***Igniting a spark?:***

***An investigation into how an Irish arts partnership can support primary teachers in their teaching of arts education***

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**Abstract**

In recent years, arts partnerships have gained increased popularity as a means of delivering arts education in schools. Creating opportunities for both teachers and artists alike, arts partnerships can enhance a shared sense of purpose, while also developing creative skills, knowledge and expertise. Although many studies on both a national and international level, have identified the successes and challenges of arts partnerships in schools, a gap in how these partnerships can support teachers in their teaching of arts education, still exists. Therefore, this study sought to investigate whether an Irish arts partnership - the *Creative Schools Initiative-Scoileanna Íldánacha (CS)* - could potentially support teachers in their teaching of arts education. Drawing on data from interviews and surveys, this study explored and analysed the perspectives of teachers, principals, *CS* co-ordinators and Creative Associates in eight primary schools. Key findings indicated that arts partnershipscan provide rich opportunities for transformational learning to occur, through engagement in collaborative, creative practice, facilitating agency and empowering all stakeholders. However, to avoid arts partnerships becoming solely a support measure, the need for teacher professional development in future arts initiatives was reiterated throughout. Results from this study will inform creative policy and practice approaches to arts partnerships and could enable the *CS* to further refine its programme. This will have an impact on schools, teachers and children. Emphasising the importance of developing knowledgeable, reflective educators, findings will also highlight the significance of pre-service teacher training and continuous professional development in arts education, on a national level.

**Key words:** Arts education; arts partnerships; transformational learning.

**Links to International Froebel Conference themes:**

* Creativity and the power of symbols “ideas given visible form”
* Developing knowledgeable, nurturing, reflective educators