

# **Deconstructing The ‘Othering’ Of Primary Teachers in Irish Arts Education Policy**

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## **Abstract**

Arts-in-education programmes, where artists work in schools to supplement arts education, have become a key feature of arts education policy in recent years. While research has shown that such programmes can be advantageous, questions remain as to the effects of such programmes if teachers are not recognised as key figures in their implementation. This study provides a unique analysis of the policy narratives which frame arts-in-education practice in Ireland and deconstructs the ‘othering’ of primary teachers within them. Using a narrative approach, this inquiry traces this ‘othering’ of teachers from foundational policy documents to the recent Creative Schools arts-in-education programme to the ‘lived’ practice of primary teachers. The findings highlight how a constructed ‘crisis’ in the arts and creativity in schools, framed within a neoliberal discourse, has contributed to a policy narrative which positions visiting artists as the experts tasked with resolving this crisis and disempowers teachers from playing an active role in arts education practice. Such positioning, it is argued, has contributed to a lack of confidence in the arts among teachers and has affected their agency and involvement in not only arts-in-education programmes but the provision of arts education more broadly. However, while his study focusses on teacher positioning in arts education, the findings illuminate the importance of policy-makers, researchers and teachers being more wakeful to the policy narratives which frame educational practice more broadly, Such “wakefulness” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 182) could allow us to alter these narratives and re-position policy actors in more empowering ways.

**Keywords:** Arts-In-Education; Educational Policy; Narrative Analysis; Neoliberalism; Teacher Positioning