



Study Visit to Dublin

PROJECT LeCoLE

Participants

Latvia: Anja Špaca, Iveta Vērse, and Linda Klusa.

Sandra Prince, the coordinator, could not attend for personal reasons.

Greece: Chrysi Koundouraki and Maria Xepapadaki

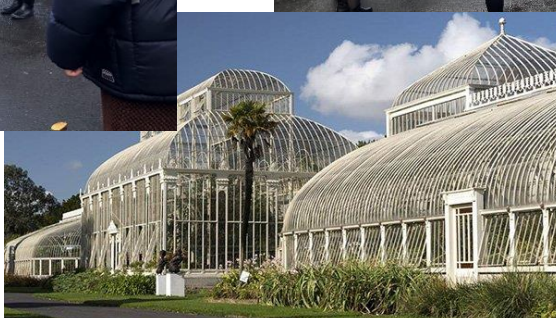
Iceland: Kristin Jónsdóttir and

Portugal: Lília Vicente and Paula Pedroso

Ireland: Aimee Brennan+ Colleen Horn (hosts)

Day 1 – 08/02/2022

After meeting at the hotel lobby at 10:00, we set off for a visit to The National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, a 220 year old space that displays magnificent Victorian greenhouses, in order to see how this space promotes "Learning and Collaboration". Despite the grey and rainy day, this visit proved to be very interesting and enriching.



We were welcomed by the head of the garden, the lead educationalist and guided by one of the facilitators. We visited the Erasmus Garden (whose name is due to the fact that this space was financed by this programme), which is organised in such a way as to promote workshops for groups of pupils and families. Its main objective is to make children aware of the richness and



Study Visit to Dublin

importance of the flora that surrounds us, through direct contact with plants, their characteristics, textures and smells and drawing attention to the role they play in the balance of nature.



We were able to visit the main greenhouses and were accompanied by a professor from Teagasc College of Amenity Horticulture, to the facilities of this college which are located in the grounds of the Botanical Gardens. While showing us the college, he described the importance of this centre in connecting its students to industrial units and other higher education institutions as heralds of

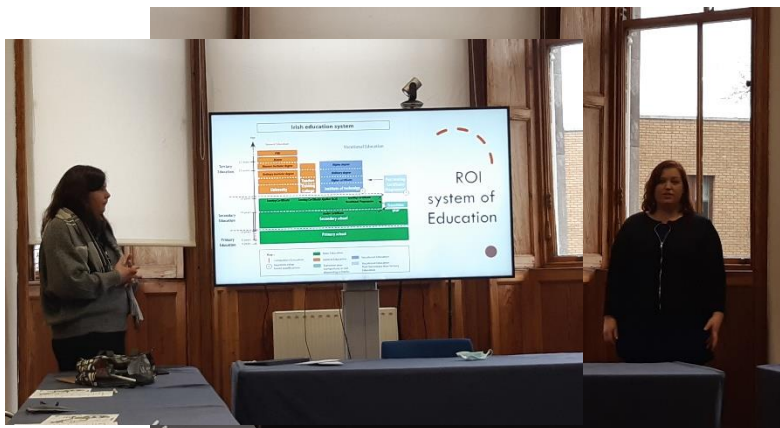
the importance of the organisation of green spaces and their preservation. He also highlighted the fact that the courses they offer are organised so that students can choose to attend the areas/subject that interest them most.



An Associated College of
Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin

We then headed to the Marino Institute of Education, where we stayed for the rest of the day.

Before lunch, Aimee and Colleen explained how the Irish education system is organised:



- 2 years in pre-school, non-generalised, with 3 hours per day;
- Primary school – 4 to 10 years old;
- Post-primary school – 11 to 13 years old;
- Education is compulsory from ages 6 to 16.
- 96% of primary schools are Catholic.

The primary school curriculum is one of the oldest in Europe (over 20 years). It comprises 11 subjects divided into 2 main areas: SESE (social, environmental and scientific education) and SPHE (social, personal and health education).

There are also so-called DASH schools (designated disadvantaged schools), located in socially deprived areas, which are allocated special funding from the Irish government.



Study Visit to Dublin



Being a teacher is a profession that is prized and well paid, and teachers have a high status in Ireland, a country that really values and rewards education. Teachers generally do not leave the profession before retirement. In terms of recruitment, there is a national website which teachers apply through. School principals have a lot of discretion where teacher selection is concerned, although the boards of

management of schools also influence the selection of prospective teachers.

Afterwards, the Director of the Institute, Prof. Teresa O'Doherty, welcomed us and wished us well in our work, stressing the importance given in Ireland to education and teacher training.

After the lunch break, one of the lecturers from the institute, Prof Alan Bedford, introduced us to the cross-cultural work he has been developing over the years with his primary school students, and which he is now disseminating in his didactics course for primary school teacher students. This approach is based on the use of direct observation of outdoor spaces to elaborate on the past of these spaces, their economic and cultural richness and the importance they have for the community that has access to them. This includes knowledge of history, geography, economics, the use of Irish and English, as well as the visual arts, including the use of natural materials collected during fieldwork. He then took us to visit the laboratory he uses for lessons with his students and future teachers, as well as the outdoor spaces he uses with them.

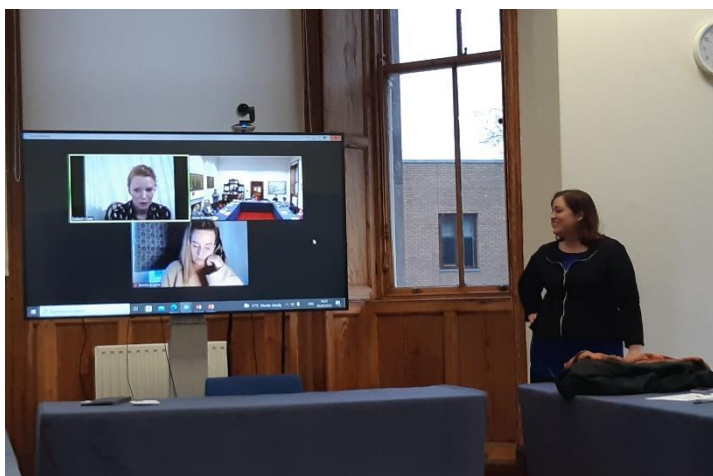


After a short break, it was time for our colleague Aimie to introduce us to the **STER (Student Teacher Educational Research)** project, which she started 5 years ago with a small group of students from the Institute. She invited 3 female students who are members of the project, to give their testimonies about their involvement in it.

We heard that the higher education institutions involved in initial teacher education in Ireland want their students to become researchers. This initiative is based on the assumption that to encourage student research and co-creation, the future teacher must also develop these skills. In Ireland, the Teaching Council of the ME has a national programme where teachers can apply for a research grant of €1000.



Study Visit to Dublin



At the end of the day we were invited to the event 'Diversity in the Teaching Profession' and attended the ceremony of awarding diplomas to 38 graduates from 19 different countries of the MTP (**Migrant Teacher Project**) teacher training course. People of many different nationalities can apply to this project in order to gain their teaching qualification, and thus be able to teach in Ireland.

Two teachers from the Marino Institute, two of the graduates, the director of the Marino Institute and the Minister of Education, Mrs Norma Foley, addressed the audience.

From the Minister's speech, we noted the following statements which illustrate the importance of education in Irish society. She said, "The role of the teacher has always been a position held in greatest esteem in the Irish society (...). It is, I believe, a career, or indeed a vocation like no other (...). I come from a teaching background myself and it is my firm belief that having children and young people in our care is more than just a job; it is a privilege".

She continued her speech by saying that "to teach is not just to develop the minds, it is to stoke a fire and passion for learning (...); it's a journey that shapes personalities, moulds minds and ultimately changes the world one student at a time".



Study Visit to Dublin

Day 2 – 09/02/2022



**PRESENTATION SECONDARY
SCHOOL WARRENMOUNT**

As we were unable to travel to visit a school due to the public health restrictions imposed following the Pandemic, a brief meeting was arranged via Zoom with Warrenmount Secondary School in Dublin, a DASH school for girls aged 13-18.

In this regard it should be noted that while primary and post primary schools in Ireland are mixed, most secondary schools are single-sexed. It should also be noted that the population is increasing, which influences the number of students per class, which is also high, reaching 35. Most schools are religious (Catholic) although 'Educate Together Schools', which are multi-denominational religious schools, are also starting to emerge.



Present at this meeting were:

- the school Principal, Gwen Brennan,
- a geography teacher, Laura Hickey, and the coordinator of 'Wellbeing', responsible for the project "Adolescence Health Literacy", which aims at the co-creation of physical education, diet and wellbeing programmes, among others, and intends to give a voice to the students. It should be noted that this project is in line with the 'Wellbeing Guidelines' (2017) and the 'Wellbeing Statement' (2019), based on which the school is building its own model and framework, with hours allocated to a 'wellbeing coordinator', who is responsible for facilitating workshops, engaging students more with their mental health and wellbeing, among other activities, with young people's voice at the heart of what they do;
- a visual arts teacher, Barry Kennedy, responsible for the Creative Schools TY 2021-22 Process project. The 'Butterfly' project aimed to develop collaborative working, project work and the promotion of reflection on each stage of its development process, as well as an interdisciplinary (cross-curricular) approach to the concept of 'freedom' through the involvement of visual arts, natural sciences and ICT.





Study Visit to Dublin

Learnings

- Students enjoyed and really engaged with the project.
- Students were able to decide what theme to work on which gave them ownership of the project from the start.
- Students were generally not motivated by prize but more about leaving a legacy in the school.
- Students developed deep learning about the environment and butterflies in a local context.
- Every student contributed in different ways, all designed a butterfly and painted it on the wall.
- Students were given enough time to reflect at each stage and this allowed for key decisions to be discussed, evaluated and agreed democratically.
- Butterfly Effect *Small Things Can Lead To Big Outcomes.*

The students involved were responsible for the different phases of the project, from the discussion of ideas, to the creation of the logo, the elaboration of the timeline, the use of Social Media, the creation of a mural and the production of a video. This involved commitment, decision making, motivation to leave their legacy to the school, learning, participation of all in diverse ways, development of reflection, agreement making and democratic decisions, spreading the Butterfly effect, "Small Things Can Lead To Big outcomes."

With this project, the school applied for a funding programme and was awarded prize money of €3000.



Still before lunch, it was time for Dr Melanie Ni Dhuinn, from the Marino Institute of Education, to give a presentation on the "Junior Cycle Reform", an educational reform that has been implemented over the past 10 years. This began in 2012, and the profile of the student leaving this cycle, being the Wellbeing implicitly included in the curriculum, is now defined for all subjects of the curriculum, and that are, as previously said, Music, Technology, STEM, Languages and Mathematics. Why was it felt necessary to undertake this educational reform in Ireland? The reasons are diverse and include globalisation, 21st century skills, education policies, international agencies, Pisa rankings, global economy.



Regarding the time that this reform has taken, this is a result of the dialogue and consultation that needs to be carried out with all the stakeholders involved. Dr Ni Dhuinn said that "what we don't like is not the change, but the pace between what we used to do and when we start to do something new". And all this takes time...

Although this reform covers the perspectives of the main actors involved in education - teachers, parents and guardians, and students, a lot of parents felt excluded from this reform, and it is important to underline that the Irish Constitution considers parents as 'primer educationers'.

At the moment it is time for senior cycle reform.



Study Visit to Dublin

An tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí JuniorCYCLE for teachers

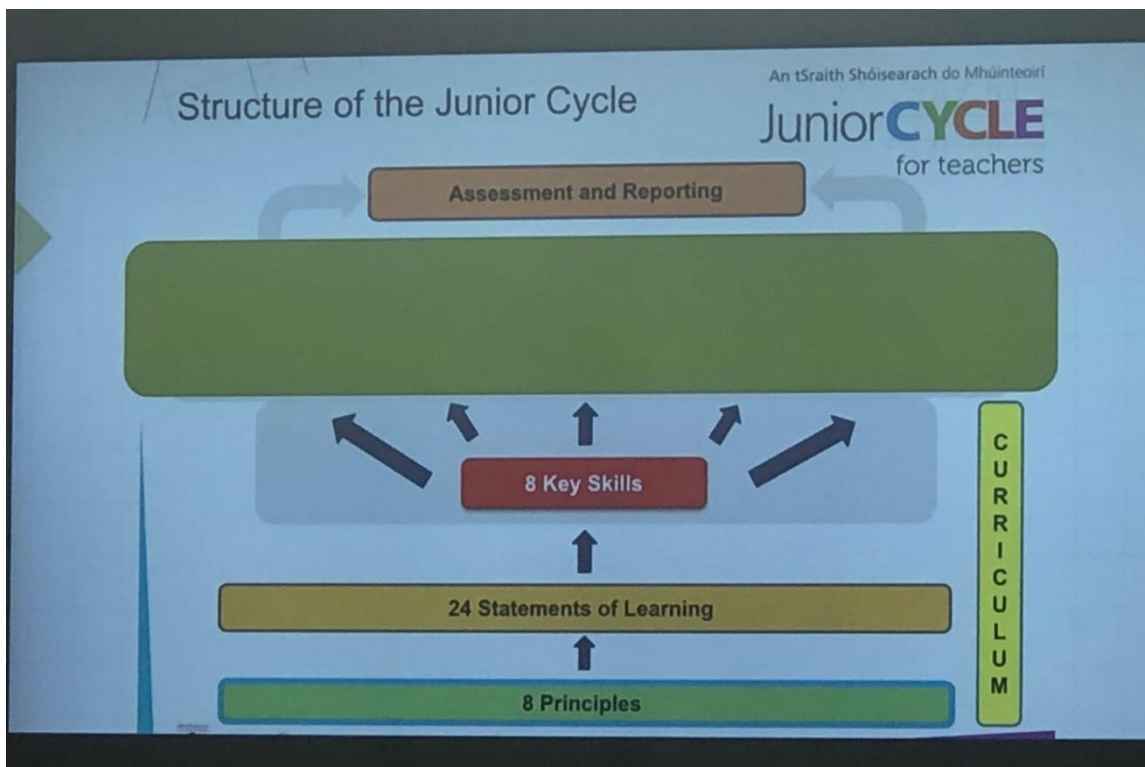
In the afternoon the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) Support Service "Embedding Co-creation in the Post-Primary Curriculum" presentation took place, by Mrs Helen Costello, member of the 'Junior Cycle for Teachers' team, as Team Leader responsible for the leadership

area, who was with us via Zoom.

A preliminary note to mention that, following the question posed by this speaker, the previous day Aimie had brought to the group discussion the concept of 'co-creation' and how the project consortium interpreted it. Reference was made to the fact that it was included in the project application even though different elements expressed their understanding.

From Ms Helen Costello's perspective the concept of co-creation involves: teachers; school leader (Principal); teacher educator; parents, researchers, members of the teacher support service who implement the educational reform. The big question that runs through the whole presentation is: How can co-creation be defined? Another arising from this is: What is co-creation based on in the Irish educational context, in particular the "Junior Cycle?"

The structure of the Junior Cycle can be represented schematically as follows:



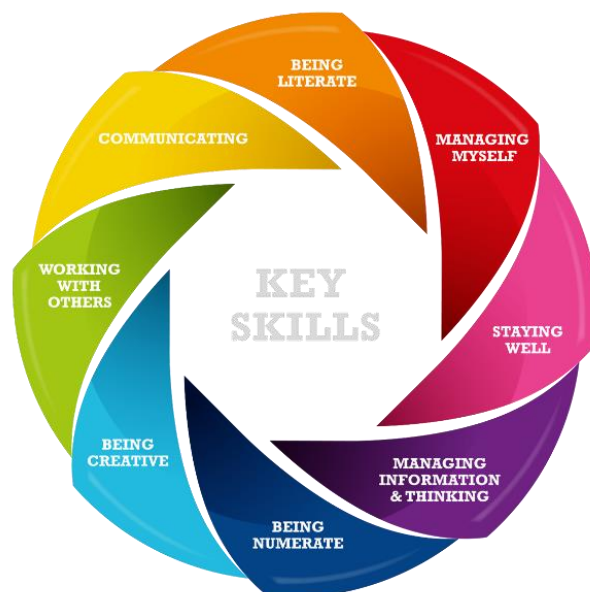


Study Visit to Dublin

The Junior Cycle Education is based on the following 8 principles:



And on the following 8 skills:





Study Visit to Dublin

And on the following 24 statements of learning:

**A FRAMEWORK
FOR JUNIOR CYCLE**

**Innovation
& Identity**
Schools developing Junior Cycle

NCCA
An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curraim agus Measúnaithe
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Statements of Learning

The student

- 1 communicates effectively using a variety of means in a range of contexts in L1*
- 2 listens, speaks, reads and writes in L2* and one other language at a level of proficiency that is appropriate to her or his ability
- 3 creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of texts
- 4 creates and presents artistic works and appreciates the process and skills involved
- 5 has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making
- 6 appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives
- 7 values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts
- 8 values local, national and international heritage, understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change
- 9 understands the origins and impacts of social, economic, and environmental aspects of the world around her/him
- 10 has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably
- 11 takes action to safeguard and promote her/his wellbeing and that of others
- 12 is a confident and competent participant in physical activity and is motivated to be physically active
- 13 understands the importance of food and diet in making healthy lifestyle choices
- 14 makes informed financial decisions and develops good consumer skills
- 15 recognises the potential uses of mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of learning
- 16 describes, illustrates, interprets, predicts and explains patterns and relationships
- 17 devises and evaluates strategies for investigating and solving problems using mathematical knowledge, reasoning and skills
- 18 observes and evaluates empirical events and processes and draws valid deductions and conclusions
- 19 values the role and contribution of science and technology to society, and their personal, social and global importance
- 20 uses appropriate technologies in meeting a design challenge
- 21 applies practical skills as she/he develop models and products using a variety of materials and technologies
- 22 takes initiative, is innovative and develops entrepreneurial skills
- 23 brings an idea from conception to realisation
- 24 uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner

*L1 is the language medium of the school (Irish in Irish-medium schools). L2 is the second language (English in Irish-medium schools).

It was these questions and their answers that made us reflect on the reality of the reform in this cycle of Irish education, taking into account the enormous challenges that this desideratum entails, namely: teachers, students and schools, and the changes needed in each of them.



Study Visit to Dublin



National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

Programme), with his communication "Steps to Partnership in Higher Education", presented this national programme aimed at higher education students, explaining how it helps students in learning and decision making, providing them with various support services.

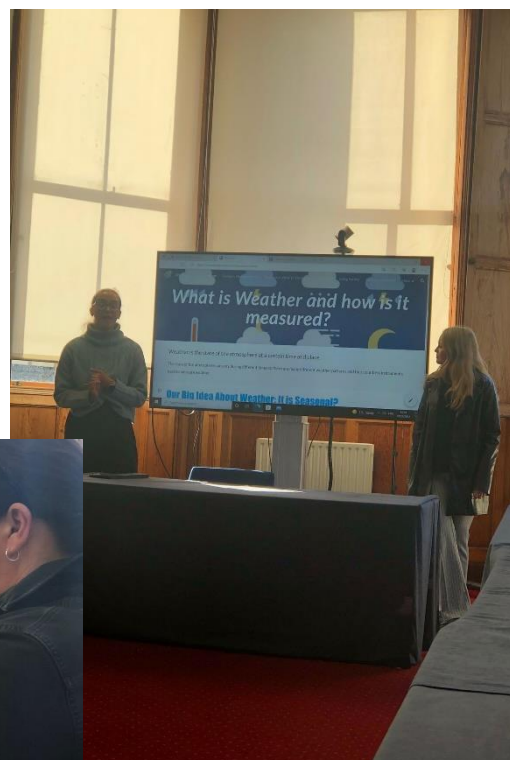
For the programme mentors the concept of 'engagement' is central although they argue that "We could define student engagement in any way we want" (Finn and Zimmer, 2012). Although there is no consensus on the concept of student engagement, it implies a commitment of students to teachers in order to work in partnership.

Another important aspect is that the students' voice is heard and the following principles of student engagement have been defined as principles of student engagement: dialogue, trust building, equity and inclusion, empowerment and co-creation. The latter assumes collaboration as fundamental, considering the essential role of students throughout the process, starting from existing norms and assumptions and facing the challenge of pressure.



Day 3 – 10/02/2022

The day began with a presentation by Alan Bedford and Robbie Irwin, both lecturers at the Marino Institute of Education, and two of their final year 1st cycle teacher students, who presented how they didactized the topic, "What is Weather and how is it measured?" for online teaching during COVID lockdown, using several digital tools, involving games and co-creation processes that, according to these future teachers, can also be used in face-to-face classes.





Study Visit to Dublin

We were then invited to attend a presentation on "Work Choco Trade Justice - An Introduction to the Chocolate Value Chain With a Taste of African Chocolates", integrated part of the co-constructed intercultural fortnight lecture, by Prof. Barbara O'Toole, from the Marino Institute of Education, and to which Mr. David Nyaluke, representing the organisation Proudly Made in Africa, was invited, justifying that the big businesses in the North are profiting from what is produced in Africa, where people receive almost no money for the raw material they produce. The example given was that of the production of and preparation of cocoa beans, and it aimed at showing that although the African continent produces 73% of the world's cocoa, the profits that this industry generates are poorly distributed in the production chain.

The objective of this initiative was, on the one hand, to show the existing discrepancies and the injustice they represent in a globalised world, but still full of huge asymmetries, and the way to overcome this unfair system by finding another form of production and distribution and, on the other hand, to motivate future primary school teachers to make their students aware of these realities and also of the need for a controlled consumption of products that come from similar production processes. A viable fair trade model was shared with the partners in which the production and sale is all made in Africa, with the brand Proudly Made in Africa.



The Portuguese Team, responsible for WP6

Lília Vicente and Paula Pedroso

February 21st 2022