



CIDREE

Consortium of Institutions for Development
and Research in Education in Europe

Experiences with a contemporary curriculum in visual arts and, how it contributes to 21st-century needs and skills

CIDREE Expert Meeting, Utrecht, September 29-30th, 2016



The CIDREE Experts Meeting took place on 29th and 30th of September 2016. It was hosted by the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development. The countries represented at the meeting were: Bosnia Herzegovina; France; The Netherlands; Republic of Ireland; Scotland; Slovenia.

The main aim of the event was to identify the key features of the curricula of Visual arts and curriculum development from each country represented and compare experiences in the enacted curriculum. The meetings had a specific focus on visual art education and the extent to which it is contributed to the 21st Century skills.

Curriculum development

It was clear from discussions that each country is at a different stage in relation to curriculum development. The Netherlands and Bosnia and Herzegovina are both at the consultation stage in devising a new national curriculum. They hoped to learn a great deal from the Scottish and Irish experiences of initiating, developing and implementing. France and the Republic of Ireland are in the midst of curriculum review and a partial reconfiguration of the existing curriculum. The French model is distinct in retaining a 'top-down' approach, in contrast to the 'bottom-up' approach of the other nations.

The enacted curriculum

In each country, information about how the curriculum is enacted is limited. A common feature in each of the participating countries is that visual arts is compulsory in primary and lower secondary education. In general, there is limited information about the progress and the improvement students make in visual art education in primary and secondary education. There is also limited knowledge about the actual learning processes or developmental stages. This is especially an issue in primary schools. Practitioners in primary schools often have a lack of knowledge and skills in cultural education and (visual) art(s) as they are generalists. A common concern is that too little time is allocated for visual art education in teacher training programmes.

21st Century needs and skills

The question of whether or not the visual art curriculum in each country was effectively configured to contribute to the 21st Century was not effectively answered at this stage. Except for Slovenia all participating countries have their own interpretations and lists of skills for the 21st Century. The most useful realisation from the discussions was that sets of skills are generally comparable but they have not been satisfactorily defined in any of the countries represented yet. This led to an extensive discussion on the problematic areas of skills taxonomies, skills frameworks and skills progression. It was clear from discussion that teachers need a framework which is logical and feasible. Each country articulated the same familiar challenges but with no apparent solutions.

The expert meeting was characterised by a high quality of professional discussion. The programme which took place over three sessions and started or continued with informal discussions in the evenings of the 28th and 29th of September was very rich and interesting. The meeting gave each of the participants very useful information. Each session started with presentations, case studies or pitches from each member, followed by discussions, characterised by enthusiastic involvement and openness.