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Unpacking the 'magical' narrative of Creative Youth policy: Where do teachers belong?

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Abstract

In recent years, creativity and arts-in-education have become key features of youth arts policy in Ireland and heavily impact the provision of arts education in schools. Since 2017, the *Creative Youth Plan* (CI, 2017, 2023a) and its *Creative Schools* programme have become the core mechanism by which this policy focus is translated into primary schools. Although the *Creative Youth Plan* (CI, 2017, 2023a) and the *Creative Schools* programme have been recently renewed, research on their impact is still emerging and remains limited. This article addresses a pertinent gap in the research by analysing the potential devaluing of the primary teacher's role through the way they are positioned firstly within the policy discourse of the *Creative Youth Plan* (CI, 2017, 2023a) and subsequently its *Creative Schools* programme. Applying a Foucauldian lens, the researchers draw on Stone's narrative approach (2012) and Pollitt and Hupe's theory of magic concepts (2011) to deconstruct the dominant policy narrative of the *Creative Youth 2017-2022* and *Creative Youth 2023-2027 Plan* and how it is perpetuated through the *Creative Schools* programme documents. In doing so, it highlights how narratives embedded within policy can create the conditions for the potential 'othering' (Foucault, 1970, 1979) of primary teachers through the policy's programme guiding its practice on the ground.

Keywords: teacher positioning; discourse analysis; creativity; arts education; policy

Unpacking the 'magical' narrative of Creative Youth policy: Where do teachers belong?

Ailbhe Curran and Ailbhe Kenny

Introduction

Youth arts policy in Ireland has been undergoing significant change over the last fifteen years and a central focus of these changes has been a renewed emphasis on professional artists working in schools through arts-in-education practice. However, while teacher-artist partnership has been promoted as the mechanism by which arts-in-education practice should function, questions remain as to how effectively teachers and artists work as equal partners on the ground. The *Creative Youth Plan* (2017-2022, 2023-2027) has been the core policy directing this practice in recent years through its *Creative Schools* programme. However, there has not yet been a critical analysis of the narratives underpinning the *Creative Youth Plan* (Creative Ireland [CI], 2017; CI, 2023a) and its *Creative Schools* programme and how this may affect the positioning of primary teachers in its implementation. This research is situated within a Foucauldian lens and adopts Deborah Stone's approach to policy analysis (2012) along with Pollitt and Hupe's theory of magic concepts (2011). While this research is set within an Irish context, it has international relevance also as the *Creative*

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Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a) and the *Creative Schools* programme are evidently influenced by, and influence, the cultural and creative education policies of other state governments and organisations.

Context

The Creative Ireland programme (2017-2022, 2023-2027) is the main programme directing current cultural and arts policy in Ireland. It was originally developed in 2017 with the aim of creating 'an ecosystem of creativity' where 'every person in Ireland should have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential' (CI, 2023b). Its development followed the publication of the Arts in Education Charter (Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht[1] [DAHG] and the Department of Education and Science[2] [DES], 2013) which documented detailed steps towards developing arts-in-education practice in schools. The Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a), under the wider Creative Ireland programme, developed as the successor to the Arts in Education Charter (DAHG and DES, 2013), and its school programmes are centred on artists and other 'creative practitioners' (CI, 2023a, p.2) engaging in creative and cultural work in schools. Indeed, the Creative Youth Plan is 'dedicated to embracing, fast-tracking and resourcing the implementation of the Charter' (CI, 2022a, p.15). The plan (and its programmes) is therefore considered as forming a core part of arts education policy in Ireland.

The two main programmes for schools which emerged from the Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a) were the Creative Schools programme and the Creative Clusters programme. This study focusses primarily on the content of the Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a) and the policy documents associated with the Creative Schools programme. The Creative Schools programme is led by the Arts Council[3] in partnership with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Department of Education (ACI, 2023). Within the Creative Schools programme, a Creative Associate [CA] (which can be an artist with a background/expertise in working with children or a teacher who has developed an arts practice) works with an individual primary/post-primary school through a Creative Schools Coordinator [CSC] over a period of two years. Their work involves devising and implementing a Creative Schools plan to develop 'young people's engagement with arts and creativity' (ACI, 2022a, p.2). Significantly, although the programme states to have involvement from the Department of Education, the Arts Council appears to be primarily responsible for the operation of the programme as a whole, from recruitment and selection of schools and Creative Associates to the organisation of training and monitoring of implementation.

The development of the Creative Schools initiative is acknowledged to be highly influenced by the Creative Partnerships (UK) programme (Creativity, Culture and Education [CCE], 2023a). The Director of Education and Skills at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] also claims that Ireland's Creative Schools initiative is under evaluation by them with a view to 'driv[ing] forward' similar approaches to creative education and cultural policy in other jurisdictions (ACI, 2022b). Hence, as a result of its considered 'success' (Government of Ireland, 2023), the Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a) and its Creative Schools programme was recently renewed and extended to 2027.

However, although the Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a) has recently been renewed, research into the plan's impact on education is only recently emerging and limited in some areas. This study

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provides a deconstructive analysis of the Creative Youth Plans (2017-2022, 2023-2027) and its Creative Schools programme in order to identify how a dominant policy narrative may be perpetuated through its programme's documents to impact on the positioning of teachers in practice.

Literature Review

The teacher/artist dichotomy within arts-in-education

A number of reports commissioned by the Arts Council of Ireland in the latter half of the twentieth century identified a greater need for investment and collaboration between the arts and education sectors in Ireland (Bodkin, 1949; Richards, 1976; ACI, 1979). However, it was not until 2006 that the Artists-Schools Guidelines (ACI and DES) were published with the goal of 'develop[ing] a tradition of collaborations between artists and teachers' (p.3). While these guidelines outlined the roles of both teacher and artist when working in partnership, they also highlighted the importance of schools availing of 'the commitment and expertise of "outsiders"' (p.11). Following this, two key arts education policy documents were published, beginning with the Points of Alignment report (ACI) of 2008. Five years later, the Arts in Education Charter (DAHG and DES, 2013) outlined the steps for implementation of the 2008 report within arts education practice in Ireland.

While the term 'arts-in-education' was first introduced by the Arts Council in the 1980s (ACI, 1989, p.11), it was not until the Points of Alignment report (ACI, 2008) and subsequent Arts in Education Charter (DAHG and DES, 2013) that the terms 'arts education' and 'arts-in-education' (ACI, 2008, p.3; DAHG and DES, 2013, p.3) became fully dichotomised in the language and discourse of arts education policy. Within these documents, arts education (cited as responsibility of Department of Education and education providers) 'refers usually to mainstream teaching and learning of the arts as part of general education', and arts-in-education (cited primarily as responsibility of the Arts Council) 'refers mostly to interventions by the world of the arts into the education system' through 'artists of all disciplines visiting schools or by schools engaging with professional arts practice in the public domain' (ACI, 2008, p.3; DAHG and DES, 2013, p.3). Consequently, within the binary definition of these terms, the positioning of teacher and artist also became dichotomised within the discourse of arts education policy (Curran and Morrissey, 2023). The bedrock for this dichotomous narrative between teacher and artist was therefore laid over a decade ago and concerns remain about the effect of this positioning on teachers and their role in arts education provision (Kenny and Morrissey, 2016; Kenny, 2017; Curran and Morrissey, 2023).

The Creative Ireland programme is dedicated to 'fast-tracking' the implementation of the Arts in Education Charter (CI, 2022a, p.15) but also notably (through the Creative Youth Plan), extending the role of outside interventions in schools further to include other 'creative practitioners' (CI, 2023a, p.2) as well as artists. However, research into the Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a) and its Creative Schools programme (independent research in particular) since its inception remains limited and no critical analysis focussed specifically on the language and discourse of these documents has yet been undertaken. This analysis examines how the language of the plan and Creative Schools programme documents have positioned the teacher within them.

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Primary teachers and arts-in-education practice

Within this article, the teacher is defined as a primary school teacher in a public school. Primary teachers in Ireland teach all curricular subjects including the arts, which consist of music, drama and the visual arts (DES, 1999; Department of Education [DE], 2023). Both the 1999 Primary School Curriculum (DES) and new Primary Curriculum Framework (DE, 2023) are highly influenced by John Dewey (1938) and position teachers as the core facilitators of arts education. This aligns with the findings of international research which acknowledges that primary teachers should play a leading role in the provision of arts education in their classes (Bamford, 2006, 2012; Kenny, 2010, 2017; Borgen, 2011; Oltedal, 2011; Christophersen, 2013, 2015; Kenny and Morrissey, 2016, 2021). As noted by Bresler (2010, p.1),

> Teachers are pivotal figures in their classrooms. They are the hub—the mind and the spirit—of curricular experiences and activities. They plan, construct, orchestrate, manage, engage and discipline, as they transmit knowledge and values.

Despite their positioning within the curriculum, external facilitators for school activities have been present in Irish schools for a number of decades, particularly in the area of the arts and physical education. Notably, research continues to illustrate that when external providers work in schools without a structured and regulated partnership programme in place, it can negatively affect teacher confidence and professional development in these areas (Hanley, 2003; Wolf, 2008; Bamford, 2012; Snook and Buck, 2014; Kenny and Morrissey, 2016; Partington, 2017; Ní Chróinín and O'Brien, 2019; Mangione, Parker, and O'Sullivan, 2021; Fahy, 2023; Murphy and Eivers, 2023; Teehan et al., 2023). It is significant to note also that while arts-in-education practice became more formally recognised and supported through government initiatives in recent years, arts-in-education practice is not allocated separate time within the curriculum and therefore takes place within the curricular arts education time.

Undoubtedly, the research highlights that there is significant value to teachers working with practising artists in their schools (Wolf, 2008; Bamford, 2006; Partti and Väkevä, 2018; Abeles, 2018; Kenny and Morrissey, 2016, 2021; Fahy and Kenny, 2023). Indeed, it is acknowledged that there many teachers with additional qualifications and expertise in this area already working in schools. The capacity of teachers to be viewed as creative artists in and of themselves is also highlighted by educational theorists and teacher leaders who argue that teaching is an innately creative profession (Dewey, 1997; Greene, 2000; Eisner, 2002; Cremin, 2015; Robinson and Aronica, 2015; Palmer, 2017; DE, 2022; Ward, 2022).

Research therefore continues to highlight how training targeted at building a relationship of equal partnership with artists is considered key when implementing arts-in-education initiatives (Kenny, 2010, 2017; Borgen, 2011; Oltedal, 2011; Bamford, 2012; Christophersen, 2013, 2015; Kenny and Morrissey, 2016, 2021; Fahy and Kenny, 2023). However, targeted training that is heavily focussed on building a relationship of mutual understanding and respect is, though available in Ireland (through the Teacher-Artist Partnership programme), not automatically a requirement of all teachers and artists participating in arts-in-education programmes. In both a national and international context, a lack of training can often lead to a situation of teacher deprofessionalisation (deskilling) within arts-in-education initiatives (Kenny, 2010, 2017; Borgen, 2011; Oltedal, 2011; Bamford, 2012;

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Christophersen, 2013, 2015; Kenny and Morrissey, 2016, 2021) and raise questions over where teachers belong in their implementation.

Recent research on the Creative Schools programme has already highlighted some tensions and challenges in relation to teacher positioning (Fahy and Kenny, 2022) and a need for a greater acknowledgment of the teacher's role and their identity as creative practitioners (DE, 2022). Significantly, one of the most recent studies on the programme also highlighted teacher dissatisfaction with professional development and a very limited impact on teacher confidence (Fahy, 2023). Furthermore, a recent research report on Creative Schools (Murphy and Eivers, 2023), though comprehensive in many ways, presented a limited analysis on the actual practice of teacher-artist partnership within the programme, reporting only what teachers may have gained from the programme while failing to examine what artists may have gained from working with teachers. This arguably served to embed an unequal positioning of teachers and artists within these programmes even further. Given that the plan and its programmes have recently been extended, there is a pertinent need to closely analyse the positioning of teachers within the policy narrative of the two Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a) and the Creative Schools programme.

Undoubtedly there are many complex factors which can inform the development of policy and inform teacher positioning in the way these policies are implemented in practice. However, although the concept of teacher positioning has arisen in some of the recent research into the Creative Schools programme, there has been very limited focus to date on how the language and discourse of the Creative Schools programme and the plan which informed its development may play a key role in shaping this positioning. The analysis and discussion presented here positions itself within a neoliberal context and draws from the work of Foucault (1970, 1972, 1979, 1988), Stone (2012) and Pollitt and Hupe (2011) to explore this aspect. In doing so, it aims to bring an awareness to researchers, policy-makers, and teachers on how language and discourse may impact on the positioning of teachers within arts education practice and help us to analyse, develop and implement our policies in this area in new ways into the future.

The 'magic' of creativity - a neoliberal construct in education

Over the last two decades, concerns have been raised about the significant effect neoliberalism has had on constructing a discourse of teacher deficit and the implications of this for both the professional and personal lives of teachers. As argued by Ball, neoliberalism is not just about economy and economic policy, but about 'how we value ourselves and value others, how we think about what we do, and why we do it' (Ball, 2016, p. 1). A growing perception of school standards in decline has led to a notable increase in workload and accountability measures, goals for excellence and an intense focus on assessment, performance and outcomes (Ball, 1990, 2003, 2006, 2012, 2016, 2021; Apple, 2006, 2013, 2018; Lynch, Grummell, and Devine, 2012; Conway and Murphy, 2013; Ó Breacháin and O'Toole, 2013; Conway, 2013; Simmie, 2014; Giroux, 2015; Brown, McNamara, and O'Hara, 2016; Skerritt 2019). Indeed, during periods of school reform, this focus on teacher and school standards is often accentuated and becomes bound in the language and discourse of policy through 'new vocabularies of practice, new roles with new titles, [and in] grids, templates, mentoring relationships, annual reviews, evaluations and output indicators' (Ball, 2016, p.1). This has had the effect of keeping teachers 'busy' (Apple, 2013, p.123) in a perpetual quest for improvement and efficiency (Brown, McNamara, and O'Hara, 2016). This process which arises from a neoliberal

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context serves to breed distrust in teachers' professional autonomy and removes them further from their core work as teachers (Ball, 2003, 2006, 2012, 2016, 2021; Apple, 2006, 2013, 2018; Moore and Clarke, 2016). In doing so, it lays the groundwork for extensive outside interventions by 'experts' in schools, including in the area of arts education.

Creativity has recently been subsumed within this neoliberal discourse in education and adopted by major organisations such as the OECD (Ball, 2007, 2021; Gormley, 2020). This has led to adaptations and extensions of the meaning of creativity to align with the neoliberal agenda and the development of skills, innovation, enterprise and future workers for the economy (Ball, 2007, 2021; Gormley, 2020). This emphasis also shifts from the arts to other subjects such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) which weigh more heavily within an economic agenda (Kenny, 2017; Aróstegui, 2018). Indeed, in many ways, creativity itself has become the neoliberal 'magic fix' to a perceived decline in school standards.

A significant example of such an approach to developing creativity in schools can be seen within the United Kingdom's Creative Partnerships programme (2002-2011). This programme was established by the Arts Council of England to develop young people's creativity (Arts Council of England, 2001) through setting up partnerships between 'creative professionals', children and teachers (National Foundation for Educational Research [NFER] 2006, p.3). While an evaluation of the programme identified positive outcomes (NFER, 2006), other studies highlighted negative effects, emphasising how there was a need for further involvement of teachers within the programme and a recognition of their autonomy (NFER, 2006; National Society for Education in Art and Design, 2007). One study noted how '"creativity" [was] seen as being located outside mainstream school structures, in projects rather than in the National Curriculum, and in artists rather than in teachers' (Hall and Thomson, 2007, p.315). Another remarked how 'there are risks that the initiative could be perceived as yet another attempt at large-scale reform of teacher practice' (Wyse and Spendlove, 2007, p.190).

Notably, Hesmondhalgh et al. (2015) argued that the programme was heavily influenced by a neoliberal agenda from the beginning. The programme's development and implementation were led by members of Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), an independent organisation which aims to deliver an education which is 'powerful, rigorous' and focussed on '21st century' skills (CCE, 2023b). This same organisation now acts as 'an expert advisor on creative learning to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development' (CCE, 2023b); an organisation whose education focus (and interests in creativity) are rooted in the economic principles of neoliberalism (Gormley, 2020). Given their connection with the OECD, it is perhaps unsurprising then that their 'Creative Habits of Mind' (CCE, 2023c) rubric for creativity clearly draws from the 5 Creative Dispositions Model presented as a background paper for the OECD on 'developing new forms of assessment [in creativity]' (Lucas, Claxton and Spencer, 2012). This indeed raises questions as to whether these 'habits of mind' in practice may be framed as a guide for teachers and students to support creative practice or as a set of performance criteria by which to assess schools. Significantly, this neoliberal focus within the organisation's understanding of creativity has been extended to Ireland's Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017; CI, 2023) which utilises the same Creative Habits of Mind model in its Creative Schools programme (ACI, 2021).

Bearing this in mind, the Creative Partnerships programme is acknowledged to have highly influenced the structure and content of Ireland's Creative Schools programme (CCE, 2023a).

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Therefore, it is clear that the Creative Youth Plan's (CI, 2017, 2023a) education focus is very much situated within this neoliberal discourse and its understanding of creativity in education.

Methodology

Theoretical foundation

As noted by Ball (2015, p.1), 'we speak policy and at the same time, policy speaks us; it creates positions from which we are able to act and think'. This research views policies as 'ideological texts' (Codd, 1988, p.244) that help to both uphold and reinforce existing power relations, and seek to control the conduct of a state's citizens. According to Foucault (1972), policy narratives are formed by the dominant discourse i.e. the dominant system of thought and knowledge within society, and the language of these narratives plays a key role in embedding this discourse further within society. Consequently, the language of policy socially constructs 'problems' and 'problem groups' whose identities need to be altered in order to align with the prevailing social order (Foucault, 1972; Scheurich, 1994, p.299). These 'problem groups' are positioned then as 'Other' (Foucault, 1970, 1979). The group constructed as 'Other' becomes silenced within the dominant discourse, positioned as in need of support or remedy in order to align themselves with the particular 'rules' and 'regularities' (Foucault, 1972, p.63) of the existing social order. Foucault (1988) argues that policies need to be deconstructed in order to uncover these constructions and enable policy actors to re-position themselves in more empowering ways. Such deconstruction provides the framework for this research and the following section will outline how this deconstructive analysis was undertaken in order to explore the positioning of teachers within the Creative Youth Plan (2017, 2023) and its Creative Schools programme.

Methodological framework

In this article, Deborah Stone's approach to policy analysis (2012) and Pollitt and Hupe's theory of magic concepts (2011) were utilised for the deconstructive analysis of the policy texts in question. There has been very limited attention given in research to date to the dual use of these concepts in policy analysis and the following section outlines why and how they were aligned for use in this study.

Stone's (2012) approach draws from both the language of policy texts, and the broader power relations in which they are situated, to elucidate a dominant policy narrative which frames the positioning of policy actors. According to Stone, all policy narratives centre on two main storylines, 'stories of change and stories of power' (2012, p.158). Stories of change are characterised as 'stories of decline, including the story of stymied progress and the story of illusory progress' (Stone, 2012, p.159). Stories of power are 'stories of control, including the story of helplessness, the conspiracy story, and the blame-the-victim story' (Stone, 2012, p.159). Stone utilises a variety of tools in order to deconstruct the language of policy text and uncover a narrative. Stone (2012) focuses on the use of ambiguous, generic, wide-ranging terms in text which mask the construction of the policy problem and proposed solution. Her work aligns with Pollitt and Hupe's (2011) theory of magic concepts which focusses specifically on these 'normative' (p.643) yet ambiguous terms which may be ideologically charged, and how these concepts are used to build consensus for a policy approach. Incorporating Pollitt and Hupe's (2011) work therefore enabled the researchers to take this feature of Stone's (2012) work further and explore how magic concepts play a key role in the formation of

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the policy narrative. These magic concepts also align with Stone's identification of the congruence of many policy narratives and fairytales in the way policy problems and solutions may be purposefully framed as simplistic through this ambiguous yet seductive language (Pollitt and Hupe, 2011; Stone, 2012). The following section will outline how both theories were applied in order to deconstruct the policy narrative of the Creative Youth Plans (2017, 2023) and its Creative Schools programme documents.

Data collection and analysis

In terms of researcher positionality, both authors identify as white, Irish and female. Both authors of this article are also qualified primary teachers in Ireland and have expertise in the area of arts education. The first author is a PhD scholar currently working as a teacher in a primary school and the second author is an experienced researcher working in teacher education. Both have a specific interest in teacher-artist partnership and arts-in-education practice with the first author having worked directly in arts-in-education practice in their school and the second having published widely on teacher-artist partnership. The authors remained acutely conscious of this positioning in their analysis and presentation of data. Although both authors share commonalities in their personal and professional identities, the way in which one was positioned 'on the ground' in schools and the other was positioned in teacher education also allowed for the data to be analysed from alternative perspectives.

For analysis, the Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a) along with an extensive number of publicly available resources relating to Creative Schools were collected. These resources included audio-visual and textual resources for Creative Associates and Creative Schools Coordinators relating to training, planning and implementation of the programme. These materials were chosen for analysis as they included all published Creative Youth Plans to date (2017, 2023) and the resources utilised by those involved in the 2022-2024 Creative Schools programme cycle which covered the period of research (and which are still available as resources on the Creative Schools website). The table below outlines the specific data analysed.

Table 1. Data used for analysis.

Title	**Author**	**Date**
Creative Youth Plan	Creative Ireland	2023
Creative Youth Plan	Creative Ireland	2017
Creative Schools Planning Framework 2022 – Introduction	Arts Council of Ireland	2022
Creative Schools - Creativity and Education [video]	Arts Council of Ireland	2022
Introduction to Creative Schools 2022	Arts Council of Ireland	2022
Creative Associate Biographies 2022	Arts Council of Ireland	2022
2022 Creative Schools Coordinators Training	Arts Council of Ireland	2022

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Title	Author	Date
Creative Schools Planning Framework 2022 – Understand	Arts Council of Ireland	2022
Creative Schools Reflective Checklist for Creative Associates 2022	Arts Council of Ireland	2022
FAQs for Creative Schools Coordinators 2022	Arts Council of Ireland	2022
Creative Schools Plan 2022	Arts Council of Ireland	2022
Arts, Creative Learning and Creativity [presentation]	Arts Council of Ireland	2021

Given the focus of this research, the first stage of deconstructive analysis involved examining each line of the Creative Youth 2017- 2022 Plan, the Creative Youth 2023-2027 Plan and the published documents relating to Creative Schools to identify any language associated with neoliberal discourse and references to creativity/creative education, arts education, arts-in-education, artists, teachers, pupils/students and schools.

In the second stage of this process, drawing from both Stone (2012) and Pollitt and Hupe (2011), language which displayed the following characteristics were selected and analysed:.

- broad language with 'multiple, overlapping, sometimes conflicting definitions' (Stone, 2012; Pollitt and Hupe, 2011, p.643)
- language displaying 'normative attractiveness' with an 'overwhelmingly positive connotation' (Pollitt and Hupe, 2011, p.643) including the citation of 'common good' causes (Stone, 2012, p.287) if used
- the citation of particular data/"facts" and the absence of others (Stone, 2012)
- terms which feature frequently (visibility), especially those with 'global marketability' (Stone, 2012; Pollitt and Hupe, 2011, p.643)
- language which implies consensus (Pollitt and Hupe, 2011; Stone, 2012)
- language outlining rules and procedures (Stone, 2012)

Arising from this analysis, the narrative plot (policy problem and subsequent intervention to resolve it) and the positioning of the characters (policy actors who affect and are affected by the narrative) was identified.

Findings and Discussion

A narrative of decline emerged as the dominant narrative within the Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a) and its Creative Schools programme. This narrative begins in the school setting where teaching standards in the arts and creativity are deemed in decline and where the teachers are framed as the instigators of this decline. Much as in fairytales, a magical and all-conquering solution to this problem is proposed in the form of 'creativity', delivered through the Creative Schools programme and its 'creative experts'. The following section explores how this narrative is evident within the Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a) and perpetuated across the Creative Schools

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programme materials, and the possible effects of the narrative on the positioning of primary teachers working with this programme on the ground.

The first section outlines how the selective use of particular language and data combined with the citation of normatively attractive 'common good' causes (Stone, 2012, p.287) within the Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a) served to create a consensus on a decline in educational standards and a creativity deficit in schools. The second section focusses on the visibility of policy actors (primary teachers, artists, other creative practitioners) across the Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a) and Creative Schools training materials and how this positioned them in different ways. The third section analyses how the use of neoliberal globally marketable terms and language with broad, conflicting meanings help to strategically frame creativity and its creative experts as the 'fixers' (Stone, 2012, p.227) of the creativity deficit. It also highlights how within this discourse, deprofessionalising language utilised towards teachers across the Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a) and Creative Schools programme materials positions them as in need of being fixed and in doing so, 'others' (Foucault, 1970, 1979) them within the policy discourse in general. This section is divided into two sub-sections with the first focussing on how this narrative is evident within policy (i.e. the Creative School Plans) and the second focussing on how this narrative is then perpetuated across the Creative Schools programme materials. The final section outlines how the use of 'rules' (Stone, 2012, p.289) and 'procedures' (Stone, 2012, p.30) evident within the Creative Schools programme documents helps to embed this narrative and the 'othering' (Foucault, 1970, 1979) of teachers into practice.

Declining standards leading to a 'creativity deficit' in schools

As noted earlier, in a neoliberal educational context, it is common for teaching standards to be portrayed as in decline before proposed interventions are introduced. Stone (2012) argues that this creates a sense that there is a problem in existing practice which helps to 'procure support' (p.227) for proposed solutions outlined in policy documents. This sense of decline within existing school practice in the arts and creativity and the need for outside intervention is perpetuated through the inclusion of particular statements and the absence of others. Within the first Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017), for example, it is claimed that the plan will ensure that 'every child in Ireland [will have] practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022' (p.34, p.37 and repeated at pp.11, 24, 41). In the second Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2023a, p.25), it is noted that 'support' will be provided to schools 'to ensure access to creative writing for children'. This is somewhat confusing given that music, drama, art and creative writing are already core components of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum (DES) and the new Primary Curriculum Framework (DE, 2023) taught by teachers. The phrasing of these statements coupled with the lack of acknowledgement of existing curricular practice can be seen to suggest that basic standards of arts education are currently not being met in schools. The inclusion of the phrase 'tuition' in the first Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017) is also noteworthy as it is generally a phrase associated with individual teaching/teaching of small groups through the use of a privately paid tutor (Collins, 2023) and is perhaps indicative of the type of outside intervention planned to remedy such a supposed decline in standards.

The second Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2023a) commits at the outset to giving 'young people, in particular those who are seldom heard, the means to express their voice and their creativity' (p.1)

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and ‘find encouragement for their creative talents’ (p.16). Significantly, the opening pages of the plan also includes an assertion that ‘children and young people who wish to develop their skills in the arts and creativity currently rely heavily on community based provision’ (CI, 2023a, p.7). This suggests a significant absence of arts and creativity in schools and fails to recognise the existing practice of many teachers. Following these statements, the same plan emphasises the need for future curriculum development to outline how creative approaches can be integrated into subjects so that ‘creative practice can be “embedded” in teaching and learning’ (CI, 2023a, p.19). However, the emphasis on this commitment to bringing the arts and creativity to schools throughout and lack of acknowledgment of existing expertise and practice of teachers serves to create a sense of deficit in teaching by implying that students have very limited access to existing arts or creative learning experiences from their teachers. In both plans, there is also a heavy focus on the intervention of non-formal education bodies in supporting creativity in schools (CI, 2017, 2023a). Furthermore, despite some references to Teacher-Artist Partnership [TAP] and a rhetoric of partnership, the lack of sufficient detail within either plan on how equal partnership will be supported and resourced in all arts/creativity in education programmes creates a possible vacuum for interventions unsupported by good partnership practice within schools to remedy this apparent ‘deficit’ in our schools.

According to Stone (2012), the citation of ‘common good’ causes (p. 287) within policy documents is also strategically used to build public support for planned interventions. This is evident within the Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a) and its Creative Schools programme where child welfare is commonly referenced when discussing the actions that are needed. Child welfare is referenced through frequent statements citing the importance of developing child ‘resilience’ (CI, 2017, p.4, 9, 44; ACI, 2021; CI, 2023a, p.6, 11, 20), and ‘wellbeing’ (CI, 2017, p.1, 3, 57; ACI, 2022c; CI, 2023a, p.1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 21, 35, 51, 52). The issue of safety/security is also emotively referenced within the ‘Voice of the Teacher’ section of the first Creative Youth Plan, which states that ‘the payback [from creating more successful models of creative education] is a just and safe society for generations to come’ (CI, 2017, p.35).

Across the Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a) and Creative Schools documents, particular data are cited to assist in building consensus for the planned interventions. The first Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017), for example, refers to ‘39 public consultations’ and ‘some hundreds of meetings’ (p.9, 21) leading to a ‘consensus’ on action (p.21). Most notably however, it is stated that these meetings were held with those involved in the ‘arts’ and ‘arts-in-education’ (p.21, but earlier referenced as ‘arts’ and ‘arts education’ at p.9). These meetings reportedly concluded that the

> ‘policy underpinnings for integration of the arts into education are already in place and that what is now needed is implementation.’

This statement is significant as firstly, it does not acknowledge that the arts have been an integral part of school curriculum in Ireland for over four decades and secondly, it ignores the fact that arts education is already being provided by teachers in schools. Furthermore, the interchangeable description of those involved in the consultations (arts-in-education/arts education representatives) and the conclusions drawn raises some questions about the level of involvement of teachers in this consultation process. Near the end of the 2023 plan, there is a section included outlining the outcomes of a consultation process with stakeholders including some primary teachers. However, upon closer scrutiny, there appears to be a disconnect between the noted outcomes of this which

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outlines the ‘central role’ of teachers in supporting creativity (p. 52) and the core content and rhetoric of the plan.

Creating this sense of deficit within current teaching practice and a need for urgent action (accentuated through data and use of common good causes) serves to breed a crisis mentality within educational discourse and helps to control any possible voices of dissent (Stone, 2012). This sense of deficit is the foundation upon which we see the intervention of creativity and its ‘creative practitioners’ (CI, 2023a, p.2) in schools emerge as the magic solution.

Introducing the characters – the Teacher, the Artist, the Others

Stone highlights how the visibility of policy actors within policy documents helps to frame a particular narrative and position the ‘fixers’ and the fixed within an intervention proposed (2012, p.227). While the word ‘artist’ and ‘teacher’ appear (on the surface) to be evenly cited within the Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a), when we look more deeply across the plans and Creative Schools documents, a greater emphasis on the voice of the artist and other creative ‘experts’ (CI, 2017, p.28) begins to emerge. Within the 2017 plan, there are frequent references made to no fewer than four other non-teacher outside organisations to support the teaching of heritage, architecture and technology as well as the arts. In terms of initiatives being led by the different departments involved, only one appears to be led by the Department of Education with four being led by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. In the 2023 plan, there is heavy emphasis throughout on the intention to expand from the arts to other areas and incorporate a wider range of ‘creative practitioners’ (CI, 2023a, p.2) and ‘creative industries’ (CI, 2023a, p.16) to intervene in schools. Furthermore, when reference is made to future research, it commits to ‘support[ing] a culture of engagement in and with research among creative practitioners, across the creative, culture and arts sectors’ (CI, 2023a, p.22), yet fails to reference the education sector and its existing creative practitioners at all.

Within the 2017 Creative Youth Plan, there is only one teacher representing ‘The Voice of the Teacher’ (CI, p.34-35) and one artist representing ‘The Voice of the Artist’ (CI, p.62-63). The ‘Voice of the Artist’ section is written by a visual artist and the ‘Voice of the Teacher’ section is written by a secondary school teacher. While the ‘Voice of the Teacher’ section is placed before the ‘Voice of the Artist’ section within the document, its rhetoric follows a strongly neoliberal pattern and doesn’t appear to place any particular emphasis on the key role of the teacher (Bamford, 2006, 2012; Kenny, 2010, 2017; Borgen, 2011; Oltedal, 2011; Christophersen, 2013, 2015; Kenny and Morrissey, 2016, 2021) in supporting students’ arts and creativity. The fact that this teacher has a background in secondary teaching rather than primary teaching is also notable as all primary teachers are involved in teaching the arts whereas secondary teachers are not (it depends on their discipline). Indeed, a large part of this section is focussed on promoting how creativity supports wellbeing, entrepreneurship, academic success and the development of skills of the future (CI, 2017, p.34-35). Consequently, opportunities to foreground the important role of teachers or their artistry/creativity is largely neglected. When we examine the ‘Voice of the Artist’ section (written by a visual artist), there is no reference made within it to teachers but rather two references are made to how ‘children and young people’ are her ‘collaborators’ in her work in ‘the classroom’ and other settings (CI, 2017, p.62-63). This is significant as while no-one can deny that children are key collaborators, the absence of any reference to collaboration with teachers further embeds an ‘othering’ (Foucault, 1970, 1979)

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of teachers within the narrative of the policy text. Furthermore, engagement with 'multiple disciplines' in the form of 'engineers, choreographers, nuns and organ builders' are mentioned, but again, no reference is made to engagement with teachers (CI, 2017, p.62). Both of these examples are significant as specifically designated sections within the Creative Youth Plan 2017 and thus playing a key role in the narrative crafted therein. The content of each downplays the importance of partnership between artist and teacher and fails to highlight the teacher's role in supporting the arts and creativity, particularly in the primary school. Notably, in the second Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2023a), a dedicated section for the voice of the teacher or artist does not exist and is perhaps indicative of the broadening of the focus of the new plan to align with a neoliberal agenda.

When we looked outside of the Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017, 2023a) itself at the list of Creative Schools Associates (tasked with supporting the implementation of the Creative Schools programme in schools), we saw a similar pattern of representation emerge. While the role of Creative Associate was open to both teachers and artists, the requirements to apply were slightly different for each. The role was open to 'either an artist with a background and expertise in working with children and young people' or 'a teacher who has developed an arts practice' (CI, 2023c). While the requirements appear similar, they are different in significant ways, as they fail to recognise teachers who have a background or specific expertise in arts education (such as those with post-graduate qualifications in this area). This is evident from a publicly available list of Creative Associates (ACI, 2022d) where out of a total of 83, only 15 appear to be qualified teachers with only 5 currently working as teachers. Furthermore, the arts practice of a number of the artists is unclear, with two listed as experts in heritage education and a number of others listed as having expertise in marketing/product development. This list therefore contradicts the apparent goal of the original Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017) to 'build a critical mass of [both] education and arts professionals who are versed in the theoretical frameworks of arts and creativity education' (CI, 2017, p.43). With the most recent Creative Youth Plan's (CI, 2023a) commitment to expand the range of 'creative practitioners' (p. 2) working in schools, this also raises questions as to whether Creative Associates will have the relevant training, experience or skills to engage appropriately with schools or act as an effective broker in building teacher-artist partnerships (Fahy and Kenny, 2023) to advance primary arts education.

On examining the Creative Schools training videos and presentations, the voice of the teacher is largely absent despite their supposed key involvement in the programme. In one video posted (ACI, 2022b), there is only one primary teacher (who previously worked as a School Coordinator) out of a total of 13 adult speakers included. Additionally, we only see clips of an outside artist/creative expert working with pupils with no teacher present. This highlights a hierarchy of perceived expertise accentuated through a strong focus on the voice of the artist and other creative practitioners across the written and audio-visual policy materials.

Resolving the deficit: creativity and its 'experts' to the rescue

As aforementioned, a dichotomy was introduced in the Points of Alignment report (ACI, 2008) where 'arts education' is regarded as the responsibility of teachers and refers to the arts as part of a general education while 'arts-in-education' is regarded as the responsibility of artists and refers mainly to arts interventions into the education system (CI, 2017, p.28). This dichotomy was repeated in the first Creative Youth Plan (2017). The dichotomy is problematic, as with no allocated time in the curriculum

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for arts-in-education, it takes place within arts education time, further emphasising the need for clear guidelines on teacher-artist partnerships. In addition, over the last number of years, the terms 'arts education' and 'arts-in-education' have come to be used interchangeably. We see this in the 2017 Creative Youth Plan which purports to be a 'comprehensive arts education plan' (CI, 2017, p.15) and yet the implementation actions (and the focus of resources and funding) are centred on arts-in-education practice and lack acknowledgement of the teacher's role in the provision of arts education. The 2023 Creative Youth Plan goes further by reframing itself as a creativity-in-education plan where what constitutes creativity is framed as a neoliberal 'innovation' (CI, 2023a, p.6, 7, 10, 12, 19, 21) and STEM-focussed mindset (Ball, 2007, 2021; Kenny, 2017; Aróstegui, 2018; Gormley, 2020) which promotes the involvement of 'creative practitioners' (CI, 2023a, p.1, 10, 13, 19, 22, 29, 51) in schools. This also raises questions about whether the Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2023a) is to be considered the successor to the Arts-in-Education Charter (DAHG and DES, 2013) as originally envisioned or rather something else altogether. Furthermore, while there are a greater number of references made to the importance of school involvement within the 2023 plan, upon closer scrutiny its proposals largely fail to acknowledge existing teacher expertise and agency and do not create the conditions for teachers to have the time and support to strengthen either their own creative practice or to work in partnership.

Within the first Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017), the implementation actions of the plan are focussed mainly on the intervention of artists and other 'experts' (p.28). These outsourced providers cover the areas of heritage (Heritage in Schools), architecture (Architects in Schools), technology (TechSpace) and the arts (Music Generation). However, only one of these organisation's initiatives mentions that training in collaborative practice is provided for artists and teachers and this organisation is solely focussed on the Transition Year programme in secondary schools. The measures of the first Creative Youth Plan also outline an intention to 'expand participation in drama/theatre outside of school' (CI, 2017, p.48) without an associated in-school action; an action which the new plan now notes is currently being resourced. The focus again appears to be on outsourcing. Notably, the only initiative which was solely funded by the Department of Education in the 2017 plan (CI) was Music Generation[4], a programme co-funded by philanthropic donations involving professional musicians providing tuition to young people in schools (DAHG and DES, 2013, p.18; Flynn and Johnston, 2016). Significantly, a research report only one year prior to the publication of the first Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017) noted how greater 'clarity' was needed in relation to the teacher's role in the programme (Flynn and Johnston, 2016, p.191). Despite this, the second Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2023a), highlighted its continued funding and support. Given this research and the programme's emphasis on the involvement of outside musicians, the continued focus on this one particular programme supporting music education in schools is notable.

Interestingly, while the second Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2023a) is vague in terms of the specific programmes or groups which may be involved in creativity-in-education in schools (outside of its one reference to Music Generation), it is clear that there is a substantial focus on the promotion and resourcing of STEM education and topics such as 'entrepreneurship and enterprise' (p.31). There are numerous references to supporting the use of technology in schools for example, as (it is claimed) 'placing technology in the hands of young people and encouraging accessibility is key to securing Ireland's place as a world leader in the creative industries' (CI, 2023a, p.16). However, it can be argued that the most effective and equitable way for all students to develop their creativity is

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in their existing public school with their class teachers as opposed to placing a technological device in their hands. This statement is indicative of the neoliberal rhetoric which frames the objectives of the plan and dilutes the references to the importance of teacher and school involvement in creativity. Indeed, while the 'integral role' of teachers is noted, the new role of the 'improvement-focussed' (CI, 2023a, p.19) Inspectorate in articulating expectations, monitoring, and reporting on school engagement in creativity is emphasised. Such measures fail to recognise the professional autonomy and existing expertise of teachers in this area and could again be seen to reflect a neoliberal agenda (Ball, 1990, 2003, 2006, 2012, 2016, 2021; Apple, 2006, 2013, 2018; Lynch, Grummell, and Devine, 2012; Conway and Murphy, 2013; Ó Breacháin and O'Toole, 2013; Conway, 2013; Simmie, 2014; Giroux, 2015; Brown, McNamara, and O'Hara, 2016; Skerritt 2019; Gormley, 2020) within the document's proposals. Furthermore, it is noted how teacher CPD is to be provided in STEM education and Primary Languages, with no reference to how existing teachers with expertise (through the teacher support service for example) could be utilised to support the arts in schools. In addition, while it notes how the evidence-based Teacher-Artist-Partnership [TAP] programme is to be continued, it highlights how it could be expanded to 'broader creativity areas' (CI, 2023a, p.46). This raises questions about whether the programme will continue to be available to support artists and teachers in the provision of arts education within an economically driven understanding of creativity (Ball, 2007, 2021; Gormley, 2020) in education. As in the first Creative Youth Plan (2017), this training programme is to date not mandatory for teachers and artists involved in programmes such as Creative Schools despite its importance in arts-in-education practice (Kenny, 2010, 2017; Borgen, 2011; Oltedal, 2011; Bamford, 2012; Christophersen, 2013, 2015; Kenny and Morrissey, 2016, 2021). Rather, it is optional with limited resources and funding in the form of substitute cover to support teachers' engagement in the programme. Despite this, the plan's proposals open the door for a multiplicity of artists and 'other creative practitioners' (CI, 2023a, p.10) who may not have any specific training or experience engaging with teachers to work in schools. Indeed, this lack of sufficient resourcing for teacher-artist partnership coupled with a focus on outsourcing above harnessing existing teacher expertise creates the conditions for the deprofessionalisation of teachers within the plan's arts-in-education programmes. It is upon this policy foundation that the narrative of the Creative Schools programme developed, which raises questions about where teachers (particularly those with arts education expertise) belong in its implementation.

A deprofessionalising rhetoric is evident across the Creative Schools documents, further accentuating a dichotomous positioning between artists/creative practitioners and teachers. A training presentation for CAs and CSCs for example, focuses largely on explaining the meaning and importance of arts, creative learning and creativity (in a neoliberal way) for teachers and optimum criteria to use to teach it within the classroom (ACI, 2021). Statements such as 'creativity and critical thinking skills are vital for children' and that 'we know how to educate second-class robots' serve to position teachers as having limited existing understanding of creativity and who are still teaching in traditional and conservative ways. It goes on to discuss how the 'high-functioning classroom' is achieved through a focus on challenging and scaffolding learners, providing opportunities for groupwork and utilising child-centred approaches to 'engage the whole child' and 'allow them to perform to their best'. Given that teachers are trained in such approaches in their initial education (as advocated in the curriculum), such statements could be considered deprofessionalising and present an inaccurate reflection of current teaching, regardless of teachers' existing expertise in the

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arts and creativity. With CAs being included in this training, such a deprofessionalising rhetoric directed solely towards teachers risks being inscribed within the practice of these CAs.

The examples of practice provided in the Creative Schools Coordinators training presentation (ACI, 2021) are also notable as within the six case examples given, the role of teachers in the process appears largely invisible. Only one example mentions an active role of the CSC or teachers in the process. Furthermore, only one case refers to a school's existing practice in creativity, but no mention is made throughout of any specific existing arts/creative expertise of teachers. Rather, many references are made to a variety of artists and other creative practitioners' work with the students and Creative Associates setting 'tasks' for pupils (ACI, 2021). In another case, reference is made to how one artist/creative practitioner 'left clear instructions for the pupils and teachers as to what work we would need to have completed before [their] next visit' (ACI, 2021). Emphasis is placed on the needs of teachers throughout the presentation and how much they learned from the process.

Although teachers' expertise, experiences and views are meant to be integral to the planning process, we observed no specific reference to the key experience/expertise of teachers in the planning materials apart from a grouped reference which includes consulting 'students, teachers, management and parents/guardians' (ACI, 2022a, p.3). While the Creative Schools Plan – Understand document (ACI, 2022f) sets out a list of reflective questions on identifying existing teacher confidence and use of creative methodologies (p.7), the completion of such a checklist is notably omitted from the extensive CA checklist of actions (ACI, 2022g). This raises questions as to its completion and considered value in the planning and implementation process.

The teacher's/school's voice is questionably sidelined from the beginning of the application process as schools are requested not to begin implementing parts of the detailed plan they submit without further consultation with the CA as this 'allows new voices to be heard' (ACI, 2022h, p.7). This is despite the fact that the application process involves extensive planning and consultation with both staff and students. While one can see that further planning time with the CA may be beneficial, the lack of specified recognition within the planning framework for this initial plan raises questions as to its purpose.

This 'othering' (Foucault, 1970, 1979) of teachers is also evident within the Creative Schools Plan Template (ACI, 2022i, p.2) which details how the CA will 'suggest practical creative evaluation methods' and provides a list of many common evaluation approaches which most teachers would already be aware of, thus acting to deprofessionalise both the CSC and teachers. While a space is included for noting the involvement of teachers/staff as well as the role of artists/'creative practitioners' in the Creative Schools Plan Template (ACI, 2022i, p.5), this is negated by the omission of any reference to what the artists/'creative practitioners' working in schools may have learned from teachers or the process itself. The language and discourse within these programme materials thus serves to position artists/'creative practitioners' (ACI, 2022i, p.5) as having greater expertise in the fields of both arts/creativity and education and position teachers as learners in need of support in these areas. Indeed, an overarching binary positioning within the narrative extends across the policy materials and is compounded further by the fact that no document provides an outline for how teachers and artists will work in partnership with each other (Kenny, 2010, 2017; Borgen, 2011; Oltedal, 2011; Bamford, 2012; Christophersen, 2013, 2015; Kenny and Morrissey, 2016, 2021; Fahy and Kenny, 2023).

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Embedding the 'happily ever after' – the use of rules and procedures

According to Stone, the use of rules is a central way in which a policy narrative is embedded into practice (2012). In the Creative Schools documentation, there is a strong neoliberal agenda influence. The Reflective Checklist for Creative Associates (ACI, 2022g) is the primary example by which CAs are directed to engage in certain actions over others and such a checklist can be seen as a typical tool within neoliberalism to control the work of those in schools (Ball, 2006, 2012, 2016, 2021; Apple, 2006, 2013, 2018). No reference is made to questioning/recording the existing arts expertise of teachers and there is limited reference throughout to engaging the voice of the CSC or teachers within the planning and implementation of the programme with all statements led with 'I' as opposed to the school/CA/teachers. These 'I' statements include supporting inclusion of students with additional needs (p.3), listening to student advisory groups (p.7), 'introduce[ing]' (p.3) the school to the Lundy model[5], considering curriculum links (p.5) and identifying creative approaches (p.3). The necessity for the CA to ensure that they have undertaken these duties (which are not presented in a shared manner) appears to ignore the existing professionalism of teachers and creative child-centred practices within schools. This is significant given that most current CAs do not appear to have training/experience in primary education. Furthermore, the inclusion of a statement that CAs have 'identified relevant artists/creative practitioners/arts organisations who will deliver tailored activities to meet the school's needs' (p.5) is notable as the language suggests that the inclusion of outside artists/'creative practitioners' must occur as part of each plan. This contradicts other statements within the programme which outline different ways in which the money could be used and as something decided by all partners in the school. An additional point that CAs have guided 'schools on how to construct a positive narrative of their CS journey' (p.6) is problematic in setting the parameters for meaningful reflection and evaluation.

Within the checklist (ACI, 2022g), there is no reference to ensuring that artists and teachers have engaged in training or understand how to work in partnership with each other. This is a significant omission as it contradicts earlier references within the programme documents to CAs checking existing levels of expertise in the school as partnership was a key aspect of the programme. Also notably, only one reference is made to supporting artists/creative practitioners in any way out of a total of 46 points. Indeed, within the checklist, it appears that the CA holds primary, rather than shared responsibility with the CSC, for planning and implementing the school programme.

It is interesting to contrast what is regarded as the focus of the CA's work with that of teachers'. Indeed, along with the omission of statements mentioned, is the inclusion in the checklist of the CA 'encourag[ing] the SC to keep an on-going record of spending' (ACI, 2022g, p. 6). This sets the tone for how the teacher's role is defined in general across the Creative Schools documents, appearing weighty on bureaucracy but limited in incentivising an active role for teachers in the process where their expertise is acknowledged.

In the FAQs for School Coordinators 2022 (ACI, 2022h), for example, the role requirements for the CSC focus on bureaucratic tasks. These tasks include 'acting as a conduit of communication', organising meetings with stakeholders, supporting contracting/payment/vetting of artists/creative practitioners, 'requesting payments in a timely fashion', uploading 'reporting documentation' and engaging in an evaluation process (p.5). This focus on measurement and evaluation is also evident within a training presentation for CAs and CSCs (ACI, 2021) which highlights how the 'Inspectorate'

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will be evaluating creative skills and how in 2022, 'creative thinking will form part of the assessment process' as part of the 'powerful' PISA[6] assessments which 'generates many column-inches'. This expectation came to fruition with the publication of the most recent Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2023a, p.30) where the 'evaluation' of creativity and its inclusion in schools' 'quality frameworks' became a new part of the Department of Education Inspectorate's work. The plan also states that it will 'give recognition to and report[s] on creative and innovative practice in school' (CI, 2023a, p.30). This raises serious questions about how teachers' work is being incentivised through measurement and public reporting of results/achievements (Ball, 2003, 2006, 2012, 2016, 2021; Apple, 2013; Giroux, 2015). This pressure is compounded further by teachers' existing workload (NCCA, 2010) and the fact that the CSC's role is considered 'voluntary' (ACI, 2022h, p.5) with paid substitution only provided for one day's training. Therefore, no additional time/payment is provided to CSCs to deliver their duties, further disabling their ability to play a meaningful role in the Creative Schools process and contributing to their possible marginalisation within the programme's implementation. These issues of existing curriculum overload, lack of time and systematic pressure with lack of substitute cover and release time were reported as top barriers to creative practice by those working in schools (CI, 2023a, p.52).

Conclusion

This article explored the potential deprofessionalisation of teachers arising from their positioning within the Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a) and its Creative Schools programme. Through deconstructing the Creative Youth Plans (CI, 2017, 2023a) and the programme materials of Creative Schools using the approaches of Stone (2012) and Pollitt and Hupe (2011), this research found that that there is a problematic narrative embedded in both the first Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2017) and the newly published Creative Youth Plan (CI, 2023a) which has permeated the programme materials of Creative Schools. A story of decline in school standards led to a neoliberally framed Creative Schools programme positioning its 'creative practitioners' (ACI, 2022i, p.5) as the ultimate 'fixers' (Stone, 2012, p.227) of the arts and creativity in schools and in doing so, subsequently 'othered' (Foucault, 1970, 1979) the place of teachers in creative practice and the provision of arts education. Such positioning has the potential not to help but further hinder teachers' confidence (a key factor in arts education provision) when this rhetoric exists without the mandatory inclusion of an evidence-based partnership training course. While this article was focussed primarily on the positioning of teachers and the implications of this, it can be argued that such positioning also places pressure on artists and other creative practitioners to serve roles that do not encompass their core purpose, values and expertise and allow them to also be viewed as learners. Indeed, to date, there has been limited research focussing specifically on the positioning of artists within the Creative Schools programme and this would be an important area of further research. As this research focussed specifically on policy language and discourse, additional research exploring the experiences of teachers and artists working with these policies in practice would also be a pertinent area of further research.

Teacher-Artist Partnership has been shown to be an effective approach for supporting the development of arts and creativity in schools (Bamford, 2006; Wolf, 2008; Kenny and Morrissey, 2016, 2021; Partti and Väkevä, 2018; Abeles, 2018; Fahy and Kenny, 2023) However, it is essential that when artists or other 'practitioners' (CI, 2023a, p.2) enter into schools through arts-in-education/creativity-in-education programmes, it is done in a way that acknowledges the crucial role

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of the teacher in the process. The potential of such partnerships is seriously undermined if the policies and in particular, the way in which the language positions policy actors, are not carefully considered and the context in which this language is developing problematised. The consequences of not taking such an approach could lead to the further 'othering' (Foucault, 1970, 1979) and deprofessionalisation of teachers in supporting the arts and creativity in schools and in doing so, diminish the high-quality arts education these policies and programmes claim they are aiming to achieve.

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Endnotes

[1] The Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, now called the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, is a ministerial department which oversees the protection and presentation of Ireland's cultural assets. The Arts division of the department is responsible for supporting and developing engagement with and in, the arts, culture and creativity by individuals and communities, enriching lives through cultural and creative activity; and to promote Ireland's arts, culture, and creativity globally; and to drive a more vibrant and diverse Night-Time Economy.

[2] The Department of Education and Science, now called the Department of Education, is a ministerial department responsible for education whose mission is to facilitate children and young people, through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, economic and cultural development.

[3] The Arts Council of Ireland, established in 1951, is the national agency for funding, developing and promoting the arts in Ireland. They work in partnership with artists, arts organisations, public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life.

[4] Music Generation is a national programme which aims to create access to performance music education for children and young people in Ireland, from age 0 to 18. It is co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, the Department of Education and Local Music Education Partnerships.

[5] The Lundy Model of child participation was developed by Laura Lundy, Professor of International Children's Rights at the School of Education at Queen's University Belfast. Her model provides a way of conceptualising a child's right to participation, as laid down in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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[6] PISA is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

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