Empowering youth through voice: The arts as an agent for bullying prevention

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Bullies, Bullied and Bystanders Conference
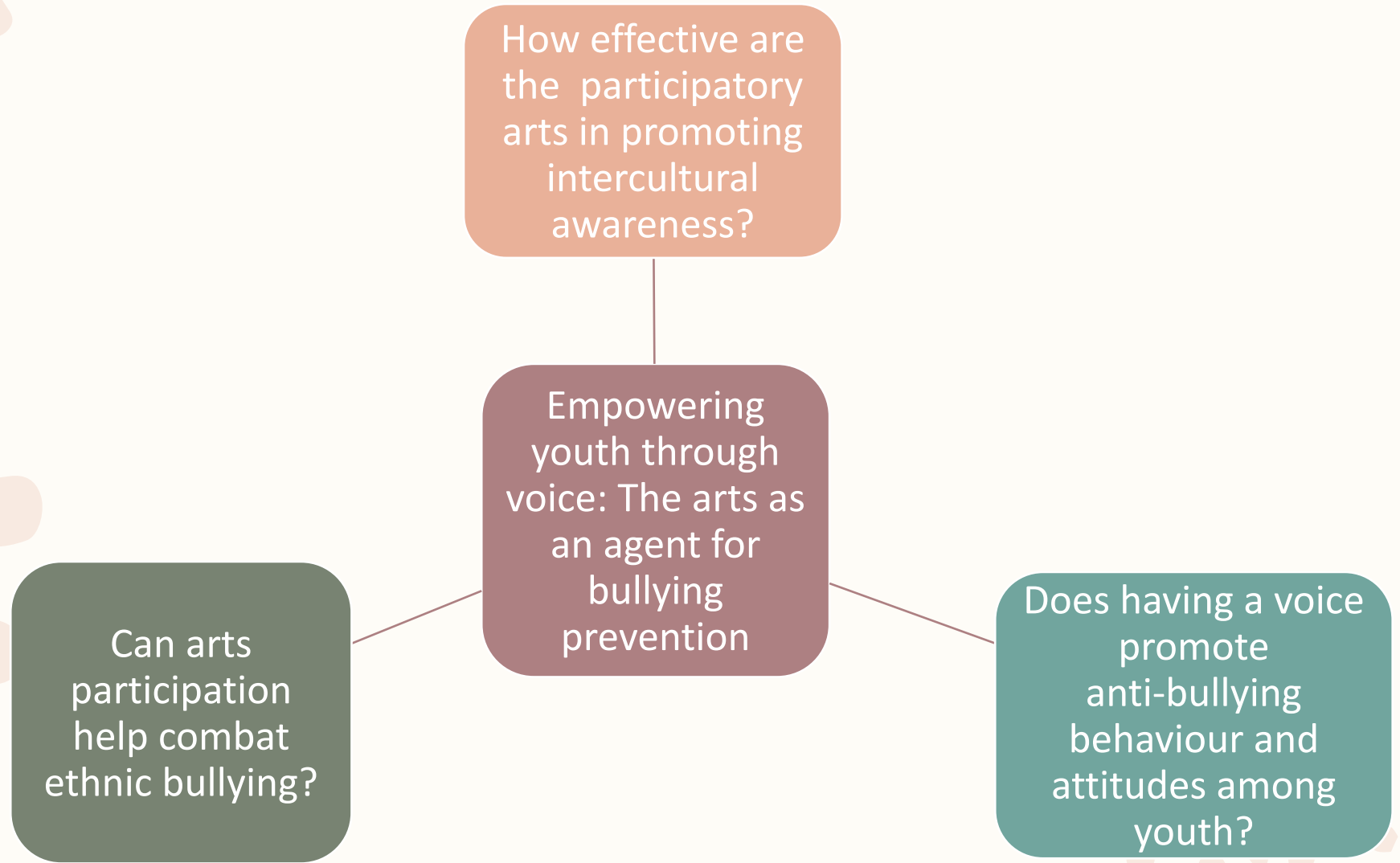
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2   Aim of this study

- Examine whether or not participation in specific art forms, e.g. visual arts, theatre, music, dance and creative writing can help combat bullying

- Explore the links between participation in specific art forms and development of broader cognitive, social and creative skills, particularly in relation to intercultural awareness and respect for ethnic diversity.

- Establish whether creative expression through collaborative collective art can specifically tackle ethnic bullying

3   Core Research Questions

How effective are the participatory arts in promoting intercultural awareness?

Empowering youth through voice: The arts as an agent for bullying prevention

Can arts participation help combat ethnic bullying?

Does having a voice promote anti-bullying behaviour and attitudes among youth?

4 Rationale

- Findings from previous research project (Fighting Words Creative Writing Centre)

  - links between creative expression and empowerment and increased self-esteem

- The literature suggests parallels between anti-bullying strategies and the benefits of arts participation for youth

- Need for social cohesion

  - Current immigration crisis in Europe

  - Ireland's increasing ethnic diversity

5 Europe
1990 - 2010

Year	International migrants as a percentage of the population
1990	6.9
1995	7.5
2000	7.9
2005	8.8
2010	9.5

6   Ireland
1990 - 2010

Year	International migrants as a percentage of the population
1990	6.5
1995	7.3
2000	10.1
2005	14.8
2010	19.6

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009). *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision* (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2008).

7   Future trends

–   This trend is set to continue worldwide.

–   Putnam (2007) argues that while ethnic diversity is a valuable social asset, immigration can initially challenge social solidarity and inhibit social capital. He asserts:

   'Successful immigrant societies create new forms of social solidarity and dampen the negative effects of diversity by constructing new, more encompassing identities. Thus, the central challenge for modern, diversifying societies is to create a new, broader sense of 'we''. (pp. 138-139)

8 Why Ethnic Bullying?

- Current immigration patterns in Ireland and Europe
- Need for intercultural education and social cohesion
- Evidence of ethnic bullying in Ireland:

    'Incidences of racism and xenophobia amongst young people increase significantly at the age of thirteen years. Arts in Schools programmes and arts in youth contexts can play a significant role in addressing this issue'. (Arts Council, 2009, p.58)

9   Bullying and Difference

– A huge amount of bullying occurs because of a lack of tolerance for diversity (O'Higgins Norman, 2008)

– Young people are often bullied because they stand out for being different from their peers (O'Higgins Norman, 2008)

– The research shows that where young people are provided with an opportunity to reflect on difference as a positive aspect of life levels of bullying and other forms of discrimination decrease (Devine and Vasquez, 1998; Chirot and Seligman, 2001; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; O'Higgins Norman, 2008).

10   Why Arts Education?

- The role of arts education in addressing wider societal matters

- Growing perception that arts education can not only help improve student achievement in schools but can also be helpful in achieving social, cultural and economic goals (O'Farrell, 2013).

- An increasing emphasis on arts education globally - arts education at the forefront of educational policy in many countries.

- Participation in the arts is considered to be an effective avenue for personal development facilitating increased self-confidence, improved skills and educational developments which can improve people's social contacts and employability (Matarasso, 1997).

11 Definition of Arts Participation

'The Arts Council understands arts participation to include a broad range of practice where individuals or groups collaborate with skilled artists to make or interpret art'.

Source: The Arts Council
http://www.artscouncil.ie/Arts-in-Ireland/Arts-participation/

Types of Arts Participation

- Drama
  - Boal's Forum Theatre particularly suitable model to address bullying
  - Participants experience as '*spect-actors*' will lead to discovery of useful strategies where 'the rehearsal stimulates the practice of the act in reality' (Boal, 2000, p142).
- Creative Writing
- Visual Arts
- Music
- Dance

13 Why the Participatory Arts?

- Arts programs offer the potential to provide innovative anti-discrimination initiatives

- Promote dialogue and provides a forum for unheard voices

- collaborative arts programmes encourage listening to others' ideas and respect for others' views

- arts participation can promote social inclusion and tolerance among youth from diverse social and cultural backgrounds - can be developed to encourage anti-bullying behaviour and attitudes

- Research focusing on benefits of arts participation for young people identifies:

  - the development of attitudes (e.g. self-discipline, self-efficacy) and behaviours (e.g. more frequent school attendance, reduced dropout rates)

  - development of more general life-skills (e.g. understanding the consequences of one's behaviour, working in teams); and development of pro-social attitudes and behaviours among 'at risk' youth (e.g. building social bonds, improving self-image) (Deasy, 2002; McCarthy et al, 2005; Stone et al., 1997;1999).

14   Arts Education Globally

- The UNESCO world conferences on arts education in Lisbon (2006) and in Seoul (2010) highlighted that educational policies throughout the world need to ensure that arts education is accessible as a fundamental and sustainable component of a high quality renewal of education and that arts education principles and practices be applied to solving today's social and cultural challenges.

- UNESCO's *Roadmap for Arts Education* (2006, p7) advises that, 'Any approach to Arts Education must take the culture(s) to which the learner belongs as its point of departure'
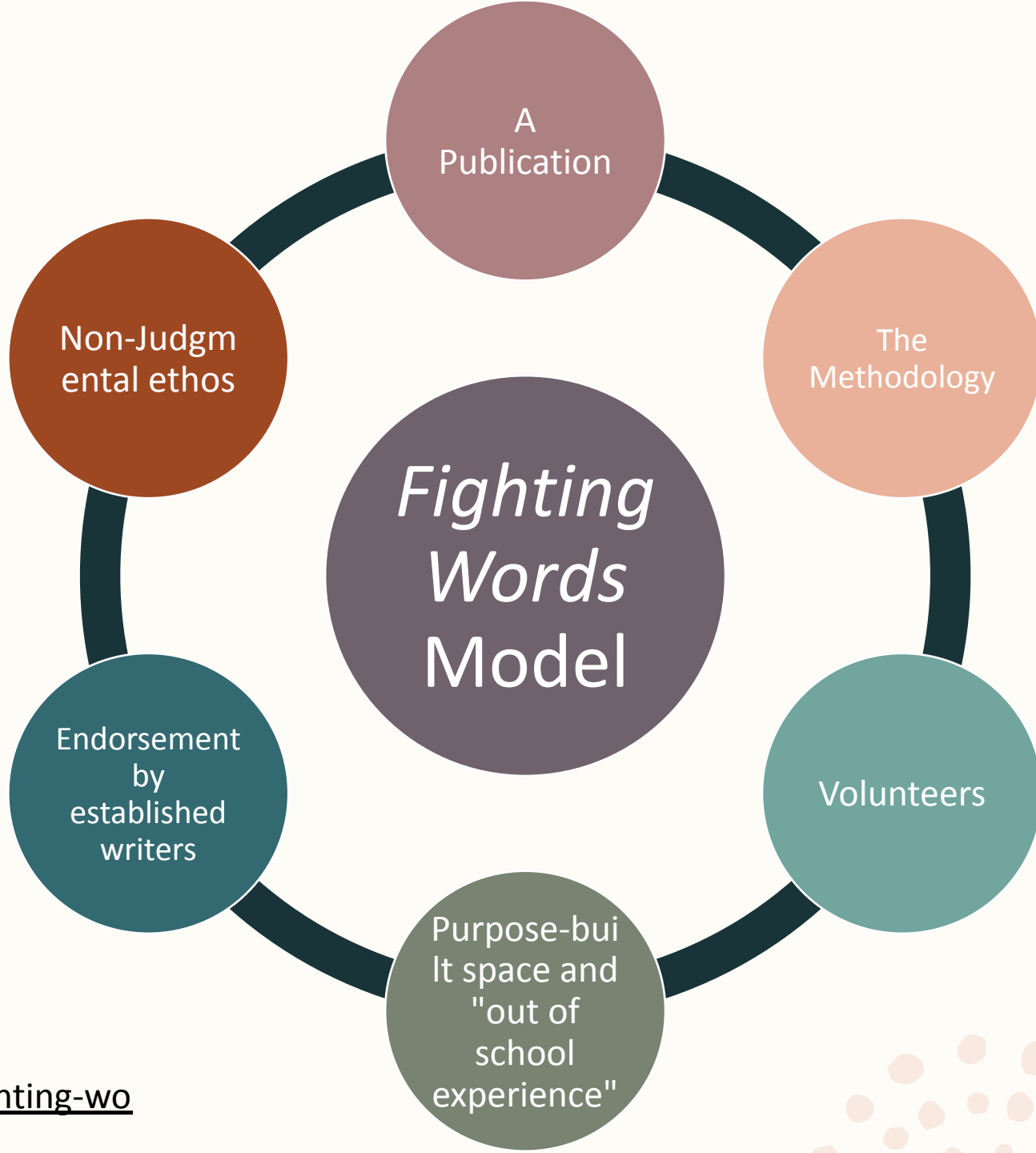
Arts Education in Ireland
Public attitudes towards the arts

- Relatively limited arts education provision

- The Arts Council's study *The Public and the Arts* (2006) found that Irish people have very positive views towards the arts

- Almost 90% believe that the arts play an important and valuable role in society

- 82% deem arts education as important as science education (73% in 1994 review)

- 70% believe spending on the arts should be safeguarded during economic recession

- 30% stated arts spending targeted at children and young people was their first choice as a spending priority
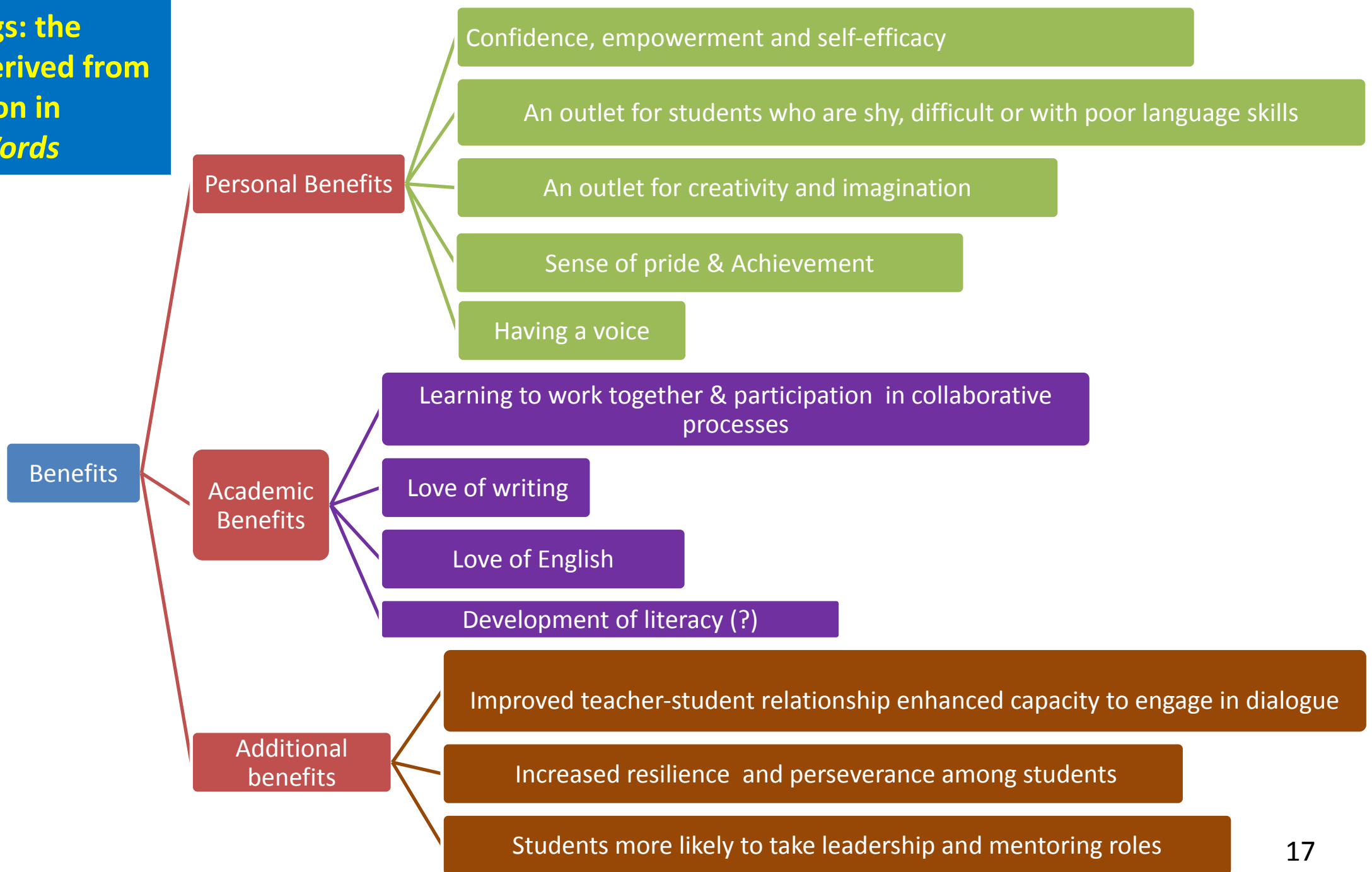
Fighting Words Research

A Publication

The Methodology

Volunteers

Purpose-built space and "out of school experience"

Endorsement by established writers

Non-Judgmental ethos

Fighting Words Model

The findings: the benefits derived from participation in *Fighting Words*

Benefits

Personal Benefits
- Confidence, empowerment and self-efficacy
- An outlet for students who are shy, difficult or with poor language skills
- An outlet for creativity and imagination
- Sense of pride & Achievement
- Having a voice

Academic Benefits
- Learning to work together & participation in collaborative processes
- Love of writing
- Love of English
- Development of literacy (?)

Additional benefits
- Improved teacher-student relationship enhanced capacity to engage in dialogue
- Increased resilience and perseverance among students
- Students more likely to take leadership and mentoring roles

17

Fighting Words Research Findings

- The combination of collaborative and individual activities constitutes a unique mix that develops different skills such as the ability to work in teams, self-management and autonomy but also specific attitudes such as respect for others, self-reliance and resilience.

- the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that participation in *Fighting Words* made them more respectful of other people's ideas and more at ease with sharing their own ideas.
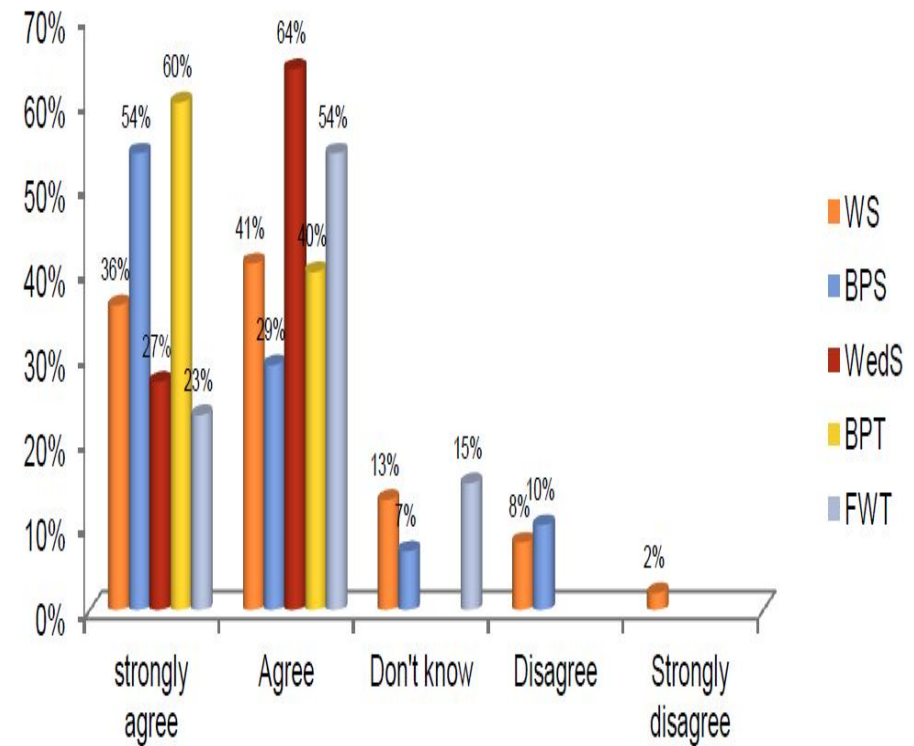
  Source: https://www.fightingwords.ie/news/dcu-report-fighting-words-model

Fighting Words Research Findings

I am/students are more respectful of other people's ideas
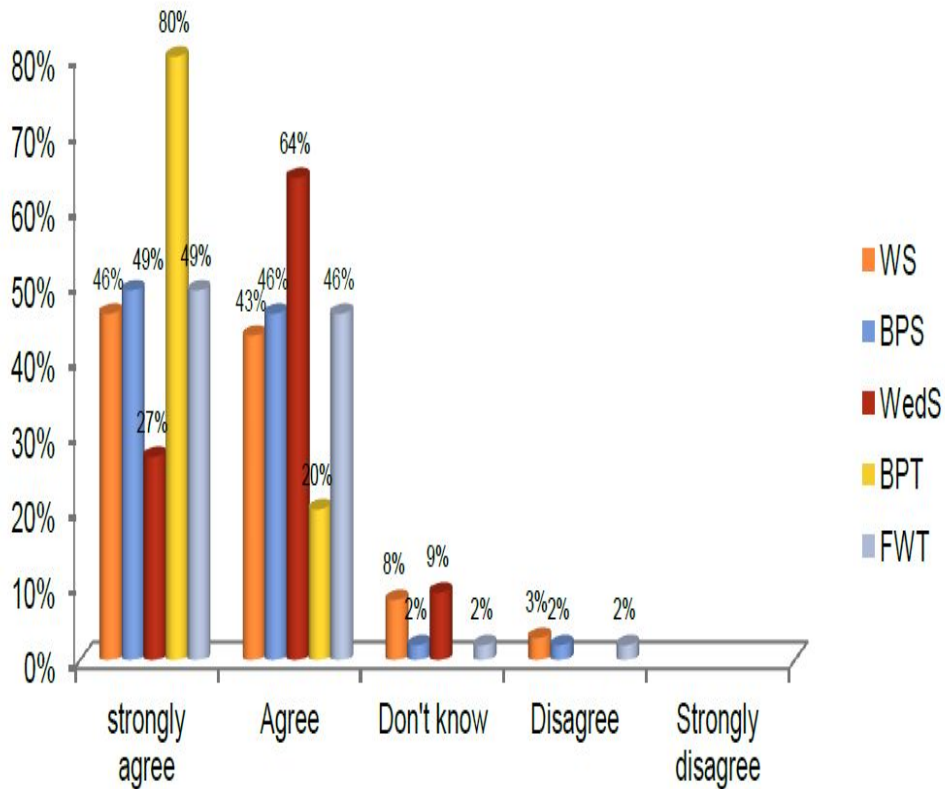
I am/students are more comfortable working with others

20   Correlations

Bullying

- Bullying attacks difference

- Bullies and victims often suffer from low self esteem and lack of confidence.

- Identity-based bullying (such as homophobic and racist bullying)

Arts Participation

- Embraces and celebrates difference

- Considered an effective avenue for personal development facilitating increased self-confidence, improved skills and educational developments which can improve people's social contacts and employability (Matarasso, 1997).

- Creates a safe space for discussion

- Examines issues from different perspectives

21   Future Directions

- Arts participation can promote Intercultural Awareness and foster social equity among youth

- Increasing self esteem may help

  - alter bully's behaviour

  - strengthen victim's response to bullying behaviour

  - increase bystander's voice

- increased provision of arts based programmes may help governments address some of the challenges associated with the social, ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity present in Ireland and indeed Europe.

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