

# 'heads up' and 'all heads' projects in dublin

[Education](#), [Learning](#)



The purpose of this project is to disseminate our client ReCreate's two research projects, called ' Heads Up' and ' All Heads' to primary school teachers in Dublin. The Heads Up project is focused on the exploration of the benefits of inclusive creative education, and the All Heads project acts as a handbook for people running activities, especially creative education activities that include children with special needs. These two research pieces include information about their organisation, about what creative education is and how they achieve this by repurposing surplus materials from Industry. This literature review is intended to inform the project on three main topics:

1. Structure of Arts and learning in Irish primary schools and the number of primary schools in Dublin.
2. Creative education and its place in the Irish primary school curriculum.
3. Creative education in ReCreate's context and its relation to Irish primary school curricula.

With the amendment of Arts curriculum in the Irish education system, the schools in Ireland have enhanced the education standards in the field of Arts, especially for primary schools. A part of this project will be focusing on getting a better understanding of methods that the primary school teachers in Dublin are using for teaching creativity in daily art education. Then, we will figure out the best way to make the teachers aware of the methods that ReCreate is employing. Moreover, it explains the reasons why creative art is imperative in education, as well as highlight the positive impacts of creativity on children.

“ Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited while imagination embraces the whole world”. – Albert Einstein According to

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Benson, Society differs in what they consider as art and in what people think through the function of art to be. Yet there is no society in the world where artistic activity cannot be found. Arts in a society represents the society itself – its belief, value, objective, perception and much more. Arts has the power to influence society and also society differs in how they foster or hinder artistic activity. The different stages of development and evolution are often related to the scales and production of works of art. Just like other societies in the world, arts have played a significant role in Irish society (Benson, 1979).

According to The Arts Council and the Irish Research Council, The arts, in all its forms, are a critical part of the fabric of Irish society. The arts help the Irish society to critically reflect on its past and present and consider its future as individual citizens and as a nation (The Arts Council and the Irish Research Council, 2017). Also, Benson's research paper states that the contribution to the artistic heritage of the western world by Ireland has been outstanding and Ireland has a great tradition and culture with respect to arts. This literature review deals with the structure of Irish primary school of arts and learning, Creative education and how Irish schools have it in their curriculum, and Creative education in ReCreate's context and its relation to Irish primary school curricula. ReCreate is a non-profit organisation which was established in the year 2013 and was the first of its kind enterprise in Ireland. Their aim is directed towards creativity and reuse by keeping in mind the sustainability of the environment. Its mission is to create awareness around reusability and to avoid materials from going to landfills and rather have them used by people from different groups like primary schools, NGO's, Montessori's and

to people who might not be able to access them otherwise. These materials can be used by members without any cost and in unlimited amounts. They feel that by the 'creative reuse' of these materials, they can have an extensive impact on groups and individuals as seen by one of their projects, Heads Up.

Our practicum will be based on the dissemination of the market research done by the Recreate team through two of their projects which are, Heads Up and All Heads to primary schools based in Dublin. This will be done through semi-structured interviews with prospective clients for Recreate and also those who already are using Recreate's services.

Irish primary schools structure in Arts and learning, and its

Geodemographics: According to the Central Statistics Office, there are a total of 326 primary schools in County Dublin. From these, 289 are ordinary national schools and 37 are special schools. Out of which 99 ordinary school and 9 special schools are present in South Dublin whereas Dublin City has a total of 190 ordinary schools and 28 special schools (Central Statistics Office, 2018).

Ireland's primary education sector includes government or state-funded schools, special schools and private schools. Education in Ireland is compulsory for children from age 6 to 16 or till the time they complete their second level education (Citizens Information, 2013). Most of the children start attending school in the month of September of their fourth year (Department of Education and Skills, 2018). The primary school curriculum provides students with a broad experience in learning and helps in excelling

different aspects of their lives such as moral, cognitive, emotional, social, physical and aesthetic. The curriculum is divided into the following key subject areas:

1. Language (English and Irish).
2. Mathematics.
3. Arts (including visual arts, drama and music).
4. Social and scientific education.
5. Personal and health education.
6. Physical education. (Department of Education and Skills, 2018)

Also, a great deal of help is given to students with special needs. This ranges from additional to specialist support. Such students can get admissions in schools such as:

1. The mainstream school with additional support.
2. The mainstream school with special support class.
3. Special schools that aim at different categories of disability (Citizens Information, 2013).

Creative education and its place in the curriculum in Irish schools: As per the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (2010), the primary school curriculum in Ireland was mainly focused on arithmetic, reading, and writing. UNESCO, in the year 1999, called for the incorporation of arts education in every child's education as it holds an exceptional place. It also laid great emphasis on the solidification of arts education which it also highlighted in its publication ' Roadmap for Arts Education' in 2006. After this, the Irish Primary School Curriculum was revised and there were recommended

implementations in it. The primary school curriculum of 1999 stated the need of arts education and also stated that with the good learning of arts, comes better imagination which is a source of human creativity. The visual art curriculum is meant to increase students' sensory awareness and allow the students to create and explore themselves (Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 2010). This is exactly what our client Recreate wants most of the schools and teachers to know. Arts is not just a fun activity but also plays an important role in a student's learnings.

**Visual arts include the following strands:**

1. Drawing
2. Paint and colour
3. Print
4. Work with clay
5. Construction
6. Fabric and fibre

In the visual arts curriculum, paint and colour strand has been found to be the most useful and drawing is seen as the second most useful strand (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2005). The Irish education system has a great opportunity to introduce young generation to the arts and creativeness. As per the key characteristics of the environments and conditions by Davies et al., (2013): Physical environment, availability of resources/materials, use of the outdoor environment, pedagogical environment, use of other environments beyond the school, play-based learning are most effective in encouraging creative skills in children. According to Marie Claire Murphy' research, a Primary School Teacher,

stimulating outdoor environment is the place for developing creativity and nurturing it (Murphy, 2018). An essential feature of the pedagogic environment is that, it can promote creativity, and develop the nature of the relationship between teachers and learners, including high potentials, mutual respect, demonstrating creative attitudes, flexibility and communication. There is strong evidence that pupil creativity is closely linked to opportunities for working collaboratively with their peers, which can efficiently extend to peer and self-assessment (Davies et al., 2013). So, basically different environment offers different opportunities for the creative skills in primary school.

According to UNESCO – “ the encouragement of creativity from an early age is one of the best guarantees of growth in a healthy environment of self-esteem and mutual respect – critical ingredients for building a culture of peace”. The practise of arts can happen both within and outside the schools, it varies from regular arts classes to workshops, programmes, art based visits, and tours. Teachers, Artists, pupil, and arts organizations work to create arts experience and nurture arts in the primary school kids. The curriculum reflects the educational, cultural, social and economic aspirations and concerns of Irish society. In 1999, a major restructuring of primary school curriculum was launched and it was the first complete revision of the curriculum since 1971.

The Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Arts and the Heritage and Gaeltacht (DAHG) made a cooperative initiative to endorse and incorporate the arts in education with the launch of the Arts in Education Charter Dec 2012. The Arts Council is working in collaboration with these

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department to successfully implement Arts in Education Charter In Ireland (The Arts Council, 2018). The latest revised curriculum implementation is in progress and elements of the revised curriculum are planned to be introduced between 2015 and 2018. At post-primary level, a radical restructuring of curriculum and assessment at junior cycle has been taken on and will be introduced on a phased basis between 2015 and 2022 (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2014). The Primary Curriculum Review Phase 1 (2005) conducted by NCCA involved 719 teachers who completed an 18 page questionnaire on their curriculum experiences. The review focused on teachers' and children's experiences with the English Curriculum, the Visual Arts Curriculum. The report have summarised key findings and recommendation on the arts curriculum. According to the findings, the Irish teachers reported that providing a range of visual arts experience for children was the greatest success, followed by children's enjoyment through visual arts. The following list is a sample of teachers' thoughts on the impact of arts on learning.

**Arts education: (Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 2010)**

1. Encourages alternative thinking
2. Builds self-esteem and fosters self-worth
3. Enhances learning across the curriculum
4. Nurtures creativity and imagination
5. Allows children to experience success
6. Makes school more enjoyable
7. Develops skills, understanding and dexterity
8. Encourages problem-solving through cooperation



9. Affords children the opportunity to express themselves differently.

**The challenges and recommendations identified by teachers included: (Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 2010)**

- Funding, funding, funding
- Reduction in class size
- Lack of space
- Time constraints of an overloaded curriculum
- Differentiation requirements of multi-grade class
- Need for extra pair of hands – especially in infant classes
- Requirement for teacher training or the employment of specialists
- More freedom with timetabling
- Help with planning

Less-ambiguous curriculum objectives Also, the teachers stated three challenges that were involved with the visual arts curriculum, they are time, the amount of knowledge the teacher had about visual arts and the appropriateness of assessment. There was a limited use of pair and group work, and the class size was a challenge as well. The teacher's felt a need of focusing on a child's ability to look and respond to art (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2005).

By addressing these challenges, the efficacy of the creative education in Irish primary schools, especially the visual arts could be significantly enhanced.

Non-profit organisations like Recreate are trying to achieve a better environment for the future generation, while at the same time encouraging creativity and invention in Ireland's future engineers, teachers and scientists.

Creative education in ReCreate's context and its relation to Irish primary

school curricula: In a wider context, ReCreate aims at creative arts education at all levels.

According to them, the arts are universally acknowledged as valuable and enjoyable cultural pursuits. When used in education, they are transformed into highly effective teaching and learning processes. The Heads Up project adopted an arts integration approach where the participants learn the visual arts thoroughly. ReCreate's workshop provided an environment in which to learn about the visual arts but also to explore other content areas. They facilitated the development of generic skills across different subject areas such as visual thinking, spatial reasoning, observation, and language, mathematical, social, emotional, cultural and scientific skills. Visual arts integration is used with positive results in early childhood education. Integrated learning experiences have been shown to be one of the most powerful and effective ways of learning (Connolly et al. 2018).

The international acclaimed Reggio Emilia approach inspired many schools all over the world is an educational project based on the image of the human beings, and child, as possessing strong capabilities for development and as a subject of privileges who learns and grows in the relationships with others. Both Reggio Emilia approach and Irish primary school curriculum incorporate this creative education practice. The Heads Up project highlighted the benefits of integrated learning achieved through the visual arts and it created valuable links to other areas of school curricula. The well known proverb that ReCreate understands and applies to the heads up project is

(Connolly et al. 2018): “ I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. ”