that there is no need for further thought, reflection or progress – a dangerous position in a rapidly changing world.'

*Instead the pursuit of quality is really about the nature of the journey itself. It is an active process, a continuous seeking for improvement, dynamic and changing in response to our deepening awareness and growing understanding of how children think and learn.*¹⁰⁸

APPENDIX ONE: Contributors to this review

Consulting with early arts figures internationally and in Ireland – survey and interview questions:

- What national policies and initiatives have been successful in engaging young children (0–6 years) or families in arts, cultural and creative opportunities in your own or other countries?
- To your knowledge, how have these policies or initiatives made a difference?
- What pedagogical approaches or programmes have been used successfully by early childhood and arts professionals in these examples?
- What are the most successful arts, cultural and early childhood programmes or projects you know of which demonstrate engagement with young children and families?
- What do you feel were the 'secrets of success' to this work?
- How has the project / programme in question achieved this?
- What evidence is there - could you provide the relevant names and contact details and / or links to relevant websites, blogs, reports, publications?
- If you think there is something else to add to this list, what is that?
- Please comment on why you have selected these priorities in the order you chose?
- Please tell us about any evidence, reports, web sites, publications, case studies, blogs, etc. which demonstrate the difference this work made to the children / families / professionals involved?
- (*For key early childhood arts figures in Ireland*):
 - What policies / campaigns / initiatives / strategies does your work tie in to?
 - What features of your work have been repeatedly successful and what are the ingredients that cause them to happen?
 - What types of support have you already had which have made a difference to you?
 - What other types of support would be beneficial with regards your early childhood arts practice and the benefits it has for children / families / professionals?
- (*For Arts Council Ireland funded clients*):

Please rate the following in order of priority for future funding investment, and comment on why you have made this choice:

 - Longer term (1-2 year) project funding,
 - Seed funding,
 - Professional development bursaries,
 - Mentoring,
 - Practice-sharing conferences and seminars,
 - 'Go see' funding to observe high quality practice,
 - Shadowing opportunities,
 - Practical CPD from experienced professionals,
 - Tools and resources on theory and practice,
 - Formal training in childhood development and creative pedagogies,
 - Something else? Please say what.

Interviews and Surveys with international early childhood arts figures:

- Jo Albin-Clark *Edge Hill University, UK*
- Arnie Aprill *Cape-USA Chicago, USA*
- Nathan Archer *Lincolnshire Montessori UK*
- Frederique Chabaud *International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation Belgium*
- Professor Alison Clarke *Institute of Education London England*
- Antonella Dalla Rosa *La Baracca Theatre / Smallsized network Italy & Europe*
- Claire Halstead *Octopus Inc West Sussex, UK*
- Dr Ashfaq Ishaq *International Child Art Foundation Washington, USA*
- Professor Lillian Katz *University of Illinois and the Project Approach USA*
- Douglas Lonie *Youth Music England*
- Catherine Main *University of Illinois Chicago, USA*
- Rhona Matheson *Starcatchers Scotland*
- Professor Daniela Miscov *Artelier D Bucharest, Romania*
- Professor Denise Newfield *University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, South Africa*
- Dr David Parker *Creative and Cultural Sector Skills Council, England*
- Grainne Powell *Sticky Fingers, Newry, Northern Ireland*
- Scott Sikkema *Cape-USA Chicago, USA*
- Dr Megan Stanton-Anderson *Alphonsus Academy for the Arts Chicago, USA*
- Dr Lidia Varbanova *LabForCulture Moldova*
- Michael Wimmer *Educult Vienna, Austria*
- Ingrid Woolf *2TuurvenHoog Children's Arts Festival Netherlands*

Interviews and Surveys with early childhood arts figures in Ireland

- Helen Barry *Visual Artist*
- Jo Belloli *Early Childhood Theatre Producer covering the UK and Europe*
- Patricia Flynn *St Patrick's College Drumcondra*
- Emelie Fitzgibbon *Graffiti Theatre Company*
- Justine Foster *West Cork Arts Centre*
- Siobhan Geoghegan *Common Ground*
- Niamh Lawlor *Puca Puppets*
- Marc Mac Lochlainn *Branar Dramaíochta Teo*
- Lali Morris *Baboró Children's Festival*
- Clíodhna Noonan *Acting up Arts*
- Mags Walsh *Children's Books Ireland*

APPENDIX TWO: Case studies of exemplar practice and programmes

CASE STUDY 1:

Charter of Children's Rights to Art and Culture, Global

18 principles, expressed in 27 languages, to state the right of all children, all over the world, to enjoy art and culture, led by Italian Children's theatre company, La Baracca – Testoni Ragazzi, created collaboratively through the international Smallsite network involving countries at national level.

Activities:

- The principles are broad, covering all art forms, different kinds of activities and experiences with arts, arts in the home, arts as language, participation, cultural understanding, etc.
- Principles presented in a book, including all the 27 languages, each presented alongside illustrations created by international artists.
- First international conference in 2011 held to debate children's rights to arts and culture.

Impacts:¹⁰⁹

- To date, almost 1,400 signatories to the charter, representing students, teachers, libraries, artists, arts and cultural organisations, educational organisations and others. Many are from Italy, where the idea originated, but significant support from elsewhere, particularly Europe.
- Charter has been widely promoted through Arts Councils and Cultural agencies, distributed at many national arts and early childhood conferences, events, symposia across Europe, including Ireland, Scotland and England.

Requirements:

- Strong multi-lingual communications strategy across network of many countries
- Clear common objective and commitment to implementing the project
- Good international distribution network once published

CASE STUDY 2:

Dreamcatcher, UK – wrist-worn digital camera for children to capture ideas and emotions

The Dream Catcher is a character embedded in a small electronic tool (intended to be a watch but trialled with small PDAs). She helps young children (3–5 years) to make video recordings and take photographs in order to share their stories, thoughts, and feelings with their family at home and their professionals at the early childhood setting. Dream Catcher aims to highlight the importance of child voice and showcase the multi-faceted, creative and playful ways in which children engage in self-directed informal learning.

Activities:

- Professionals / parents given support / training
- Children given prototype Dreamcatcher tool / PDA to use for two weeks to capture ideas, stories, family activities, etc., which are subsequently discussed with professionals and evaluator/researchers

¹⁰⁹ Charter of Children's Rights to Art and Culture: <http://cartadeidiritti.testoniragazzi.it/>

Impacts:¹¹⁰

- Useful tool for discovering children’s interests and influences, tracking their informal learning, facilitating three-way learning between child, family and early childhood setting
- Improved communications and relationships between siblings and parent-child
- Improved child-centred practice in settings and homes
- Increased skill levels in using technology for story-building and communications

Requirements:

- Research into learning processes that are suitable for exploration via technology
- Support for adults and children in using the technology
- Time to download, evaluate, discuss and plan how best to use the learning
- Appropriate technology to support the process and the developmental stage of the children

CASE STUDY 3:**Creative Connections in the Early Years, Tasmania**

Creative Connections is a partnership between Tasmanian Early Years Foundation and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery which enables artists-in-residence to be placed in a number of Child and Family Centres around Tasmania, working closely with professionals, as well as parents and children.

Activities:

- Artist residencies for two blocks of eight weeks in a year, 1 day/week equivalent plus extra time for planning and evaluation
- Working with community to co-develop a bespoke programme
- Artist-led hands-on experiences for children and adults
- Participatory workshops with parents for ideas at home to encourage parent-child shared experiences
- Development opportunities for staff
- Evaluation and documentation by artist

Impacts:¹¹¹

- Increased adult confidence in creative engagement with children;
- Increased parental perceived connection with children;
- Better understanding of child competences and true potential;
- Improved early childhood professionals’ understanding of creative processes

Requirements:

- Funding, including grant from Tasmanian Community Fund
- Artists with child development understanding who can provide professional development for professionals and document/evaluate;
- Artists with early childhood experience desirable
- A centre of excellence to host the programme
- Management buy-in from the early childhood setting involved
- Focussed efforts on networking for the arts / early childhood / community sectors

¹¹⁰Hague, C. and L. Grant (2009), *Dream Catcher Evaluation*, Futurelab, accessed from <http://archive.futurelab.org.uk/projects/dream-catcher> 22 April 2013.

¹¹¹Creative Connections (2012), *Creative Connections in the Early Years: Phase one Report*, Creative Connections, accessed at http://www.earlyyears.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/173488/final_report_-_1st_phase_-_Creative_Connections_Report_Final_Web.pdf accessed 19 Apr 2013.

CASE STUDY 4:**Ludus Dance Company, Lancashire
– dance playmates and movement exploration¹¹²**

Ludus Dance Company have developed a performance-based dance-in-education model for co-constructing dance with 3–5 year olds.

Activities:

- The dance-in-education model is built around five principles: child development; accessibility; artistry; emotional security; engagement
- The dance-in-education model encounters various elements, including: building playmate partnerships between children, movement exploration, performance, transitions, artistry, space, children’s interests, play, and self-selection
- Two-way professional development / co-construction process between different adults: dancer, early childhood professionals and parents/carers

Impacts:¹¹³

- Significant positive impact on dancers’ skills in early childhood work
- Model is flexible enough to be able to support an early childhood curriculum in a variety of different contexts

Requirements:

- Understanding of child development, particularly for physical development.
- Dancers require a toolkit of different strategies and techniques to respond to different circumstances and events
- An employed choreographer
- Video to document and capture process and progress
- Understanding by dancers of their role to engage in authentic play processes

CASE STUDY 5:**In Harmony, Liverpool
– immersive whole-school orchestral development¹¹⁴**

In Harmony is a school-based orchestral instrument learning and orchestral music-making, providing immersive musical experience for whole school community, supported by professional orchestral musicians, for social and musical goals, based on the Venezuelan *El Sistema*¹¹⁵ model. In Harmony, in Liverpool, is for 4–14-year-olds.

Activities:

- Professional (often orchestral) musicians with music education specialists work with teachers in schools to run orchestral education programmes,
- Working carefully to engage and work alongside parents, local communities and external partners and agencies;
- Extensive evaluation – this is a national pilot programme developed in part to test a new model for social regeneration

¹¹² www.ludusdance.org

¹¹³ Carroll, T, O’Connor, A (2011) Performance based dance-in-education model for national early years sector with a focus on 3-5 year olds: http://www.ludusdance.org/downloads/cache/early_years_r&d_final_report.pdf

¹¹⁴ www.ihse.org.uk

¹¹⁵ www.fesnojiv.gob.ve/en/el-sistema.html

Impacts:¹¹⁶

- Increased participation in music-making in areas traditionally with limited opportunity and take-up;
- High rates of continued engagement from primary to secondary school;
- Increased academic attainment in other, core curriculum areas (other than music);
- Significant positive academic impact on SEN children;
- Children reported increased confidence, achievement, commitment, belonging and pride;
- Increased musical ability and well-being;
- Improved parent-child relationships and parent-school relationships;
- Increased sense of pride in a deprived community

Requirements:

- Significant funding, support and expertise;
- High quality musicians, experienced music educators and other specialists;
- Significant school commitment;
- Strong partnership-working and careful alignment of activities with local community;
- Leadership;
- Regular joint professional development provided
- Focus on whole-school immersive experience
- Strong, on-going formative evaluation.

CASE STUDY 6:**Media Initiative for Children, Northern Ireland**

This programme was aimed at encouraging young children to respect differences within a deeply divided society that is emerging out of a prolonged period of violent conflict in Northern Ireland. It is led by a partnership between US-based Peace Initiatives Institute and NIPPA—The Early Years Organisation.

Activities:

- Encourages children to value diversity and be more inclusive of those who are different from themselves through the use of short cartoons designed for and broadcast on television
- Specially prepared curricular materials for use in pre-school settings.
- Delivered through hundreds settings to over thousands of children
- Rigorous evaluation
- Incorporates activities for meaningful engagement with parents and communities

Impacts:¹¹⁷

- Increased willingness in children to play with others, including some of those who are different to themselves
- Increased understanding in children of how being excluded makes someone feel

¹¹⁶ Burns, S., et al., (2012) *In Harmony Liverpool – Interim Report: Year Three*, In Harmony Sistema England, <http://ihse.org.uk/sites/default/files/In%20Harmony%20Liverpool%20Year%203%20Interim%20Report%20-%20March%202012.pdf>

¹¹⁷ <http://www.early-years.org/mifc/research.php> and Coral (2007), *Evaluation of the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme*, Coral: Belfast: <http://www.early-years.org/coral/mifc.php>.

- Increased ability to recognise instances of exclusion without prompting
- Significant positive contribution to young children’s attitudes to difference and inclusion

Requirements:

- Programme designed and developed for the different stages in children’s development and the infrastructure/organisations supporting them
- Knowledge and understanding of diversity issues spread across the curriculum
- Early Childhood professionals trained to work carefully and inclusively with parents
- Bespoke animated cartoons for broadcast with significant air time
- Tools, activities, materials and resources for engaging parents and communities
- Early Childhood Specialist to support Early Childhood professionals in delivering the programme, with its emphases on inclusion and diversity

CASE STUDY 7:

Kids’ Own Publishing, Victoria, Australia
– empowering children to share their stories¹¹⁸

Kids’ Own Publishing has pioneered an arts-and-community-based approach to early literacy for children from diverse cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds. They bring together families, artists, educators and communities to help children develop an early love of reading, including those from homes without books or where English is not the first language.

Activities:

- Collaborative projects designed to enable children to be co-creators of their own books: artists, illustrators, designers, writers, editors and publishers
- Bringing together networks of educators, parents/carers and communities to collaborate in the publishing process
- Launching books with fun celebrations
- Training early childhood professionals
- Monitoring and evaluation of impact and quality

Impacts:¹¹⁹

- Improved literacy and school readiness.
- Greater intercultural understanding.
- Equitable and respectful relationships between children and caregivers.
- Collaborative partnerships between early childhood educators, families and communities.
- Shared knowledge leading to increased skills and confidence in creative practices

Requirements:

- Working with specialist partners who engage with children
- Web-based community publishing as well as print-based publishing

¹¹⁸ www.kidsownpublishing.com

¹¹⁹ <http://kidsownpublishing.com/about/what-we-achieve> Academic evaluation pending.

CASE STUDY 8:**House of Objects, Newcastle
– creative recycling and construction of intelligent materials¹²⁰**

Inspired by Reggio Emilia's *Remida*¹²¹ programme, House of Objects started out as a local authority-funded initiative and now are established independently as a community interest company.

Activities:

- Collecting 'intelligent' materials thrown away by local industry and other sources and repurposing them through artistic activities, and workshops
- Activities take place at a dedicated resource centre in 400 acres of green space.
- Training for leaders, educators and businesses on using reclaimed materials to support creativity and creative thinking.

Impacts:¹²²

- Promotion of recycling and increased understanding of issues and solutions around environmental change, waste reduction; and fostering respect for the earth and for human beings
- Develops creativity, problem solving, innovation, critical thinking skills, collaborative architecture, appreciation of, and resourcefulness in, recycling

Requirements:

- Junk, space and imagination!
- Access to regular collection vehicles to retain valuable connections with 'junk' suppliers

CASE STUDY 9:**MUS-E, Yehudi Menuhin Foundation, Europe and Israel**

MUS-E believes that arts should be part of all education, from cradle to grave, accessible to all and therefore to open new possibilities of expression and ways of looking at life and people. The project promotes social integration and aims to reduce levels of violence, racism and social exclusion amongst the young. It works particularly to help those children coming from challenging environments to begin the road of personal fulfilment through music, singing, drama, painting, dance and all art disciplines. It operates in 10 European countries and Israel currently working with over 1,000 artists and 60,000 children in over 600 nurseries and schools.¹²³

Activities:

- Professional artists come into the Primary classroom to give regular arts classes, as a discreet part of the curriculum, minimum one hour/week, for 1 to 3 years.
- Activities emphasise well-being, real-life shared experiences, enjoyment, motivation, development of the senses, expression of emotions, movement and fluidity

Impacts:¹²⁴

- Pupils show increased sensory development, bodily awareness, creativity, attention span, emotional intelligence

¹²⁰ www.houseofobjects.org

¹²¹ www.reggiochildren.it/atelier/remida/?lang=en

¹²² http://houseofobjects.org/?page_id=8 accessed 19 Apr. 13. Academic evaluation pending

¹²³ <http://www.menuhin-foundation.com/mus-e/> accessed 16 Mar 2013.

¹²⁴ As reported by International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation at <http://www.menuhin-foundation.com/mus-e/>.

- With specific attention pupils showed increased self-expression, communication, self-confidence and self-esteem, respect for others, team-working, efficiency in non-arts subjects
- Teachers supported to play a stronger role in arts activities at school and in local community
- Artists develop experiential learning processes, links with children, develop their own artistic practice and social/communication skills

Requirements:

- Planning and preparatory meetings establish with the artist a good understanding of the school, its environment and culture
- Building strong teacher-artist partnerships
- Monitoring and evaluation

CASE STUDY 10:**Artplay: Behind the Bright Orange Door, Melbourne, Australia**

ArtPlay is a permanent home for children's art and play, inspired by The Ark in Dublin. It makes an important contribution to the artistic, creative and cultural development of the City of Melbourne. Open to children aged 3–12 years, it offers a wide range of artist-led programs across diverse art forms and age groups.

Activities:

- Artplay is a dedicated children's arts centre
- A very broad range of workshops and other activities for children: public-booked, for schools, or drop-in; with artists, children, parents and teachers; one-off, short-term or long-term (up to a year); multi-art-form
- Consultation with children, families and artists
- Built-in paid time for artists reflection and evaluation
- Regular professional development for artists
- Opportunities for artists to extend themselves

Impacts:¹²⁵

- Very broad ranging, depending on the nature of the activity but generally:
- Broad engagement with a very diverse set of different participant ethnicities/ backgrounds
- Children learn about making and doing, emotional confidence, social relations, play, creativity, something different, confidence, ideas for home and group work
- Children have opportunities for 'cultural citizenship' – being active participants in their own cultures

Requirements:

- Artplay has a dedicated authority-funded building
- Flexible, spacious custom-designed in-door and out-door space
- Staff are welcoming and supportive, and provide a safe, practical and aesthetic environment conducive to creative expression
- Staff work towards organisational goals and values that support creative enquiry by children

¹²⁵ Jeanneret, N. and R. Brown (2013), *Behind Artplay's Bright Orange Door*, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/artplay/behind_the_bright_orange_door accessed 16 May 2013.

- Artists' practice emphasises:
 - making connections and relationships with participants
 - creating practical and personalised experiences
 - good planning and also time for being responsive
 - strong communication – not just verbally
 - taking appropriate roles when working in different ways with different people
 - creative learning informed by the artists' practice
 - transformative environment and materials
 - making and allowing time

CASE STUDY 11:

Babelut (Art for babies and toddlers) by Musica,¹²⁶ Impulse Centre for Music, Belgium

Babelut use play with music and sound as starting point and foundation for building bridges to visual arts, drama, theatre, dance. They centralise the relationship of babies and toddlers with music, dance, graphics and theatre; They provide a creative meeting place offering performances, workshops, lectures and debate; and for all involving parties: babies, toddlers, (grand)parents, pregnant women, child care workers, students, teachers, artists, pedagogues, art centres and festivals.

Objectives:

- Set up research and experiments to investigate the influence of music on the very little
- Develop a cultural programme specifically intended for this age
- Create awareness among professional musicians and artists
- Stimulate the nursery sector to reflect on a well-considered artistic offer
- Strive to incorporate 'artistic care' in the curriculum of child care education
- Draw attention of decision makers in order to create a basis for new initiatives for babies and toddlers

Activities:

- Babelut festival – Two-yearly, for babies, toddlers, parents and all professionals involved; International performances, workshops, lectures, debates, expositions; Results of labs, experiments in day care centres, schools; Tryouts of new productions created during labs; Platform for artists to exchange experiences; Support dialogue between artists and audience.
- Babelut lab – Training of young musicians who want to work with this target group; Set up experiments with them in day care centres and schools; Develop new concepts for workshops; Create artistic products/ music theatre; Present results on Babelut Teaser Days with parents and children.
- Babelut workshops, training & symposia – For educators, day-care workers; No need to be a professional musician to make music/art; (Re)discover creativity (Voice games, Music in the kitchen, Musical Dialogues, Move till it sounds and sing till it moves, ...); Tools to incorporate music in daily life rhythm.

Impacts:¹²⁷

- Through music/art children gain insight into themselves, others and into life itself
- Personal, social and emotional development through enhanced self-awareness and better group interactions and communication skills
- Confrontation with art will develop and sustain their imagination and creativity

¹²⁶ <http://www.musica.be/en>

¹²⁷ Reported by project delivery team.

Requirements:

- Babelut Ethos takes as its starting point the musical potential of the child; No teaching in traditional sense but playing together – let the child absorb; Source of inspiration is Music Learning – Theory of E. Gordon; Musical communication and interaction: Musical Dialogues; Immerse children into a music language so that they can build up a musical vocabulary; With a lot of room for own experiment.
- Music/art is typical of humans, it is as basic as language to human development and existence
- Start At home! = The most important school that young children will ever know
- Parents and children among children are the most important teachers they will ever have
- Day-care: the first contact with society, so work with parents and day-care workers is crucial

CASE STUDY 12:**Cape: Delta project, Chicago, USA
– developing literacy through the arts¹²⁸**

Cape USA is a multi-arts organisation running arts education projects and programmes, inspired by Reggio Emilia.

Activities:

- Supporting schools/settings with integrating the arts across the curriculum and finding ways to use the arts (visual, dance, theatre, music) to develop literacy
- Teacher professional development
- Teacher-artist collaboration
- Documentation, reflection and formal research
- Partnership between Chicago public schools and CAPE-US
- Unlike some Reggio Emilia-type programmes, this one works in poor areas

Impacts:

- Increased teacher understanding of arts impact in literacy;
- Improved pupil engagement;
- Increased sophistication of pupils' enquiry;
- Improved pupil reflective awareness;
- Improved pupil understanding of writing process and structures;
- Improved pupil literacy confidence and literacy resilience

Requirements:

- Children encouraged to explore and engage in literacy processes outside the setting (street, home, murals etc.)
- Literacy relationships explored through different artforms – words to songs, bookmaking activities etc.
- Mandatory documentation process and pupil self-assessment encouraged
- Professionals free to observe children whilst artist engages them
- CAPE developed a Snapshot of Early Literacies tool to aid the measurement of achievements

¹²⁸ Scripp, L., (2007), *Developing Early Literacy through the Arts: A Final Report*, CAPE-USA; <http://www.capeweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/delta.pdf>

CASE STUDY 13:**Learning through the Arts, Royal Conservatory of Music, Canada**

Started in 1994, LTTA claims to be the largest, and one of the most respected, full-school intervention programmes in the world.

Activities:

- Artists are specially trained and certified as artist educators to work in schools
- Certified artists work creatively with classroom teachers in schools to teach the core curriculum in and through creative arts activities.

Impacts:¹²⁹

- Significant increased academic achievement in non-arts subjects. One study found that LTTA programme participants scored on average 11 percentile points higher in maths than peers in non-LTTA schools
- Students are highly engaged in their learning, as reported by teachers, school leaders and students
- Increased student ability to work collaboratively and understand different perspectives
- Particular benefits with engagement of Aboriginal learners
- Teacher reporting that arts-based teaching enlivens and deepens learning in non-arts subjects
- Significant increase in teachers using arts in non-arts subjects (from 19% to 86%)

Requirements:

- Engaged and committed schools, teachers and students: LTTA is a structured curriculum programme operating on a daily basis throughout the school curriculum
- LTTA programme provides:
 - Teacher and artist planning sessions
 - 4 or more in-class artist-educator visitors per class/term
 - Lessons driven by curricular requirements
 - Hand-on, job-embedded teacher training
 - Specially-trained, RCM certified artist-educators
 - Customized lesson plans
 - Extension activities
 - Ongoing teacher support between artist sessions
 - Teacher and artist debriefing sessions
 - Needs assessment and impact measurement

CASE STUDY 14:**Earlyarts Shared Practice Networks – UK**

Earlyarts is a national network for people working creatively with young children and families in the arts, cultural and early childhood sectors. It operates as a social enterprise, attracting both public and private income, and reinvesting any surplus back into the network.

Activities:

- Online network promoting training, experiences, leadership support, research, consultancy and providing an online map/directory of network members

¹²⁹ As reported in <http://learning.rcmusic.ca/learning-through-arts/about-ltta> (accessed 16 May 2013), citing 50 academic research studies.

- Annual conference
- Local practice-sharing network events
- Advocacy, research, news distribution, blog interviews with sector experts on current issues, toolkits and resources for implementation of creative processes
- Training via webinars, master classes and twitter-events

Impacts¹³⁰

- Only UK national network for creative multidisciplinary arts in early childhood with 6,500 members: from arts and culture and early childhood sectors
- Creative artists, early childhood professionals, policy-makers, managers and educationalists networking and sharing practice
- Members kept up-to-date with sector news, as well as policy updates, curriculum changes, national consultations and research findings
- Members supported professionally through training, practice-sharing and accessing research and resources. 2011 training programmes reached 800 professionals, who themselves work with 20,000 children each year.
- Members accessing particular specialist expertise through trainers, consultants or creative / early childhood professionals, brokering new partnerships with each other

Requirements:

- Up-to-date online platform able to manage multiple mailing segments on regular basis with news, research, webinars and events
- Partnerships across the country with settings and cultural organisations willing to host and promote network events, and share best practice
- Network consulted on developments (e.g. conference themes, new network services, CPD requirements, best forms of advocacy support)
- Mixed-economy business model requiring income from membership, events, sponsorship, consultancy and publications in order to be sustainable with little grant aid.

CASE STUDY 15:

ArtsSmarts, Canada

ArtsSmarts supports, promotes, and demonstrates the positive impact of the arts as a way of engaging students in 21st Century life and learning. They envision that all young people in Canada will acquire the creative capacities and competencies needed to grow and excel. Started in 1995, ArtsSmarts is now a network of partners and projects operating across Canada.

Activities:

- ArtsSmarts projects start with a big question or idea. This leads artists, teachers and students onto an enquiry-based process of discovery.
- Once the BIG question has been defined, ArtsSmarts comes to life when an artist collaborates with a teacher. ArtsSmarts engages students in the creative process through artistic enquiry into topics that span many different subject areas of the curriculum.
- Projects range in length of time, from several weeks to a full school year, with the average project length being four months which is similar to an artist-in-residence.

¹³⁰ Earlyarts (2013), Earlyarts UK National Consultation: *Summary of Key Findings*, http://www.earlyarts.co.uk/images/stories/earlyArts/Documents_for_Newsflash/National_Consultation_Findings_2012.pdf

Impacts:¹³¹

- Positive and harmonious classroom environments, with students listening and learning from each other through greater team work and inclusiveness
- Increased pupil pride, confidence and value of their own work and ability
- Professional development for artists and teachers
- Shared resources, knowledge, visibility, connections and skills through extensive networks
- Other more specific impacts per project

Requirements:

- Artist and teacher work together: planning and preparing, running sessions and lessons, joint reflection and evaluation
- The teacher is the guide and leader and the relationship with students changes from one of transmitting knowledge to offering support and facilitating learning. The artist models creative thinking, inquiry, artistic processes and habits. Together, the artist and teacher serve as model learners and social role models for students.
- Sufficient time allocated for planning and reflection.

CASE STUDY 16:

Graffiti Theatre Company, Cork – educational theatre company specialising in 0–3s¹³²

Graffiti is an educational theatre company, specialising in integrated arts with 0–3s in community settings.

Activities:

- Theatrical/integrated arts performances in early childhood settings
- CPD workshops for early childhood professionals.
- BEAG cross-agency project with local authorities and health bodies.

Impacts:¹³³

- Providing positive creative experiences for children;
- Increased confidence of early childhood professionals to develop their own creative arts activities;
- Improved children's attention and help with behavioural issues

Requirements:

- Allowing permission to experiment and fail;
- Thoroughly researching new areas of work and identify existing excellence;
- Allowing time for research and development;
- Documenting practice and analysing responses;
- Demanding quality from ourselves
- Partnerships/funding: BEAG funded by two LAs and local Health Service

¹³¹ As reported in <http://www.artssmarts.ca/en/in-schools/in-schools.aspx>, citing various research reports.

¹³² www.graffiti.ie

¹³³ O'Sullivan, M., (2011) *BEAG: Report of a pilot project for Cork*, www.graffiti.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/BEAG-Pilot-Report.pdf

CASE STUDY 17:**Cre8us, Coventry – artist-led early years projects addressing diverse learning goals¹³⁴**

Cre8us developed out of the Arts Council England-funded Creative Partnerships programme.

Activities: A series of artist-led projects about making discoveries, solving problems, building shared understanding of creativity and its value in children's play and development, working in schools in the foundation years. Varied activities, including:

- Using physical performance to explore the geography of a river, investigate fractions, explain the use of commas and understand the processes of the water cycle, developing a whole-school, kinaesthetic maths curriculum
- Finding ways to use creative processes and arts to explore themes, challenges and questions encountered in the classroom (e.g. behavioural, societal, or curricular themes)
- Second skin: multi-arts approach, exploring innovative ways in which creative learning environments can stimulate learning. Artists used various new and recycled materials to create stimulating environments and then supported children to explore their own lines of enquiry and document what they did. Stay-and-play sessions and ideas for parents to take home.

Impacts:

- Improved artists' and early childhood professionals' confidence with creative approaches to learning and arts activity;
- Significant benefits for children in engagement with core learning themes and issues
- Improved parental engagement in creative activity at home;
- Embedding creative and exploratory approaches to cross-curriculum learning in early childhood settings
- Second skin artist has convinced schools and early childhood settings to fund continued sessions and activities

Requirements:

- Time and space for planning, reflection and growth, and be committed to developing relationships between artist and early childhood professional
- Funding (Creative Partnerships-funded),
- Creatives' training and experience, developed over time

CASE STUDY 18:**5x5x5=creativity, Bath, Bristol and Somerset – research network and partnership projects designed to build core learning dispositions through creative activity¹³⁵**

Inspired by Reggio Emilia, 5x5x5=creativity began as five partnerships of an early childhood setting, an artist and a cultural centre, each with a mentor. Key features of how they work:

- Children and young people are seen as innate and creative knowledge builders, explorers and co-constructors of their learning.

¹³⁴ www.cre8us.org.uk

¹³⁵ Hay, P. (2012) *5x5x5=creativity 2011-12 Annual Report*, Bath: 5x5x5=creativity: www.5x5x5creativity.org.uk

- Educators and artists are enablers and companions in the children's and young people's learning within a culture of listening and action research.
- Learning is focussed on the process of the children's and young people's explorations, not the end product.
- Documenting learning journeys is the method for evaluating and reflecting upon the children's and young people's thinking and learning.
- The development of a creative learning community of teachers, artists, co-workers in cultural centres, parents, children and young people
- Involving family and community in life-long learning

Activities:

- Action research projects, enabling children to research and identify their interests, and develop ways of nurturing their own creativity and broader development through creative activities;
- Publications and network-based practice sharing
- Covers a broad range of curriculum subject areas
- Focus on pre-school age children and on the adults who support them
- Accredited masters programme with Bath Spa University

Impacts:

- significant improvement in mathematics for previously low-achieving children
- professionals better able to spot, scaffold and extend children's creativity and use action research processes
- other outcomes arising from different project focusses

Requirements:

- Identifying appropriate committed partners (early childhood setting, artist and cultural venue) and good partnership working

CASE STUDY 19:**Starcatchers, Scotland
– artist residencies and specialist performances¹³⁶**

Starcatchers is a producer-led organisation that works with a range of associate artists and companies to deliver their projects and performances. They believe in creativity having a fundamental role in supporting early childhood development, in creating arts experiences for the very young being inspiring for artists, and in the creative confidence of early childhood professionals having a significant impact on the children they care for.

Activities:

- Extended artist residencies in early childhood settings, providing time, space and resource for artists to experiment and play, and to tailor their work for specific audiences, running for around a year, mainly in areas of multiple deprivation

Impacts:¹³⁷

- Children acquired cultural experiences through the arts and extended their cultural understanding

¹³⁶ www.starcatchers.org.uk

¹³⁷ Dunlop, A-W., et al., (2011) *Live arts / arts alive: Starcatchers research report 2011*, University of Strathclyde School of Education http://www.starcatchers.org.uk/sites/default/files/starcatchers_summary.pdf accessed 19 April 2013

- Children developed empathetic judgement
- Children engaged intellectually, imaginatively and emotionally in theatre
- Artists developed a keener understanding of early childhood issues, which became more deeply reflected in their own practice

Requirements:

- artists with a strong track record for innovation;
- Paying artists enough so they don't have to focus on other work, based in arts centres or settings
- Funding – these residencies connect into 15 different Government budgets

Other examples of excellent practice – researched but not included in the case studies

Visual Arts:

Artspace *Australia*

Moonbeams Action Research programme *Birmingham, England*

Theatre / Festivals:

La Baracca's La Nida festival *Italy*

Hellwach – international theatre festival for young audience *Germany*

Baboró International Arts Festival for Children *Ireland*

Windmill Theatre for Children *Australia*

Sydney Children's Festival *Australia*

Theatre Rites *England*

Oily Cart *England*

Belfast International Children's Festival *Northern Ireland*

2TuurvenHoog Children's Arts Festival *Netherlands*

Music / Opera:

Utah Children's Opera Festival *USA*

Young Ensembles Scheme *Ireland*

Music Generation *Ireland*

Environment / Architecture / Sculpture:

Creative Forest Schools *Kindling Play & Training, North Yorkshire*

WEAVE *Warwickshire, UK*

Dance:

Bare Toed Dance *Newcastle, UK*

Balabik Dance Co *France*

Primed for Life early years dance *Lancashire, UK*

Film / Photography / Media:

Reggio Emilia Refocus / Fotografia Europea international photography festival *Italy*

Foreground Media and Lightstream *UK*

Literature:

Kids' Own Publishing Company *Ireland*

Children's Books Ireland *Ireland*

Museums / Art Galleries / Libraries with Family Engagement at the heart:

Queensland University of Technology *Australia*

Chicago Children's Museum *USA*

Family Story building *Romania*

Anantolo Arts Centre *Helsinki*

Discover Children's Story Centre – esp the 'Ways In' programme *England*

Networks / Professional Development:

Cork College Early Childhood Cultural Module *Ireland*

Tiny Voices – The Common Ground and Early Childhood Ireland *Dublin, Ireland*

Practice.ie / Helium Arts *Ireland*

Smallsize *Europe*

Early Childhood Ireland

TYA-UK / TYA-Ireland

Take Art and the Little Big Bang project *England*

Future Playground, run by Fevered Sleep Theatre *England*

Arts and Early childhood partnership *West Cork, Ireland*

APPENDIX THREE: Examples of nationwide arts education strategies or manifestos

Denmark's Arts, Culture and Education strategy:

www.boernekultur.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/billeder_og_pdf/Publikationer/BKN_strategi_2010-2012_UK.pdf

Arts Council Sweden's Creative Schools Programme:

www.kulturradet.se/sv/nyheter/2012/Skapande-skola-starker-elevs-sjalkvansla/
www.nationalmuseum.se/sv/english-startpage/Schools/Creative-Schools-at-Nationalmuseum/

Arts Council England's Reflect and review:

www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/documents/publications/reflectandreview.php6880Sj.pdf

Arts Council Ireland's Points of Alignment:

www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/Arts_education_en_08.pdf

Arts Council Ireland's Artists and Schools guidelines:

www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/ArtistsSchools06_English.pdf

Arts Council Ireland's Arts in Education Charter:

www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Arts-In-Education-Charter.pdf

Cultural Learning Alliance's ImagiNation: www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/userfiles/files/FINAL_ImagineNation_The_Case_for_Cultural_Learning.pdf

Children and The Arts Manifesto:

www.childrensarts.org.uk/what-we-do/manifesto

A Manifesto for Children and the Arts in Northern Ireland:

www.stickyfingersarts.co.uk/USERIMAGES/Sticky_Fingers_Manifesto.pdf

Charter of Children's Rights to Arts and Culture

<http://cartadeidritti.testoniragazzi.it/>

National Campaign for the Arts Manifesto:

www.artscampaign.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61&Itemid=73

Manifestation for Participation in the Arts and Crafts:

www.vaga.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=543:participation-in-the-arts-&catid=176:participation&Itemid=501

Kids in Museums manifesto:

<http://kidsinmuseums.org.uk/manifesto/>

Music Manifesto:

www.icmp.co.uk/instituteUpload/research-pdf/2010%20-%20Music%20Manifesto%20Factsheet.pdf

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