MPEB

Muslim Primary Education Board

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MPEB Submission to the Creative Youth Ireland Programme 2023-2027

For the attention of:

Mr Eamonn Moran

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit

Department of Education

Sent to: creativeyouth@h2.ie

Muslim Primary Education Board

14 April 2022

Dear Mr Moran,

Thank you for your invitation to participate in the consultation process informing the new Creative Youth Ireland Programme 2023-2027.

Muslim Primary Education Board (MPEB) acts as the management body for the existing Muslim national schools established under the Department of Education. By advising on the Islamic perspective on educational issues, the Board supports and encourages children's holistic development in becoming successful and valuable members of Irish society.

We have participated in the consultation meeting and two focus groups where we shared our views and experiences. In addition to those, we now wish to formally contribute to the new Creative Youth Ireland Programme 2023-2027.

In reflecting on the existing Creative Youth Ireland Plan, MPEB welcomes the significant and highly successful work that has been made in the areas identified under the existing Plan. The current Creative Youth Plan (2017) reaffirms its commitment that: "every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022", with *music*, *drama*, *art* and *coding* further emphasised on the website. While we welcome this scope of the definition, we also believe that it could be enhanced further by the inclusion of '*digital activities and creative thinking*' instead of the reference to coding which is limiting and prescriptive. *Digital activities* can be defined in terms of coding, digital (graphic) design and digital literacy projects, inclusive of creative entrepreneurship and inter-disciplinary projects, both in and out of schools. *Creative thinking* does not apply strictly to arts and crafts programmes only, but it is a method of obtaining new insights and different ideas through examining existing information from different viewpoints to see new patterns.

It is important that we ensure that we reconceptualise creativity and reflect on what it means for children growing up in contemporary Ireland; in a world where digital and physical environments seamlessly converge. While creativity has long been a contested

term (Pilkington, 2017), we need to ensure it is reflective of evolving nature of our society and consider various definitions of creativity. In other words, we need a broader understanding of creativity that supports collaboration and cross-pollination. In doing so we will further foster children's development so that they are ready participants in the digital era, ensuring every voice and ability is heard, is visible and has a place in it, thereby supporting their sense of belonging and empowering them.

Thus, it is vital that we constitute our understanding of creativity as a fluid and emerging definition which is subject-specific, reflective of digital environment but also intertwined with all educational activities. Hence, developing creative and innovative thinking, and applying creativity to tasks that focus ideas in a logical way, supports them in this pursuit. Consequently, creative thinkers and problem solvers can learn, unlearn and relearn.

In the words of Sir Ken Robinson (2006) "Creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status." A 2012 US survey of 1,000 college-educated professionals found that 82% of participants believe that creative thinking is critical for problem-solving in their career, and 71% believe that creative thinking should be "taught as a class – like math or science." (Adobe News, 2012). Similarly, a 2010 IBM report of 1500 CEOs highlighted creativity as the single most important trait for navigating through the social and economic challenges of the future (Forbes, 2010).

Therefore, creativity, as reconceptualised, needs to be embedded in the school throughout the entire curriculum and not only seen in the context of arts.

Additionally, we would like to see specific support for the research in the area of creativity to ensure the activities and initiatives are evidence-based and informed by current and up-to-date empirical evidence. There needs to be a clear correlation between practice and theory, ensuring sharing of the best practices.

We also support schools' autonomy in deciding what is important to them, empowering them with the resources but acknowledging the creativity on their terms, as fitting the needs and interests of their children. For the success of creativity, partnership and collaboration at every level are crucial. Building on the existing collaborations and fostering new

partnerships, the schools should be supported, both through adequate funding and also access to experts in the field, so that they can develop and embed creativity in the range of projects, becoming the centres for creative excellence.

Investment in the initial and continued teacher training, supporting creative and digital practices and creative thinking, ensuring that teachers are empowered and able to scaffold children in these creative practices is also vital.
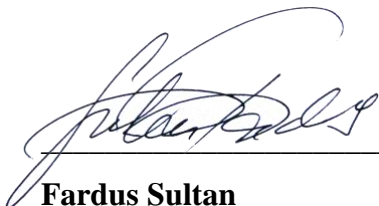
Similarly, the new plan needs to consider provisions to support schools' libraries, ensuring that the resources are current, inclusive of and apt for the digital environment but also culturally inclusive and diverse, reflective of the makeup of contemporary Ireland.

Lastly, we wish to emphasise that creativity, as re-conceptualised, ought to be acknowledged and recognised at all levels; from young people to teachers, principals and schools themselves, through formal and informal awards (assessment points that can count towards CAO points), accreditation, digital badges, ECT credits and similar. Essentially, we need to illustrate that creativity matters in other tangible and meaningful matters, where their creative skills beyond literacy and numeracy are officially recognised too.

Yours sincerely,

For and on Behalf of the

MUSLIM PRIMARY EDUCATION BOARD

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Fardus Sultan

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