



NUI Galway  
OÉ Gaillimh



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# Bridging Worlds: New Learning Spaces for New Times

## Idiographic Summary

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# 1. Context

It has been widely argued that existing educational inequality and inequity was exacerbated when schools closed due to COVID-19 (Tamil, 2020; Darmody, 2020).

In addition, it is disadvantaged young people who are likely to experience the most negative long-term impacts. Many of these young people were successfully engaged in the non-formal sector (that is, youth work services) before and during the pandemic.

Bridging Worlds is a new initiative which brings together the formal and non-formal education sectors to develop a new partnership and shared engagement framework to enhance educational outcomes and positive youth development.

## 2. Introducing Bridging Worlds

The ‘Bridging Worlds – New Learning Spaces for New Times’ project was a one-year initiative funded by Rethink Ireland.

The project focused on promoting knowledge, skills and awareness among teachers and youth workers of the formal and non-formal education sectors, using blended learning techniques and implementing a number of prosocial youth programmes.

It aimed to bridge the gap between learning in formal and non-formal contexts by creating links between these sectors as a project legacy.

Bridging Worlds was a collaboration between Foróige and NUI Galway.



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# 3. Review of Project

The Bridging Worlds initiative developed a professional learning component through joint engagement of academic staff and practitioner expertise.

These training resources on *Blended Learning*, *Online Culture* and the *Formal and Non-Formal Education Sectors* were used to provide training to 65 participants – 35 teachers and 30 youth workers.

All Bridging Worlds participants had the opportunity to be trained in the four prosocial youth development programmes.

These resources are available as a project legacy and for further dissemination.

**65**  
Participants

**35**  
Teachers

**30**  
Youth workers

# 3. Review of Project

The project provided timely and valued support to the participants.

Both teachers and youth workers engaged actively with the programme and reported high levels of satisfaction with the support received.

The expertise of project staff and the high quality of the training materials were recognised; these contributed to the project's success.

The topics focused on were of particular interest given the emphasis on online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns about individuals' wellbeing during this time.

# 3. Review of Project

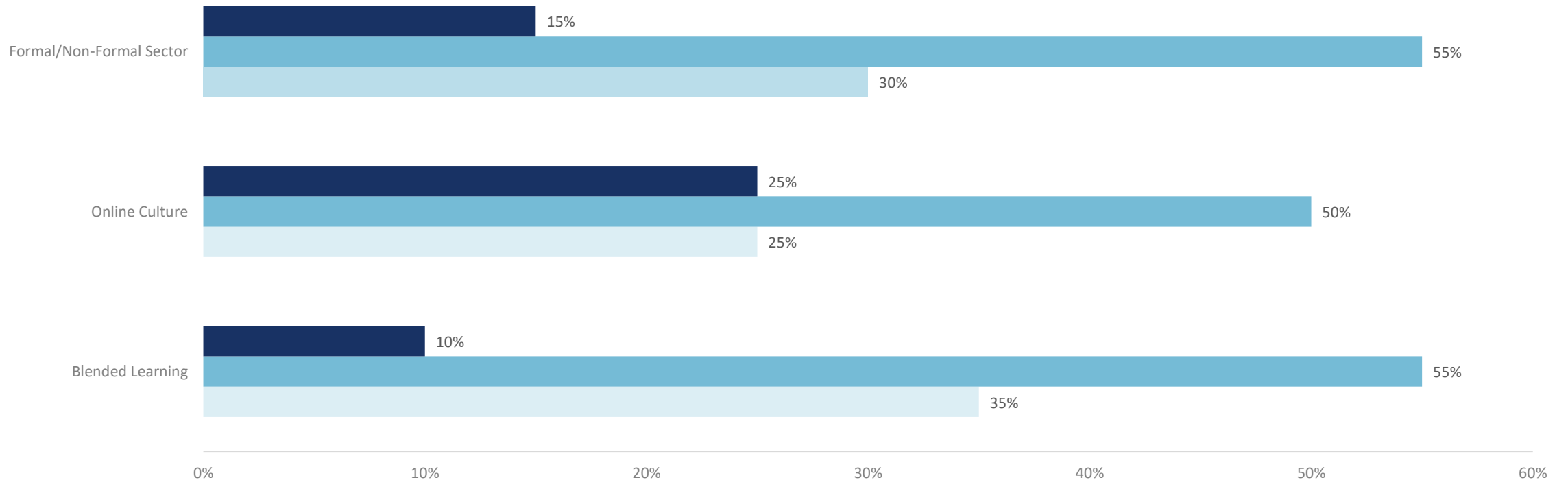
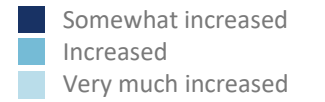
The most significant feedback across all participants was that the development of connections across the formal and non-formal sectors made intuitive sense and was to be welcomed.

Both teachers and youth workers reported that they benefited from learning about each other's roles and sectors.

While there was strong interest in fostering and developing better connections across the sectors, there was recognition that further support is needed in this area.

# 4. Findings

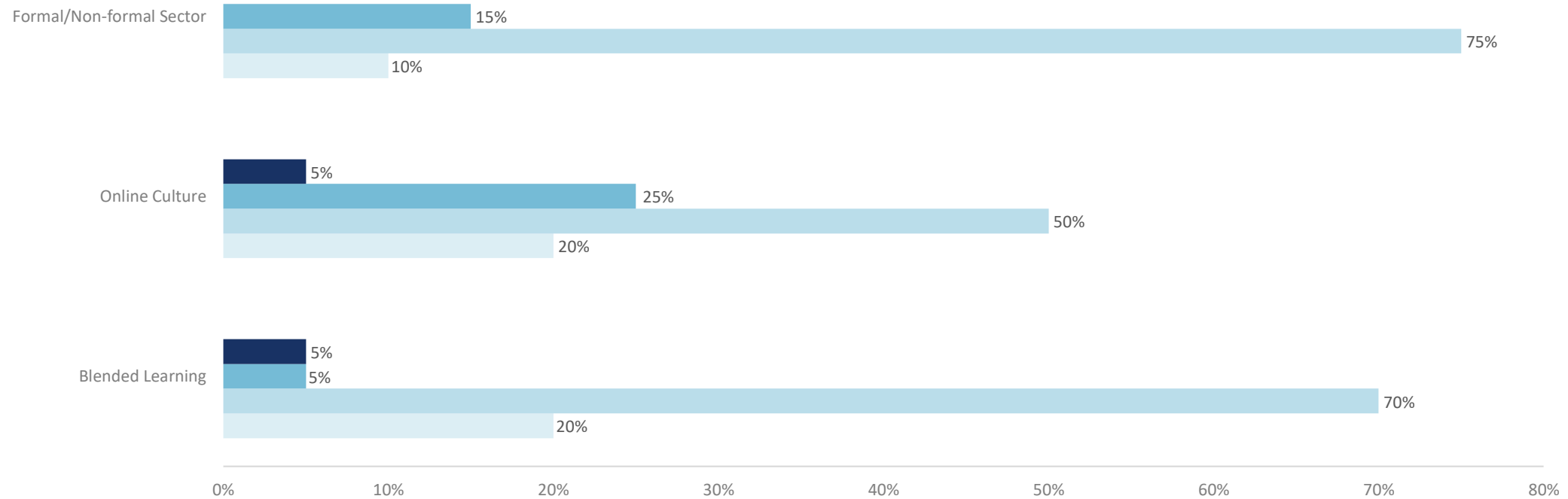
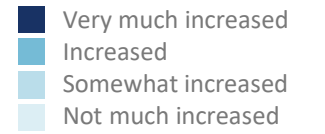
## Did your knowledge increase?





# 4. Findings

## Did your confidence increase?



## 4. Findings

I think the training is really well developed. It is going really well. I think the timing was perfect because we were really in need of that. But what I think is really well done in a way, that is, pulling all our thoughts together ... So I think it's really good, and I think it's really the best moment to start implementing this kind of work.

Youth worker

We learnt the difference between empathy and sympathy.

Student

I would like to use the blended. Because if we don't, then we are not using what we were shown to its full effect. You know, that was the whole purpose of doing that, you know and to try to be as creative with blended. And also it's good for students to see that we're able to do it, you know, yeah. They get more enjoyment out of it as well if we can do it.

Teacher

## 4. Findings

And it's important that the students also see the teachers are very much like youth workers, and the youth worker is very much the teacher and you know, there's a bit of a parallel going on there, you know, yes one teaches but another one does something else you know but you know they're kind of on the same wavelength.

Teacher

We learnt what to say to people if they are feeling down.

Student

... the follow-up sessions I know we were looking at different platforms and, you know, this was like the stage with maybe we thought we'd used them all but there's a few different ones that we got to learn about that we can use. I know they work in other areas of our work, or different programmes and groups as well. So that's helpful too.

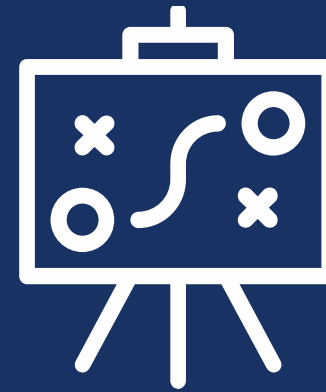
Youth worker



# 5. Recommendations

## Needs Assessment

A key success of this project was the joint planning and development across the range of stakeholders, specifically NUI Galway staff and Foróige practitioners. This joint development of responsive resources should be the foundation of the next phase of the project, post pandemic.



# 5. Recommendations

## Stakeholder Engagement

A critical success factor in this project was the active and sustained involvement of Foróige, the NUI Galway School of Education and the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, and the project funder. This engagement should be maintained and strategic links developed across education and youth partners both regionally and nationally.



# 5. Recommendations

## Modify the programme delivery

A number of modifications should be made to support a more seamless delivery of the programme. These changes include reframing the training into a two-day training event, with responsibilities and time frames for further engagements agreed as per participant availability and support needs.



# 5. Recommendations

## Project Expansion

Teachers and youth workers who have received training in one of the Foróige youth programmes in the past should be invited to attend Bridging the Gap training to extend their existing training. They should also be invited to explore the potential for setting up local connections across the corresponding formal/non-formal sectors in their area.





# 5. Recommendations

## Youth Engagement

Young people have preferences on how best to involve them across the various formal and non-formal spaces. They also have suggestions on what types of project may fit better in the various spaces, whether blended or online. As local hubs develop cross-sectoral plans, it is important that youth representation be included to bring a youth-led approach into any new and co-created space.



## 6. Conclusion

The overwhelmingly positive feedback indicates that there is considerable potential in this initiative for cross-sectoral working and positive engagement across the youth and education sectors.

This project was implemented in a time of considerable upheaval and disruption.

Our research makes a strong case for embedding and extending the project nationally, enabling it to fully deliver positive outcomes for young people.

We believe Bridging Worlds has the potential to support the progression of teacher and youth worker skills, and to enable more effective cross-sectoral joint working.

Fully implemented, Bridging Worlds will create a more cohesive, connected, responsive and supportive environment for young people to develop and thrive.

# 7. Methodology

**65**

## Participants

Pre, Post and Follow up Surveys with Teachers and Youth Workers who participated in Bridging Worlds

**5**

## Interviews

5 Interviews with Programme Staff and Stakeholder

**12**

## Interviews

12 Interviews with Teachers and Youth Workers

**1**

## Focus Group

1 Focus Group with youth participating in a follow up programme

For detailed methodology see complete report and supplemental report



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