Diversities: Interpretations through the Context of SPHE

Proceedings from the 4th SPHE Network Conference
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
10th November, 2018

Edited by
Seline Keating, Bernie Collins, Margaret Nohilly,
Carol O'Sullivan and Barry Morrissey

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Acknowledgments

Introduction

I am both delighted and honoured to present the proceedings of the fourth SPHE Network conference, *Diversities: Interpretations in the context of SPHE* which took place in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick on 10th of November 2018. The conference title was subdivided into four key themes: Multiculturalism, Wellbeing, Gender, and Diversity Challenges. These were explored across the day through insightful keynote, paper, poster, and workshop presentations. All of which created thought provoking dialogue among presenters and delegates alike.

The SPHE Network was founded in 2000 by Dr. Carol O' Sullivan and Dr. Bernie Collins as a forum for providing support and continuing professional development for those wishing to promote SPHE in schools and colleges. The Network has grown from strength to strength since its establishment. This is clearly visible in our membership numbers which have grown and is inclusive of lecturers, teachers (primary and post-primary), researchers and representatives from a significant number of national organisations with an SPHE promotion remit.

We meet regularly to share ideas, organise events and engage in CPD. Our website www.sphenetwork.ie has lots of information such as previous conference publications, upcoming events, our funding award, and teaching resources which we hope you will find supportive of your work in SPHE. Details on how to join the SPHE Network is also included on our website.

This fourth set of conference proceedings contains eight chapters along with the keynote address. We are very grateful to everyone that presented, chaired sessions, set up stalls and supported the SPHE Network on the day of the conference. A special "thank you" to Frankie Andrews for capturing the warm, supportive and collegial atmosphere that prevails at an SPHE Network conference, in her wonderful photographs taken throughout the day.

Finally, I would like to thank those who agreed to submit an article for publication and acknowledge the work of the editorial team who showed great commitment to the task of producing a high-quality publication: Bernie Collins, Barry Morrissey, Margaret Nohilly and Carol O' Sullivan. To Bernie, an extra thank you for her careful proofreading of all chapters.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this publication and view it as a beneficial and valuable resource in your future SPHE endeavours.

Seline Keating
Editor and Chairperson of the SPHE Network

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Education and Resistance to Injustices:
Matters for Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

Kathleen Lynch, UCD School of Education and UCD Equality Studies Centre

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

When asked to address this conference, I began by reflecting on the concept of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). As critical educators and scholars such as bell hooks[1] (1994) and Paulo Freire (1970) have observed, the personal is always political; power is an issue in all matters personal and all political matters have personal implications. Education is never neutral. As it is a 'social praxis', it will always be in the service either of the "'domestication' of men *(sic)* or of their liberation" (Freire 1971). If we follow this logic, it is time to rethink this area of the school curriculum. There is a strong case to suggest that the *P* in SPHE should really be a P[2]; this would recognise the personal *and* political as intersecting processes; SPHE should perhaps become SP[2]HE, Social, Personal/Political and Health Education. The primary reason for making this claim arises from my analysis of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) as it stands.

THE CURRENT SPHE CURRICULUM

The current *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) was developed twenty years ago. It is a coherent and engaging programme for primary schools, promoting three interrelated goals: 1) children's well-being, self-confidence and sense of belonging; 2) children's sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions; 3) children's self-awareness and understanding by helping them to manage their own feelings, to recognise and appreciate individual abilities, and to cope with change of various kinds of challenges. It sets out to support "children to become active and responsible citizens" (*SPHE Curriculum* 1999, p.2) through engaging with them in three strands of education and development: *Myself; Myself and others;* and *Myself and the wider world*. The *Myself* strand focuses on personal development, sense of identity, health and well-being; *Myself and others* centres on developing an understanding and managing relations with family and friends, while *Myself and the wider world* is about developing a sense of citizenship and engaging in media education.

While each of these goals is highly commendable in itself, together they also reflect a very individualistic approach to children's education and development. They begin and end with the SELF, *Myself*. While there is a need for such an approach as part of SPHE, given children's age at primary school, focusing the child's attention on her or himself alone also has limitations. It depoliticises children's understanding of their own place in their family, their school, their local community and the wider world by not naming it or attending to it explicitly in institutional and structural terms.

Children's lives are lived in the micro worlds of their family, friends, school, neighbours and communities, but they are also lived within the wider economic, political, cultural and affective structures in which they are embedded. From the princess dresses that girls are taught to desire, to the cars or tractors that boys want to own, to the name of the street and postcodes where they live, their lives are politically, economically, affectively and culturally framed. They live in differently constituted households: single parent; blended; heterosexual or homosexual; they are introduced to different religious beliefs or none; they vary in their relative economic security, wealth or poverty; and they are part of the majority society or the minority - ethnically, culturally and linguistically. Because of this,

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1 bell hooks uses the lower case to spell her name.

children's lives are framed daily by structures and institutions that are of enormous importance to how they know themselves and their world. Ignoring these wider institutions and structures while educating them socially leaves them powerless to name and know the institutions and systems which frame their lives. Without these linguistic and conceptual capabilities, they are also powerless to name what may oppress them. They cannot learn to speak in their own voice if they do not know the frames and systems that keep them silent.

WHY A CRITICAL STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS MATTERS

There is a need to complement the individualistic (ME/SELF) focus of the current SPHE framework with a critical structural analysis of institutions and systems within and through which children's lives are lived. Without such a structural analysis, one that is also openly reflexive and critical, children will learn about themselves in isolation from the power institutions that frame their lives, institutions that are generally enabling of the personal development, but may also be disabling.

An education that does not recognise and name the power relations encoded in families, schools, communities and wider society is not entirely honest. This is especially problematic for young children, as they are quite powerless simply because they are children. In many respects, children are the ideal type (in the classical sociological sense) powerless person. They have no independent economic existence as they cannot earn an independent income until their later teens, and they cannot vote or take office until they are 18 years old. They are thereby constrained in exercising autonomy and influencing politics and policies that impact on themselves. Their powerlessness is reflected most clearly in the fact that poverty rates for children in Ireland are consistently and significantly higher for children than for adults (Lynch *et al.* 2016). And it is also evident in the litany of abuses that children have been subjected to in many of our public and private institutions (Ryan Report 2009). Whether children should have political power or the independence to earn a living, and at what age, is a sensitive question and cannot be addressed here. However, in the study that Anne Lodge and I undertook of 1,500 young students in second-level schools (Lodge and Lynch 2000; Lynch and Lodge 2002), the biggest single equality issue that concerned children was their sense of powerlessness vis-à-vis adults in schools, in their families and in the wider society. Given that our study was of children in their teens, the powerlessness question is of even more significance for primary school children.

A Structural Analysis in Framing 'Diversity'

Children live within legal and political frames over which they exercise little control. Hiding this from them intellectually, disempowers them in their childhood vulnerability. Consequently, it is not advisable to name and frame differences between children in terms such as *diversity* without qualifying and problematising it. Diversity is a concept that needs to be decoded. It is a descriptive, non-normative term that makes the politics and injustices underpinning different social statuses quite invisible by neutralising them and presenting them as if they had equal standing.

The concept of diversity implies that social identities are equal in power and status terms; that diversities are like sweets, things (identities) that are interchangeable. Such is not the case as every identity has an associated income, cultural and status designation. Being a boy, whose skin colour is Black is not just about being a boy, it is about being a Black or African or an African-Irish boy with a particular social class, age, cultural and racial standing. Being a girl who is deaf is not just a private personal identity, it is also a social status that has serious linguistic, educational, political and social consequences. The language of diversity glosses over the fact that most identities come with a price tag, some of which are highly valued socially and others not. Ignoring this means ignoring the economic and power inequalities and injustices that are endemic to given group identities. This induces a sense of fatalism, and cynicism in later life, about social change. Children know and live out the injustices but do not know how to name it structurally or how to think about changing it over time.

Using the term diversity also conceals the intersectionality of identities, as no one person is singular in their social and political identity. Every given child has a range of identities, some of which are of positive social value and others which are negative.

Given that citizenship is social as well as individual in character, it is important that the group identities of children are named and known, even while recognising that these are sensitive issues that must be handled with care. But it is only through this sensitive examination that the social structures within which children live will become more visible. This will empower children in framing and naming their own worlds and changing them, as necessary, through *praxis*: actions based on informed understandings and knowing.

Systems, Structures and Inequality

Children's identities are socially and structurally framed by the groups to which they belong. While they can know and learn about themselves as individuals in SPHE, they also need to know that they are co-created through relationships across different social systems and institutions. The economic, political, cultural and affective (care) relations, in which their lives are embedded, operate intersectionally to help make them who they are. And these relations may exacerbate or mitigate social inequalities between children (Baker *et al.* 2004; Lynch *et al.* 2009).

Table 1 below shows the intersection of social systems in the generation and reproduction of inequality for children, and what the resolution of these involves for groups affected.

Table 1: Key Structured Systems where Equality/Inequality is Generated for Children

Key Social Systems	Forms of equality/inequality generated in different systems intersecting with each other, groups affected most and solutions			
	Economic Inequalities	Cultural Inequalities	Political Inequalities	Affective (Care) Inequalities
Economic System	XX Income and resource inequalities - money and wealth Solution: Redistribution	X	X	X
Political System	X	X	XX Inequality in power relations over decisions that impact on your life Solution: Parity of representation in the exercise of power	X
Cultural System	X	XX Lack of recognition of different cultures/ languages and/ or identities (esp. minority status) Solution: Equal respect and recognition of different identities/cultures and/or languages (esp. minorities)	X	X

Affective System	X	X	X	XX
				Inequality in Love, Care and Solidarity (LCS) in family, organisations and society respectively Solution: Equality in a) receipt of LCS and b) in the doing of LCS work especially in gender and racial terms
	Groups typically affected by economic inequalities Poor; working class; welfare dependent	Groups typically affected by cultural inequalities Racial and other minorities; Travellers; LGTBI; deaf; mentally ill; older people; women	Groups typically affected by power inequalities Children; the incarcerated; intellectually disabled; the very ill	Groups typically affected by affective inequalities a) The unloved and uncared for; abused children; the homeless; prisoners; refugees; asylum seekers b) Carers who receive no care or reward (women)

Source: adapted from Baker, J., Lynch, K., Cantillon, S. and Walsh, J. (2004)

The double XXs in Table 1 illustrate that this is the site where a given social injustice is generated while a single X indicates an indirect inequality arising simultaneously from the impact of other systems.

What is significant about the interface between structured social systems is that while inequalities (and diversities) among children may be primarily generated in one system, the impact of this inequality is not confined to that system; it has secondary effects across other systems. Being a child, and thereby relatively powerless in absolute terms, leaves one open to other inequalities, including lack of respect and recognition (not being taken seriously), being poor, and not being able to do anything about this, or being abused by adults, most of whom are powerful compared with children. Likewise, economic inequalities do not just have an economic impact; they impact on power, cultural and care relations. When households are poor, this impacts on all aspects of children's lives. Those who are poor are less respected and frequently powerless to influence decisions that affect them adversely (Kirby and Murphy 2011). They suffer disrespect for their poverty-driven lifestyle, clothes, housing and tastes (Devine and Kelly 2006), and their families are often seriously under-resourced in their care and love work (Dodson 2013). Children are party to the experience of poverty, racial and other disrespects, yet they know the value of care and love in their own lives and recognise the constraints under which it is provided (Luttrell 2013).

What is significant about the four systems outlined in *Table 1* is that they indicate clearly where the resolution to various injustices lie. Within economic systems, the resolution to injustice is through equalising the distribution and redistribution of income, wealth and resources. Thus, much of the resolution to economic inequality lies outside of schools - it rests in the taxation and inheritance systems. However, schools can exacerbate working-class and poverty-related injustices by direct and indirect exclusionary practices, for example, by making school entry expensive with high voluntary contributions, branded uniforms, and requirements for tablets or other expensive educational resources (Lodge and Lynch 2002). Students who are different may not be recruited nor made welcome, so they do not come. This is especially true of Travellers or other ethnic minorities. Or they can exclude children internally by assigning those who are most marginal to low streams (McGillacuddy and Devine 2018) or alienate them through the language code used (MacRuairc 2009; Skerritt 2017).

Educators can invisibilise economically-related injustices by denying the existence of classed inequalities in Irish society, and by not providing a safe environment to discuss this and other socially sensitive issues. The question must be addressed: why do Irish schools not discuss social class, dis/ability (diff/ability)[2] and/or racial inequalities in schools yet they do address issues of gender, and increasingly, sexuality?

Within the cultural systems, addressing inequality is about ensuring there is respect and recognition of differences between children, including differences in belief, gender, language, ability, sexuality, colour, age, marital/family status and ethnicity (including Travellers' ethnicity). This involves ensuring respect in schools in the arts, symbols and emblems. And it involves not using disablist language, such as 'not bright', 'stupid', 'weak' 'thick'; terms that classify the whole child in a negative way. There is a need for critical cultural education on differences, and an open recognition of the myths around the fixed nature of human intelligence (see Howard Gardner 1984 for a critique).

Within political systems, addressing inequality is concerned with parity of representation in the exercise of power. In schools, the resolution of power-related injustices is through ensuring parity of representation for children, democratising both pedagogical and organisational relations, by creating dialogical relations of learning. Those affected by decisions need to be involved in defining 'the rules of the game'.

Within the affective systems, addressing inequality is about ensuring that people have equal access to love, care and solidarity, and that there is an equal sharing of the burdens and benefits of love, care and solidarity work between genders and other social groups. The resolution of affective injustices is through relational justice. What does this mean for education in SPHE? It means recognising the centrality of care to learning (Feeley 2014). Children learn best when they are cared for, and recent research with primary school children shows they value that care from teachers (Luttrell 2013). Yet, education remains dominated by the Cartesian metaphor, *Cogito ergo sum*, I think therefore I am (Lynch *et al.* 2007). Human beings (and children) are not simply cerebral, they are emotional and social beings. They are dependent and interdependent, bound together by affective relations. The African proverb: I am because We are; We are therefore I am needs to be recognised more fully in the governance and pedagogy of education.

There is a need to move beyond the language of identities and diversity to recognise the profound importance of structures, that is, the powerful economic, political cultural and affective institutions that frame identities and either undermine or enhance children's well-being.

THREATS TO CRITICAL THINKING IN EDUCATION AND SPHE

Neoliberal capitalism is the dominant political-economic ideology of our time (Harvey 2005). Premised on the primacy of the market in the organisation of economic, and political and social, life, while it has been contested, it has retained institutional hegemony in Ireland (Kirby and Murphy 2011), including increasingly in education (Lynch *et al.* 2015). One of the ways in which neoliberalism has achieved hegemony is through the institutionalisation of market values and norms not only in private, but also in public sector organisations (Sowa *et al.* 2018); it has led to the institutionalisation of Taylorist forms of governance where all value is measured, and the focus is on outputs and performances. Changes in nomenclature, systems and operations reflect a new type of moral regulation that is

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2 The prefix *dis* implies something negative, something missing. Because of this, it is not an appropriate designation of person's status where they may have some impairment. There is a case to be made for using a new word '*diff-ability*' as children (and adults) differ in their abilities, but the difference does not imply an absence of ability as the *dis*ability term implies. It is for this reason I am hyphenating the work dis/ability here.

market led. There is a glorification of the 'consumer' student, construed as willing, resourced and capable of making market-led choices, and the productive 'performing' teacher. Commercial values have been encoded in systems of appraisal and modes of operation at all levels of education, but especially in further and higher education (Lynch and Grummell 2018).

The move to make education into a marketable commodity has had profound implications for education in terms of what is taught (and not taught), who is taught and what types of subjectivities are developed in schools and colleges (Rose 1989; Olssen and Peters 2005; Lolich 2011; 2014). The student child is defined increasingly in human capital terms, a person who is being educated primarily as a market citizen (Mooney Simmie 2012).

As it endorses a form of entrepreneurial individualism that is highly competitive and self-interested, and as it regards these traits as natural and desirable (Friedman 2002), neoliberalism is antithetical to the ethic of care (Federici 2012; Fraser 2016; Oksala 2016), an ethic that at the heart of education[3] .

Market-driven managerialism prioritises success and outputs from children and their teachers over other higher order values. It weakens not only the ethic of care, but also respect for children as whole persons because when schools are judged by measurable performances, non-performers become a liability in meeting 'targets'. The vulnerable, be they children or staff, become a nuisance and a 'blockage' in the system of production.

Time for Resistance: Education is Political

The hidden curriculum of schools plays a central role in determining what children learn by their daily routines, practices and evaluations (Lynch 1989). Given that the organisational norms and values of new managerialism and neoliberalism are increasingly part of the fabric of Irish educational policymaking (Mooney Simmie 2012; Skerritt 2019), this is having an impact on informal learning and education that must be recognised for what it is. If school tests, grades and rewards are highly individualised in their appraisal of school children, and if outputs and success are what matters in all areas of school life, this promotes a hidden curriculum of individualised competition and self-centredness even if schools formally 'teach' care and concern for others, and the environment in the SPHE syllabi. The question must be asked: are new managerial norms of market competition and success the real values we are teaching through living and practising them?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Education is, at its foundation, a distributive process: it opens new ways of knowing the world, facilitating new forms of consciousness and giving access to knowledge (Naidoo 2015); it enables the unnamed, unknown, unspoken, and unthinkable to be thinkable and visible. Given the enabling and liberating role of education, there is a moral obligation on educationalists to protect its epistemological and ontological foundations by resisting attempts to undermine it as a human right and public service, and by making it open and critical. As public educators, we are compelled to be proactive in defending the public, democratic non-market foundations of education to ensure it does not result in market-indoctrination by default (through the hidden curriculum of competitive individualism encoded in meritocratic norms (Lynch 1987; 1989). Without such resistance, education is in danger of teaching values of competitive and possessive individualism as priority virtues, by default rather than design. It can be reduced to becoming a simple provider of human capital subjects to service the market economy.

More specially, there is a need to rethink the model of citizenship underpinning SPHE as its current apolitical stance is highly political! As it focuses on the ME-Child, it leaves the deep structures that are framing the child's life outside of educational analysis in this classroom. The role that economic, political, cultural and affective (care) institutions play in making up everyday life is largely ignored; this leaves the child not knowing the whole truth of where and how she or he is living. It is disempowering for children as they lack the language and concepts to know and understand the social institutions and structures that frame their everyday lives.

Without resistance to the privatisation, pychologisation and depoliticisation of private troubles, without the P² (Personal and Political Education), SPHE is in danger of being incorporated into the market as an instrument of capitalism and profiteering, a simple provider of human capital. As C. Wright Mills (1959) noted sixty years ago,

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3 The root of the word Education is derived from the Latin words Educare and Educere. The word Educare means to nourish while the word Educere means to lead forth.

private troubles are public issues and education needs to recognise this, especially if it purports to educate children holistically on social, personal (political) and health matters.

The intellectual incorporation of dissent is probably the greatest challenge for educationalists in the social, personal, political and health education fields. An important way to ensure that dissent is not silenced is to give children the capacity and freedom to think critically and structurally as well as personally; they need to learn to think analytically as well as descriptively, always problematising the so-called 'common sense' of social and political life. To achieve this, children must learn the confidence and courage to find their voice, name their dissent, their differences and their oppressions (if, and when, these arise). And they need to be encouraged to engage in age-appropriate praxis, that is, to engage in action, changing the world for the better based on their new knowledge and understanding. It is through praxis that they will see how action-following-knowing can make the world a better place. It is not enough to talk about doing, children need to learn to act in and on the world.

The language of equality, social justice and social structures needs to inform SPHE. As noted at the outset, using the term *diversity* alone to name social differences is problematic: it neutralises the debate about the social injustices attached to different social status positions. It represents differences of age, dis/ability (diff-ability), sexuality, gender, social class, race, Traveller and other statuses as if they were of equal standing socially which they are not. This approach silences children in naming injustices they may experience as a result of being children *per se* (namely, their powerlessness), or because of the way their social class position, gender, race and/or dis/ability (*diff-ability*) frames their everyday lives and their futures.

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CHAPTER 1

Supporting the Needs of the Multicultural and Multilingual School: The Role of SPHE?

Dr. Carol O'Sullivan, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

INTRODUCTION

Over just one generation, the profile of, and perceived certainties in, Irish society have become unsettled. Although there has always been diversity in Irish society, there was a tendency towards homogenisation. Most of the population were Catholic and Gaelic (Tovey and Share 2000), and there was little inward migration into the country until quite recently. The main languages spoken were English and Irish. Back in 1996, 6.9% of the total population was non-Irish. This increased to 11.3% by 2016 (Central Statistics Office [CSO] 2018). The top two languages now spoken in Ireland on a daily basis are English and Polish (2.9% of population speak Polish as compared with 1.6% who speak Irish on a daily basis) (ibid.). While the vast majority of the Irish population are at least nominally Catholic, this has decreased from 91% in 1996 to 78.3% in 2016 (ibid.).

These demographic changes have impacted significantly on Irish education and on Irish schools. Predictably, teachers have very real concerns about speech and language development as they endeavour to support children who may have no knowledge or experience of English or Irish prior to commencing school. Communication difficulties have been shown to impact upon achievement (O'Toole and Skinner 2018). Religion classes are now very sensitive as many children are not Catholic and thus their beliefs and values may not align with the school ethos. Management of different religious traditions becomes even more difficult in denominational instruction for sacrament classes, where it can no longer be assumed that all children will receive First Communion or Confirmation in any particular class. While there has been some movement towards devolving patronage of schools in Ireland, progress is slow, with approximately 90% of schools still operating under Catholic patronage (Darmody and Smyth 2017). As the impact of the economic crash is still resonant in Ireland, schools are still subject to significant budgetary constraints. For example, Circular 0015/2009 (Department of Education and Science [DES] 2009) reduced provision for English as an Additional Language (EAL), and current provision remains at 2009 levels despite the recent upturn in Ireland's economy. Currently schools are limited to a maximum of two EAL teachers unless there are exceptional circumstances. This results in schools having to rely on their own initiatives and resourcefulness in order to meet the many and diverse needs of their pupils.

DIVERSITY AND THE SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE) CURRICULUM

The question posed in this chapter asks how the *SPHE Curriculum* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 1999) supports the demographic changes in Ireland. It is acknowledged here that we have evolved significantly as a society since the publication of the revised *Primary School Curriculum* (PSC) in 1999. Yet even then there were strong portents of change as inward migration was occurring since the mid-1990s, due to the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' boom (Ross-Lonergan 2009). Consequently, the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) was a significant development in education as it was introduced as a new subject with specific foci on issues such as identity and citizenship. However, the discourse of the curriculum tended to avoid the more challenging aspects of cultural diversity and focused instead on recognition and appreciation. This has not changed to any large extent in the interim. As recently as 2011, Devine (cited in Faas and Ross 2012) observed that the debate about cultural diversity, including what the appropriate educational response should be, is still in its infancy.

The structure of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) tells its own story. The focus on *Myself* in the first curriculum strand hardly induces confidence in terms of teaching children to actively engage with others, including those of different cultural backgrounds. According to Seery (2008), the aims of education at the time of its introduction were very much focused on self-realisation, the realisation of potentialities and the moral and social development of the individual. Terms such as self-esteem, self-worth and self-awareness were central to educational discourse. While the 'Self' is accorded significant (and perhaps excessive) attention throughout all three strands of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999), cultural diversity is explicitly addressed in the third strand only and the optics are not in its favour. It is situated at the end of a page and is accorded approximately 25% of the overall space on that page. Research on the implementation of primary school SPHE indicates that teachers tend not to focus on the third strand as much as the other two strands (NCCA 2008; DES 2009).

THE RESEARCH

This research, which is part of an Erasmus+ partnership project involving four different countries, looks at how teachers cope with the many challenges of teaching in a diverse school. The project, *Teacher Well-being and Diversity: Managing Language and Social Diversity in Classrooms,* aims at strengthening knowledge generation, innovation and dissemination in relation to multilingualism, multiculturalism and teacher wellbeing through national and international partnerships. The project provides the participant schools with the means to articulate their needs and concerns in relation to diversity and to engage with an intervention focused upon increasing their own sense of wellbeing. The four partner countries are Norway (lead partner), Denmark, South Africa and Ireland.

There are over 20 different nationalities represented in the school featured in this chapter, and a similar diversity of language. The majority of the children (63%) need EAL support at some stage of their time in the school, and 51% need ongoing support. Non-Catholic children account for 57% of the pupils. The physical infrastructure of the school is not supportive of the different needs in the school - there is a significant shortage of space as numbers increase. Yet despite this limitation, the school staff maintains a positive and enthusiastic outlook and strive to create an environment wherein every child is happy and has the opportunity to achieve his/her full potential. There is also a pre-school located on the campus. Both settings work to ensure an integrated, cohesive and holistic approach to child development where each child's potential is fostered and nurtured. The school encourages partnership with parents and their involvement in different aspects of school life. The school, while Catholic in ethos, welcomes students from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework underpinning this research chapter relies on the work of Soini *et al.* (2010) and what they term as Teacher Pedagogical Wellbeing (TPWB). This construct is viewed as the process of interaction in the school's multilevel learning environment, namely, interactions not only with pupils but also with colleagues, families and other members of the school community. Essentially the authors propose that the achievement of wellbeing depends on achieving a sense of balance between empowering and stressful factors (Soini *et al.* 2010). A similar model can be seen in the work of Dodge *et al.* (2012), who look at achieving equilibrium between resources for, and challenges to, wellbeing. Empowering factors (resources) may also become stress factors (challenges). For example, Soini *et al.* (2010) observe that while a teacher's interaction with their pupils may be empowering, parents and families may constitute external pressure.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used in undertaking this research which was funded by Erasmus+. The focus group was the chosen method for data gathering as this was viewed as the most effective and efficient means of including all the staff (27 teachers and five Special Needs Assistants [SNAs]). Focus groups tend to be less threatening to many research participants (Krueger and Casey 2000) and they help researchers to look beyond facts and numbers that might be obtained via survey methods, thus learning the meaning behind the facts (Leung and Savithiri 2009). This project was approved by the Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee (MIREC) in October 2016 and commenced immediately afterwards. An ethnographic approach to analysis was employed as such analysis aims to be contextual, i.e., to ground interpretation in the participants' views of 'what is going on' rather than the analyst's view (Wilkinson 2011). As the teacher participants have the experience and expertise in this context, this approach was considered to be the most relevant.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Presentation of the research findings will follow the theoretical framework of Soini *et al.* (2010) outlined earlier and will thus be divided into empowering factors and stressful factors as identified by the participants in the focus groups.

Empowering Factors

Peer mentoring and continuous professional development

Empowering factors included the support given to Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs). Carter and Francis (2001) state that the support provided to beginning teachers is critical to the quality of their immediate professional experiences as well as to their longer-term professional learning. Citing other research, they describe mentoring as a means of mitigating teacher isolation, promoting an educative workplace and leading to the creation or understanding of consensual norms in a school. The data from the research detailed in this chapter demonstrates that the experienced teachers were generous in allowing colleagues to shadow them and observe them teaching. The school follows the approach for supporting NQTs as outlined in the *Droichead* induction programme (Teaching Council 2016). There are a number of Professional Support Teams (PSTs) in the school and the new teachers are mentored in a spirit of collaboration and partnership. Mentoring was seen as increasing confidence and knowledge:

> *…[it makes] a massive difference and it can really increase your confidence in your ability to go in then and do a lesson in front of the class…*

> *…you have the opportunity to teach…and they would give you feedback…*

> *They were really affirming and that was good, I was on the right road and that was very positive for me.*

Many of the benefits associated with the Professional Learning Community (PLC) were evident in the feedback from teachers. Owen (2016) identifies the PLC as a particular feature in innovative schools. Citing other research, she presents shared vision, collaboration, engagement in practical activities, distributed leadership, professional growth and collegial learning as key features of the PLC. The value and role of the PLC also emerged in the comments about Continuing Professional Development (CPD) which emerged strongly as an empowering factor, particularly where this was conducted in-house with the entire staff involved:

> *…CPD would be quite important in terms of my knowledge and ability to teach.*

> *I was away for a while and I came back and I found that CPD was really helpful. It gave me a lot of confidence in things that had changed and developments…*

The principal teacher was identified as a key facilitator of CPD:

> *[Principal] is very good. She identifies different courses that are coming along…*

Chai and Kong (2017) observe that professional development for teachers has always been the key enabling factor for transformation in education to happen. Banks and Smyth (2011) comment on the evolution of CPD over the years and on the relationship between CPD and the historical, cultural and political contexts in which teachers are embedded. Darling Hammond *et al.* (2017) endorse the need for effective professional development for teachers in order to develop the required competencies among students for negotiating the challenges of the 21st century. Borko (2004) makes the salient point that much teacher learning is informal and is not confined to professional development courses or workshops and thus professional development must be studied within multiple contexts. This endorses the observations and experiences of the teachers as presented above. Owen (2016) comments on the limitations of one-off conferences for professional learning, especially without follow-up collegial support for trying and refining new pedagogical approaches over a longer timeframe. This is borne out in the observations of Banks and Smyth (2011) who recognise the ongoing nature of CPD and, drawing upon other research, present teacher learning as an active and constructive process that is problem-oriented, grounded in social settings and circumstances and which takes place throughout teachers' lives. The teachers in the current research recognised the need for context-specific CPD, with in-house interventions seen as more relevant:

CPD could be in-house CPD or external CPD but I think with in-house CPD for certain interventions in the school anyway that it's more directed at the context that we are teaching in…

While the teachers presented CPD as an empowering factor for their wellbeing, they also identified a need for additional CPD when supporting children with EAL. This will be addressed in more detail later.

Positive behaviour
Good manners/behaviour on the part of the children was identified repeatedly throughout the interviews as an empowering factor for the teachers. The positive climate in the school was very evident to the researchers:

Behaviour is very good here. The children have lovely behaviour.

…they are well mannered so it is easier when you have polite children who say please and thank you…

Interestingly, Banks and Smyth (2011) demonstrated a link between positive behaviour of pupils and engagement in CPD. The importance of a positive school climate was presented as having significant benefits not only for pupils themselves but for teacher professional development.

Time for meeting and engaging in group planning
The Croke Park hour[4] was viewed as being a good facilitator of planning:

…we take the Croke Park hour and…we plan together or we agree about two weeks' planning…that really helps when you plan together…

This non-contact time is very important for teachers, yet this time is limited to one hour per week after school. Awang *et al.* (2013) observe that knowledge exchange with colleagues tends to be overlooked by teachers due to the many other demands of the working day. They contend that knowledge exchange among teachers is not perceived to be part of the core activities of the school. Banks and Smyth (2011) comment on the importance of school leaders providing time and opportunity for teachers to meet and share ideas. However, local arrangements do not suffice here. The Croke Park hour is a good starting point in terms of recognising the importance of non-contact time, yet more work needs to be done here at policy level.

Feeling appreciated and valued
Feeling appreciated and valued was seen as a major empowering factor. The words "Thank you" were highlighted many times. Generally, the teachers said it was small acts of kindness or thoughtfulness from children, parents, the school principal and other members of the school community that strengthened their sense of feeling appreciated:

If a child comes in and she is happy and she is smiling and says 'Teacher I am happy to see you, it's good to be in school today' …

…if they write a note [parents], it's lovely when they actually go to the trouble of writing a note or a card.

It's really nice, the principal sometimes sends out emails to acknowledge significant events. It's amazing how nice it feels, say if someone got probated, or if you were doing professional development or something like that. It is really nice, a pat on the back.

This perspective is endorsed in The Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (NCCA 2017), which state that the importance of small everyday acts of kindness, interest, consideration and positivity cannot be underestimated.

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4 Under the Irish national public service agreement in 2011, teachers in primary schools are required to work 36 hours (33 in post-primary schools) outside of formal school time in order to facilitate planning and preparation and other identified needs of the school. These hours are known as the 'Croke Park' hours.

Stressful Factors

High percentage of children with EAL

The high percentage of children with EAL emerged repeatedly as a catalyst for stress. Teachers spoke of concerns in relation to communication, planning and differentiation. They also spoke of the inadequacy of current resourcing, in particular for children who may never have attended school before coming to Ireland. Additional CPD was viewed as necessary in this context:

> *…I'm thinking of speech and language as probably an area that none of us feel very confident about…I suppose we don't really have the content knowledge, it's not something that we have had much training in so I suppose that…a bit of concrete CPD would be good there.*

> *We're not trained speech and language therapists but at the same time we're kind of implementing speech and language interventions so we are a bit out of our depth…we have a huge percentage of kids already diagnosed and huge percentages that are not diagnosed who need speech and language input so it's an area that we definitely need to upskill on.*

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO 2006) highlight the ad hoc nature of EAL support to schools. This is mirrored in the comments from the teachers cited earlier. O'Toole and Skinner (2018) indicate that concerns in relation to EAL support are ongoing. They highlight the importance of teachers possessing knowledge and understanding of EAL pedagogy, and call for education about EAL pedagogy to form part of pre-service provision and CPD.

Sense of guilt

Allied to concerns in relation to EAL, many of the teachers identified a sense of guilt as impacting on their own confidence and ability to teach and thus on their own well-being:

> *You can feel guilty about it you know. Guilt about a child in a senior class with no English and they can't do any of the tasks sufficiently. So [feeling] guilty that you don't have more time to spend with them at their desks doing work – you feel like you are ignoring them…*

> *It can just be something that will play on your mind outside of school, that you mightn't have got to spend as much time as you would like…*

Todd (2003) observes that guilt is a commonplace reaction in classrooms particularly in the context of social justice issues. She presents guilt as a kind of response that is seen to represent a pedagogical failure of sorts. This aligned with the teachers' comments in this research.

Absenteeism

Absenteeism and late entrants to the school were also identified as stressful factors for the teacher:

> *There's a point that maybe absenteeism sometimes can affect…your knowledge and ability to teach…you're just being pulled on so many levels…*

> *…a lot of EAL children come at different times throughout the year and it's kind of hard, working where to fit them into the class or group and organise them.*

Thornton *et al.* (2013), using data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study, demonstrate a correlation between absenteeism and the language spoken in the home. They observe that the odds of having a poor attendance record were more than nine times greater for children of mothers whose native language was other than English or Irish. This demonstrates the need for a concerted approach to supporting children with EAL at national policy level. It can be seen from the direct quotes presented earlier that such support would impact positively on both the pupils and the teachers. The *Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010-2015* (DES/Office of the Minister for Integration [OMI] 2010) recognises the importance of supporting children with EAL. However, it emphasises that such support must be provided within the constraint of existing resources. This is understandable given that the strategy was produced at the height of the economic crash in Ireland. However, our economy is now improving, yet provision for schools has not increased.

Lack of knowledge and experience of different cultural norms
Teachers worried a lot about their own lack of knowledge and experience of different cultural norms:

> *I would have concerns that I wouldn't be aware of the cultural norms in the many different countries that our kids come from, and that you could just, unwittingly, infringe on or breach maybe some of the norms in your interactions…*

The management of holidays and festivals such as Christmas or Hallowe'en was identified as challenging. Cultural differences also emerged in relation to disciplining the children and this was a significant source of concern for the teachers. Such concerns were identified in the INTO (2006) publication on *Newcomer Children in the Primary Education System*. The research with the teachers outlined in this chapter took place a decade later, indicating that teachers are still experiencing the same concerns. However, it should be noted that significant progress has been made at initial teacher education level to provide future teachers with increased knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to cultural difference. The introduction of Development Education as a mandatory part of the Bachelor of Education programme since 2012 is an important development in the context of supporting teachers in diverse contexts. It may take some more time for the benefits of this development to become evident in schools.

DISCUSSION

Probably the most interesting and also worrying outcome from this research was the lack of reference to SPHE in terms of supporting teachers. Not one response included the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999). It could be argued that this area of the PSC (1999) is the most obvious location in relation to supporting diversity in the school/classroom. The third strand of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999), *Myself and the Wider World,* contains a large focus on the recognition and support of diversity. But it has not impacted on this school in terms of support. Such findings are mirrored in research cited earlier (NCCA 2008; DES 2009). This highlights the problems and limitations of the current SPHE provision. Interestingly, the *Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010-2015* (DES/OMI 2010) does not identify any specific role for SPHE in supporting diversity although many of the principles and characteristics of SPHE are evident in the document. Faas and Ross (2012) identify SPHE as a key element of the PSC (1999) in terms of exploring issues of diversity, racism and poverty. However, they do not refer to implementation of the curriculum.

As the PSC (1999) is currently undergoing review, it is timely to present these concerns. A key question relates to how to make SPHE more relevant to the daily realities of schools. In January 2018, the NCCA published their report on the consultative process which they conducted in relation to structure and time allocation in the primary school curriculum. There was a clear message that SPHE, along with a number of other curricular areas, should not be diluted in any redeveloped PSC. Unfortunately, as a result of the extensive focus on literacy and numeracy (DES 2011), it could be argued that the other curricular areas have already been subjected to dilution. There is a significant need to rethink literacy and numeracy provision and to recognise the role of the other curricular areas in the development of these core skills. But the NCCA's (2018) report demonstrates concerns that in a redeveloped PSC, some subjects may lose out in a reconstituted time allocation. How best to plan for flexible time to ensure consistency and maintain a balance that will meet children's needs, while protecting curriculum areas from either neglect or excessive attention, was highlighted. Some form of guidance to support the use of a new curriculum time allocation was considered necessary by respondents (NCCA 2018).

So far, there are no indications in relation to the role and profile of SPHE in a redeveloped curriculum. The research outlined in this chapter indicates that its role in terms of supporting diversity needs to be foregrounded in future policy documents, with an emphasis on implementation. In addition, the discourse in relation to diversity needs to be more definitive in terms of recognising the many benefits but also the many challenges within the multicultural classroom. Acknowledgement and celebration of difference does not suffice. Another salient issue is the fact that Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is also being reviewed at the time of writing. This review is very relevant to the diverse classroom as different cultural values, beliefs and morals may impact on provision. RSE needs to be placed firmly within SPHE and reviewed in the larger context of the PSC review in order to avoid the confusion and resistance to implementation which occurred at the time of the introduction of RSE in the 1990s.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the story of how one school addresses the challenges of diversity. In general, it can be observed that the main initiatives occur as a result of local resourcefulness rather than national policy. Supporting children with EAL was presented as a major challenge and the importance of CPD in this regard, and in general, was recognised. The concept of the PLC was embraced by the teachers. The positive impact of peer mentoring and effective leadership was evident. However, contrary to the expectations of the researchers, SPHE was not named as a means of supporting teachers in this very diverse context. This is in no way a reflection on the school. Instead, it is indicative of the need for a critical review and update of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) in the context of 21st century Ireland. A key consideration in the PSC review should be the status and implementation of SPHE and related areas in a revised curriculum. SPHE addresses themes of identity and citizenship which are core elements of a functioning society. This begs the question of whether SPHE needs to emerge as a core curricular area in future educational policy. In addition, the assumption of the capacity of all teachers to engage with the complexities of SPHE needs to be challenged and more recognition is needed in terms of supporting teachers' engagement with, and delivery of, this key curricular area. All of these concerns underline the timeliness of this research.

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CHAPTER 2

SPHE: An Effective Curricular Space for Promoting Respect for Diversities and Challenging Racism?

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)'s potential as an effective pedagogical space for promoting authentic respect for diversities and de-cloaking and challenging the pernicious ideological assumptions which underpin racism. The question in the title is addressed through critical analysis of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) and critical engagement with teachers' understandings of, and responses to, racism. At a national policy level, interculturalism is the Irish State's official response to cultural diversity and racism. Non-statutory *Intercultural Education Guidelines* (IEG) for schools were published in 2005 by the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

In the IEG (2005), intercultural education is conceptualised as:

> . . . education which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all areas of human life…
> sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, and
> that this breadth of human life enriches all of us. It promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair
> discrimination, and promotes the values upon which equality is built.

> (NCCA and DES 2005, p.3)

As is evident from this interpretation, diversity and diverse ways of being and living are conceptualised positively and viewed as culturally enriching. Diversity is normalised and seen in Parekh's (2006, p.226) words as a "fundamental part of the human condition". The promotion of equality is highlighted, as is challenging behaviour which undermines human rights, dignity and wellbeing. While not explicitly named, it can be argued that challenging racism is also part of this understanding of intercultural education, as racism is considered a form of discrimination. SPHE is explicitly mentioned in the IEG (2005, p.86) as a curricular space where students can learn to "respect human and cultural diversity" and to "challenge prejudice and discrimination". It is a space where students can begin to develop intercultural competence[5]. This chapter begins by critically engaging with how diversities and racism are addressed in the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999). It then critically analyses teachers' views of SPHE as a space for exploring racism. It problematises the misrecognition of racist incidents by teachers and examines the consequences for minoritised students. The chapter concludes by critically assessing whether SPHE is an effective pedagogical space for addressing diversities and racism and presents related recommendations.

Within the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999), the cognitive, affective and behavioural skills associated with intercultural competence can be fostered through elements of the strands, Myself and Myself and others; particularly those pertaining to identity, belonging and relationships. However, opportunities to explicitly foster such competences are more productive and targeted in the *Myself and the wider world* strand, particularly under the strand units, *Developing Citizenship* and *Media Education*. These units address areas such as mutual respect, belonging, rights, responsibilities, interdependence, democratic citizenship, taking action to challenge stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination and so on. The research tells us however, that this strand is the most neglected of the SPHE

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[5] "Intercultural competence is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions." (Deardorff 2006, p.3).

strands (NCCA 2008; DES 2009). One possible explanation for this, among others, is the levels of discomfort and ill-preparedness which teachers report feeling when addressing social justice issues such as discrimination which fall under this strand (Holden 2007; Bryan 2009; Lyons 2010; Philpott *et al.* 2011 and Arshad 2012). Another is the strand's sequential location, which may mean that it is addressed during the third term in schools, a time when there are frequently disruptions to curricular work.

The strand's marginalisation is problematic for a range of reasons. Studies repeatedly show that children from visible minority groups and children for whom English is a second language experience greater levels of bullying in schools (Immigrant Council of Ireland 2017). Research also shows that these students are more likely to experience harassment, marginalisation, anxiety and depression, to drop out of school, to underachieve academically, to be unhappy and lonely, to misuse substances, to develop Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and to commit suicide (Whitted and Dupper 2005; Van Hout 2010; Van den Bergh *et al.* 2010; Panko 2017; Immigrant Council of Ireland 2017). As has been well documented in the literature and news media, racist incidents are increasing in Ireland and internationally as is the normalising and mainstreaming of far-right anti-immigrant ideologies which would previously have caused serious disquiet and concern (Michaels 2017). For example, there were 330 reports of racist incidents in Ireland to European Network Against Racism (ENAR) between January and June 2017. This indicates a 33% increase since the previous six-monthly report (ibid.).

Given these stark reports and negative outcomes for students, the neglect of the "Myself and the Wider World" strand of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) is particularly problematic. Indeed, these factors underscore the need to explicitly address racism in primary schools and to address the neglect of the "Myself and the Wider World" strand as a matter of urgency. The following section critically engages with how diversity and racism are understood in the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999).

DIVERSITY AND RACISM WITHIN THE *SPHE Curriculum*

Understandings of Diversity within the *SPHE Curriculum*

Cultural diversity is the "presence of a variety of cultures and cultural perspectives within a society" (Parekh 2006, p.165). It takes account of the range of different cultural practices, cultural identities and ways of being and knowing that exist in society. Cultural pluralism, one of the most common approaches to cultural diversity, is synonymous with approaches such as multicultural education and intercultural education. Using concepts drawn from the IEG (2005), including "Identity and Belonging"; "Similarity and Difference"; "Human Rights and Responsibilities"; "Discrimination and Equality"; "Conflict and Conflict Resolution"; and discourses around "appreciating" and "respecting" diversity, a critique of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) with regard to cultural diversity and racism will be provided hereunder.

Diversity is most frequently mentioned in the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) in the context of "appreciating" and "respecting" diversity. For example, one of the broad objectives is that children would be enabled to "appreciate and respect the diversity that exists in society and the positive contributions of various cultural, religious and social groups" (NCCA 1999, p.10). In keeping with the IEG (2005) and wider literature, these are important features of an intercultural society. However, as is argued by Bryan (2010), this narrative - particularly the idea of valuing the positive contributions of minoritised groups - reinforces power asymmetries between dominant and minority groups, as minority groups are constructed in terms of how they can enrich the dominant culture. She states:

> … while the dominant cultural group simply exists, minorities exist to enrich dominant culture…the relationship between those who do the embracing and those who are embraced is dependent on the self-perceived altruism or generosity of the 'host' …and a corresponding supplication of minorities.

(Bryan 2010, p.255)

As such, while the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) gives visibility to minoritised groups, the manner in which it does so maintains the hegemony of the dominant group's culture, norms and values. Notwithstanding this hierarchical positioning, the locating of the term "respect" after the term "appreciate" at the very least acknowledges that developing respect for other groups is a process.

The IEG (2005) argue that conceptualising diversity as a normal feature of society promotes the idea that it is not just white, heterosexual, Irish-born, settled, Catholics (WHISCs) who belong (Tracy 2000 as cited in Bryan 2010, p.255), but also those who do not fit neatly into the narrow understandings of what constitutes Irishness. The IEG (2005, p.54) state: "This recognises that diversity is a characteristic of the groups who can be regarded as 'belonging' in Ireland". Feeling a sense of belonging requires pupils to feel valued as unique individuals but also valued and connected to the wider school and classroom community (Woodhead and Brooker 2008). It is inextricably linked to identity. Supporting this, Woodhead and Brooker (2008) assert that:

> Belonging is the relational dimension of personal identity, the fundamental psycho-social 'glue' that locates every individual…at a particular position in space, time and human society and – most important, connects people to each other.

<div align="right">(Woodhead and Brooker 2008, p.3)</div>

In terms of "Identity and Belonging", the *SPHE Teacher Guidelines* (1999) assert that: "In a constantly changing society it is imperative that children develop a sense of belonging—of understanding where they fit in" (NCCA 1999, p.3). According to the curriculum, the *Myself and Myself* and Others strands of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) facilitate the development of children's sense of identity and belonging.

Another interrelated concept is the focus on children learning about similarities and differences. The curriculum states that children should learn about other cultures, but significantly, it includes learning from other cultures (NCCA 1999). This helps to move away from more tokenistic approaches which tend to exoticise those that are perceived to be different. The approach promoted by the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) is akin to what Banks would term an additive approach, i.e. children learn about other cultures as part of the curriculum (Banks 2006). Banks sees this approach as important, but only as one element of a wider more holistic whole school approach. Interestingly, the much-maligned term "celebrate" is only mentioned once in the curriculum and is simply mentioned as "celebrate difference". In addition, the folkloristic elements of culture, including cuisine, music, customs and cultural holidays, are not mentioned. However, again one could infer, in the absence of more specific instruction, that learning about other cultures most likely involves learning about these elements.

Understandings of Racism in the *SPHE Curriculum*

Racism is mentioned in a very limited capacity in the SPHE Curriculum (1999). In general, rather than being explicitly mentioned, it can be inferred from the use of the broader term of "discrimination". In this instance, it is referenced in the context of understanding and challenging discrimination. For example, the curriculum states:

> As children learn to understand and practise equality, justice and fairness in school situations they will be enabled to challenge prejudice and discrimination as they experience it in their own lives both now and in the future.

<div align="right">(NCCA 1999, p.4)</div>

It appears that racism is conceptualised as an individual act in the curriculum - a by-product of individual ignorance, interpersonal prejudice and a lack of understanding of cultural differences. While it is important to recognise and address the personal dimension of racism, such conceptualisations fail to acknowledge the institutional nature of racism - how policies, structures and taken-for-granted assumptions and practices are used to privilege dominant groups at the expense of minoritised groups. This is hugely problematic as the research literature argues that initiatives that fail to take account of institutional racism have little impact on the life chances of minoritised students (Ladson-Billings 2004; Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997; May and Sleeter 2010). A failure on the part of schools to challenge and redress the impact of structures or practices which privilege or prioritise one cultural group over another is considered institutional racism. The narrow conceptualisation of racism is therefore a limitation of the curriculum.

At a thematic level, "Human Rights and Responsibilities", "Discrimination and Equality", "Conflict and Conflict Resolution" are more associated with forms of discrimination such as racism than with the concept of diversity. While human rights' instruments are not explicitly named in the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999), children's rights and responsibilities are mentioned (Kavanagh 2018). It states that through SPHE, "… children can learn about their own rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of others" (ibid. p.4). In the context of racism, there is scope as suggested in the IEG (2005, p.65) to understand racism "… as a violation of human rights" and to take action "… to challenge the denial of human rights". Similarly, in terms of "Discrimination and Equality", the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) facilitates pupils in developing an understanding of racism as a form of discrimination but also seeks to motivate and equip pupils with the relevant skills to challenge it. In terms of "Conflict and Conflict Resolution", which are components of everyday life but can have particularly traumatic consequences for minoritised groups who are more susceptible to bullying, SPHE provides a space to help students to negotiate and peacefully resolve conflicts. While it is arguable that all of this is possible within the context of SPHE, the concept of racism is not foregrounded by any standard. The neglect of the *Myself and the Wider World* strand by teachers and teachers' discomfort with dealing with racism as previously argued means that racism does not receive the attention that it requires in order to preserve minoritised pupils' wellbeing.

Teacher (Mis)Recognition of Racism

According to James (2015, p.100), misrecognition occurs when something is not recognised for what it really is "… because it was not previously 'cognised' within the range of dispositions and propensities of the habitus of the person(s) confronting it". Rather the "thing" is ascribed to "… another available realm of meaning, and, in the process, interests, inequities or other effects may be maintained whilst they remain concealed" (ibid.). Reflecting international research and the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999), racism is frequently relegated to the realm of the individual within teacher discourse, with incidents downplayed or denied, and clashes of personality, cultural misunderstandings and lack of knowledge of cultural difference cited as causal factors (Ryan 2003; Raby 2004; Devine 2005; Aveling 2007; Smyth *et al.* 2009). As will be addressed below, this has significant implications for minoritised pupils.

METHODOLOGY

The study presented in this chapter adopts a qualitative case study methodology grounded in critical ethnography (Anderson 1989). Reflecting this methodology, understandings of diversity and racism and teachers' practice in this area in two case study schools are examined by drawing on the qualitative methods of observation and semi-structured interviews. Following purposive sampling, five weeks were spent in each school, observing the whole school environment, shadowing and interviewing four mainstream teachers and interviewing the principal and support teachers. Focus group interviews with pupils in the schools were also conducted.

Analysis of Data

Data were analysed using the software package N-Vivo 9. Following three phases of coding and the construction of analytic memos, the study's empirical findings were integrated with concepts drawn from intercultural and anti-racism education and from the theory of misrecognition.

Profile of Schools

The two case study schools have been ascribed the fictitiously names of Clarepark and Seven Oaks. Principals, teachers and pupils have been assignment pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. The following table provides further details on each school and the participants who are cited in this paper.

Table 1: Profile of Schools

School Name	Clarepark NS	Seven Oaks NS
School Patronage Model	Catholic	Catholic
Location	Suburban	Urban
No. of Staff	17 staff members	51 staff members
Ethnic Composition	25% pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds	51% pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds
Policy Approach to Cultural Diversity	No specific policy to address cultural diversity No anti-racism statement	Policy of Intercultural Education No anti-racism statement
Participants Cited During Analysis	Ms. Dowling (5th class teacher) Ms. Clarke (2nd class teacher) Vera (migrant student)	Ms. Brennan (Deputy Principal) Ms. Jackson (5th class teacher) Ms. Tuohy (4th class teacher) Ms. Devlin (English as an Additional Language [EAL] teacher)
No. of Interviews	2 per person	2 per person

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

SPHE as Space to Address Diversities and Racism

Reflective of the research which shows that *Myself and the Wider World* is the least taught strand of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999), when asked about where they incorporate intercultural issues such as diversity and racism into their teaching, only 14% of teachers mentioned SPHE. The specific issues of similarities and differences were highlighted in this context. When explicitly asked about addressing racism, only one teacher and one principal mentioned SPHE. Ms. Clarke (Clarepark N.S.) stated:

> And then we've sort of focused on what are the differences between people in the class in SPHE and what would be the things that are the same and that sort of thing. Very much focused on you know there's something the same about everybody. You'll always find something the same about somebody and bullying was something we touched on a lot.

(Ms. Clarke, Clarepark, Interview 1)

She continued: "I try to incorporate it [intercultural issues] into english, history and geography. Obviously, it's very easy to incorporate it in there, SPHE, kind of, drama as well" (Interview 1).

While her teacher, (Ms. Dowling, Clarepark), did not mention SPHE, Vera, a student in fifth class, did. She indicated that her teacher's focus was on sameness, on the similarities between people, what we share in common. She stated: "Yeah we do in SPHE. Like when we did it, she [Ms. Dowling] was like 'It doesn't matter if you're from another country or you have a different religion, everybody is the same.'" Vera is a migrant student. A focus on sameness alone is problematic as it fails to acknowledge that diversity and difference characterise society. If Ms. Dowling fails to acknowledge this in her teaching, it could be argued that she fails to acknowledge and legitimise minoritised pupils' social and cultural reality.

In terms of addressing racism, racist incidents are downplayed in both schools. In Clarepark, incidents are misrecognised and ignored, while in Seven Oaks, recognised incidents are addressed. In terms of downplaying and misrecognising incidents, Ms. Dowling (Clarepark) stated:

> One year. . . a child came from another country, from Africa and there was a little bit of giggling and that kind of thing about him. Maybe I wouldn't use the word racism. There was a little bit of negativity towards him because of his skin colour. . .

> (Ms. Dowling, Clarepark, Interview 1)

How teachers understand difference has important implications for how they conceptualise and interpret classroom interactions and incidents, particularly those related to racism. If a teacher adopts a deficit understanding of difference, for example, s/he will see the origin of any problem as being inherent within the individual child (Benjamin and Emejulu 2012). The following quotations demonstrate how the minoritised child is misrecognised as the problem. When referring to an incident relating to a Polish child in her class, Ms. Clarke (Clarepark) said: "I'd say it was a personality thing…". Similarly, when referring to a Malay Muslim child in her class, Ms. Dowling (Clarepark) stated:

> Like I haven't come across any racist incident this year now but there would be a little bit of slagging, well not slagging almost smirking around Aazim and that kind of thing but I don't think it's because of where he's from. It's just him.

> (Ms. Dowling, Clarepark, Interview 1)

In each of the cases, incidents are explained away as clashes of personality due to the minoritised child's deficits. Misrecognition can also manifest as non-recognition. In this instance, comments are not misrecognised, they are simply ignored and addressing them is avoided. The EAL teacher in Clarepark recounted an incident which she had observed:

> The new little Chinese boy knew the answer and he put up his hand and Ms. Dunphy asked him and he pronounced "four" with a Chinese accent. And the little boy [non-migrant Irish] beside me said "four" in a mock Chinese accent, you know imitating him. Now again, I feel the teacher heard that and didn't do anything.

> (Ms. Devlin, Clarepark, Interview 2)

Failure to recognise or choosing not to recognise racist incidents is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, a failure to recognise racist incidents means that it is highly unlikely that they will be addressed in an adequate way. Moreover, by failing to vocally name racism and its unacceptability, it arguably legitimises racist behaviour and communicates to children that the school does not take racism seriously.

Even within the same school, teachers gave different accounts of whether racist incidents took place. Ms Devlin (Seven Oaks) stated: "Not in here…". Ms. Brennan (Seven Oaks) on the other hand stated: "Occasionally, but our Travelling Community are very well settled here". Ms. Tuohy (Seven Oaks), however, recognised the existence of a racial hierarchy premised on superiority and inferiority in the school. She stated:

> Irish children sometimes think that they're better than the Travellers. The Travellers think they're better than the coloured children. They think they're a cut above, you know. There's a lot of name calling and that kind of thing.

> (Ms. Tuohy, Seven Oaks, Interview 1)

What did become apparent and is reflective of the wider literature was that some teachers misrecognised incidents of racism but also that they were fearful of addressing it, perceiving it as an emotive topic where they could possibly exacerbate an already difficult situation. Ms. Jackson (Seven Oaks) stated: "It's a very touchy subject to deal with without kind of insulting one race saying 'White children you're the ones who do it to the Black children' or vice versa. It is a very touchy subject" (Interview 2).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings outlined and analysis and on the wider literature, what can schools and teachers do to effectively respond to cultural diversity and racism? As a first step, schools should engage in an equity audit so that policies, structures and practices can be critiqued to assess whether they promote equity for all students. Without equity, diversity cannot be meaningfully respected. To address the issue of misrecognition of racist incidents, it is imperative that school staff discuss and define racism and explicitly name it in school policies, particularly the Anti-bullying Policy. Equally, the construction of an anti-racism statement, including steps for addressing institutional racism, would greatly assist schools in tackling both overt, covert and indirect racism. During the construction of such policies, all school staff would benefit from having a discussion around language use and terms that are considered inappropriate and offensive to minority groups.

Authentic respect for diversities requires equal recognition and representation. Are children's home worlds and home languages a feature of classroom life? Are children encouraged to share stories of home life? Is open-mindedness and the sharing of diverse perspectives encouraged in the classroom? Are classroom resources representative of society's diversity and as bias-free as possible, i.e. library books, toys, posters, photographs, music? Can the children hear and see children like them in the classroom and school?

At a curricular level, the explicit teaching of lessons about racism and anti-racism, how to recognise bias, to think critically and take action to challenge stereotyping and discrimination is an important first step in the fight against racism. Action could include raising awareness around the school and getting the school to take up the cause, i.e. design posters, write a play/song/rap/poem which challenges discrimination. Pupils could organise a campaign to combat discrimination and so on. This view of children as active change agents can be further supported by introducing them to people who have challenged discrimination, both from the local and wider community and further afield.

However, is SPHE the curricular space most suited to such work? The discussive methodologies promoted in the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) allow for the type of critical reflection, reflexivity, dialogue and discussion needed to unpack, deconstruct and challenge racialised assumptions, stereotypes and disparaging representations of minoritised groups. But there are challenges at the level of teacher ideology and attitudes and within the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) itself. While not exclusive to the teaching of SPHE, research shows that Irish teachers do not think about race equality and fail to see the extent to which they themselves embrace oppressive (e.g. racist) ideologies, discourses and behaviours (Connolly and Keenan 2002; Devine 2005). Secondly, the foregrounding of an individualistic approach to human development within the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999), as argued by Prof. Kathleen Lynch (in this publication) during her keynote address, is particularly problematic. As maintained by Prof. Lynch, this individualism needs to be challenged by foregrounding concepts such as human dependency and inter-dependency. A revision of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) to include an emphasis on concepts such as relationality, care, love and solidarity would augment SPHE's capacity to provide an effective pedagogical space to promote authentic respect for diversities and challenge racism.

Addressing racism at both an individual and institutional level is challenging for schools, particularly in a context where little support has been provided by the State. The current proposal to introduce a *Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill* will create a useful space for discussion and dialogue on how schools can tackle the pernicious and insidious problem of racism.

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CHAPTER 3

Intercultural Education in the Irish Primary Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of rapidly increasing inward migration over the last twenty years, Ireland has changed to become a nation with a wealth of diversity. As a result, schools have had to ensure pupils from a range of diverse backgrounds are and feel included in the classroom. Intercultural Education (ICE) is one of the key responses to including and celebrating diversity in our schools. ICE strives to eliminate prejudice and racism by creating an awareness of the diversity that exists in our society. This is achieved through teaching about the normality of diversity and the benefits that can be derived from people having different viewpoints and cultural expressions (Department of Education and Science [DES] and National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 2005). ICE fosters open mindedness and an ability to resist stereotypes and it is ultimately about being able to interact and communicate positively and effectively with those different from ourselves (Deardorff 2009 ; Cushner and Chang 2015). Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is uniquely positioned within the Irish curriculum to provide time and space to develop many of the skills and attitudes necessary for developing intercultural competences in ourselves and our students in order to prepare for life in the diverse society of Ireland today.

IRISH CONTEXT

Teachers in Ireland, regardless of their own personal beliefs and attitudes about equality and diversity, have a legal obligation to "…respect the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society" (Education Act 1998, p.5). There is a long trajectory of policies in Ireland in relation to ICE that have been published over the last twenty years (as outlined in *Table 1*).

Table 1: National Policy Timeline
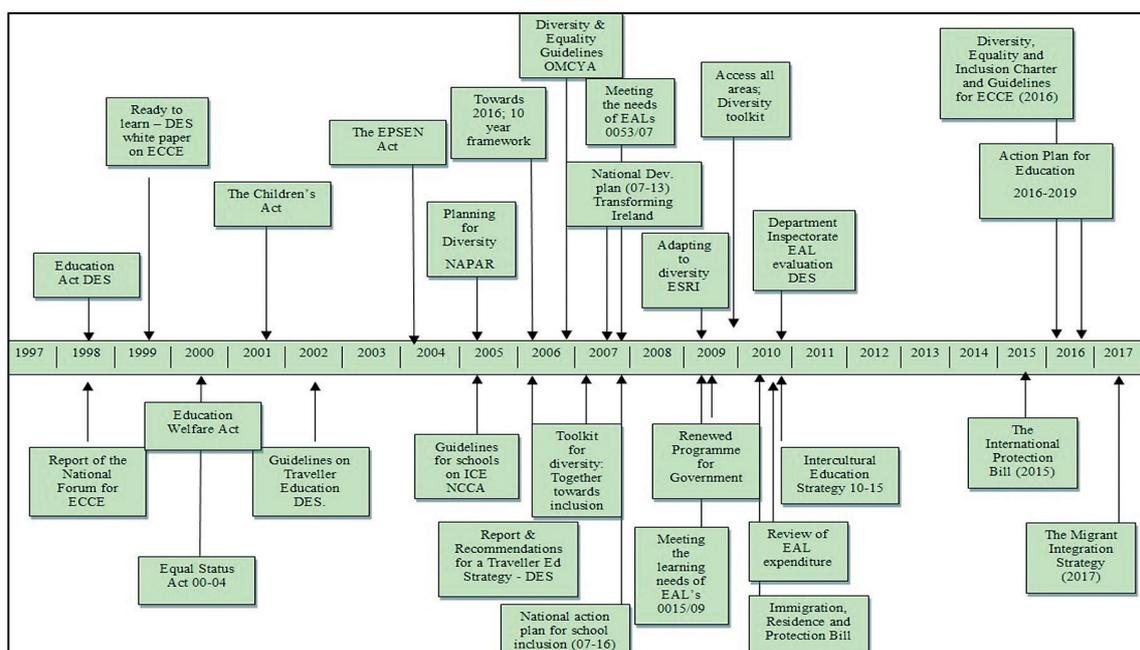
The *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for ECCE* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs [DoCYA] 2016) sum up the core idea underpinning the above policies in the following statement:

> All children have rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

> (DoCYA 2016, p.4)

ICE and catering for diversity is an area that is current and relevant as seen in the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 (Department of Education and Skills [DES] 2016) and the *Migrant Integration Strategy* (Department of Justice and Equality 2017). Ireland has strong policies in relation to catering for diversity in our country and schools, such as the *Inclusion Charter* (DoCYA 2016) and the Intercultural Education Guidelines (2005). However, despite the commitment at policy level, practical progress in the area of ICE has been slow. Bryan and Bracken (2011) are critical of the Irish policies, in particular the *Intercultural Education Guidelines* (2005), and argue that the guidelines are ineffective due to inadequate training and support for teachers.

LITERATURE

ICE comes from the concept of interculturalism which expresses a belief that we can all become personally enriched by engaging with and experiencing each other's cultures (DES and NCCA 2005). According to Vuković-Ćalasan (2018), interculturalism aims to strengthen relations between communities to make "living with each other" possible, rather than just "living next to each other" (Vuković-Ćalasan 2018, p.128). The teacher plays a huge role in promoting interculturalism in their classroom (Gay 2002; Paris 2012; Davis 2016). Education has the ability to become a means for the "other" (a person outside the dominant cultural group) to voice their beliefs and opinions and to assert their rights and worldviews (Stuart and Thomson 1995). Freire (1971) asserts that it is the teacher's task to "make it possible for us to grow together in the differences: to get unity in diversity" (Freire, cited in Crotty 1998, p.151). Education systems need to become more conscious in their efforts to remove generalisations and stereotypes from practice to allow young people to develop their own cultural and linguistic competencies (Derman-Sparks and Ramsey 2011; Pricope 2013; Toppel 2015). This view is supported by the NCCA (1999) who highlight that SPHE provides opportunities for students to develop their understandings of their own and other cultural traditions and, in doing so, challenge injustices they and others face.

The NCCA (2005) accepts that schools, and all within the school community, have a role to play in the development of an intercultural society. It is important to note that Ireland's school populations have significantly diversified over the last 15 years, however, Ireland's teaching population has remained relatively homogeneous (Devine 2005; Leavy 2005; Drudy 2006). This could make teaching ICE difficult as most teachers will not have any first-hand experience to relate to when it comes to being part of an ethnic or cultural minority. In a study that was carried out across six European countries it was found that 66.2% of teachers said they had received "none at all" or "very little" Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in the area of ICE (Fine-Davis and Faas 2014). It is imperative that teachers receive all necessary supports to ensure they can successfully prepare their pupils to live in a diverse society.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This research sought to explore the range of teachers' experiences of ICE and how they supported interculturalism in classrooms. It aimed to investigate teaching methodologies and resources for ICE that teachers have found successful when catering for diversity and/or teaching about equality. The specific research objectives were to identify the teaching methodologies and resources used by teachers to promote inclusion of pupils from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. This study further aimed to identify the perceived benefits and challenges of ICE and whether teachers felt that there was adequate support and training for teachers in this area.

METHODOLOGY

Using a sequential mixed methods approach, primary school teachers were first surveyed and subsequently interviewed to enable the researcher to obtain information that documented their opinions of diversity in the classroom and their practices when managing culturally diverse learning environments. A reflective journal was kept by the researcher throughout the study to track the experience of data gathering and note thoughts and reactions as they emerged.

A convenience purposive sampling technique was employed for this study. Purposive sampling was necessary as teachers involved in the study needed to have experience in teaching in diverse classrooms. Convenience sampling was employed due to the time limitation of this study, and so only schools local to the principal researcher were included. The final sample included 46 teachers ranging from junior infant to sixth class teachers. Thirty-eight questionnaires were completed by teachers from all class levels. Eight interviews were conducted, one for each class level. The sample included teachers from mixed mainstream schools, single sex mainstream schools and Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) schools. The sample also ranged from Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) to teachers who had over thirty years of teaching experience.

FINDINGS

All the participants of this study, due to the purposive sampling technique employed, had taught or were currently teaching children from diverse backgrounds. Half of the participants stated that they were familiar with the DES/NCCA's *Intercultural Guidelines* (2005) in the questionnaires but only four participants stated they had a good knowledge of these. This links to the first finding of the study which is that teachers feel they had not received enough training or support to teach effectively in a diverse classroom and deal with all the challenges that a diverse classroom brings (see *Table 2*).

Table 2: Teachers' opinions on training and support in ICE

I have received adequate training and support in the area of Intercultural Education

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
■ Series1	12	11	11	4	0
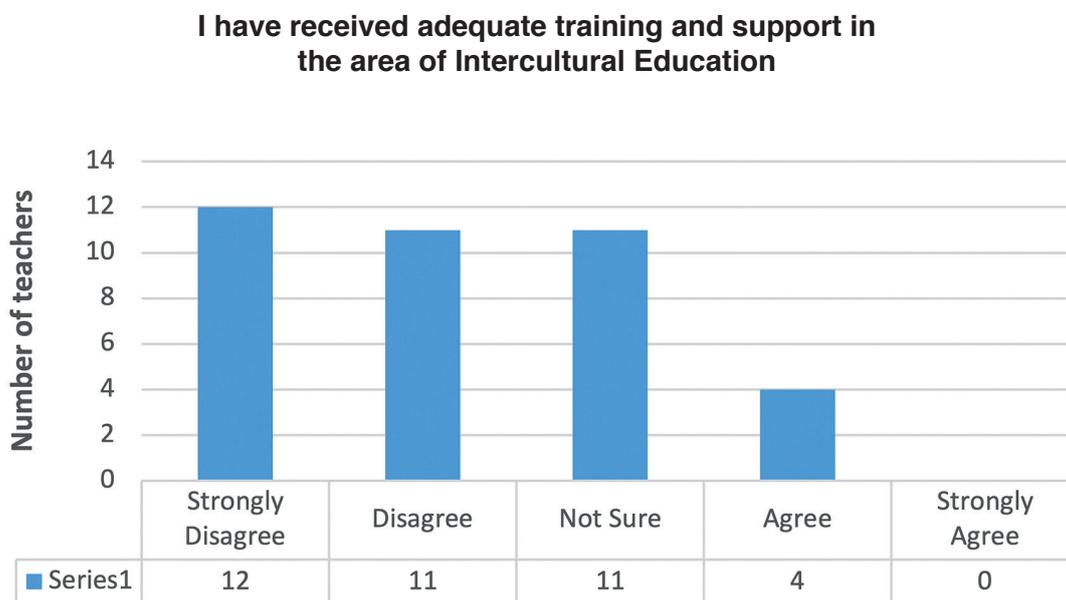
It was noted in the researcher's reflective journal that interview participants appeared quite angry and frustrated when speaking about their perceptions of training and support (or lack of) they had received in the area of ICE to date. Some signs of this irritation included, "…they started speaking much quicker and they raised their voice"; "… their face reddened"; "… they started using large hand gestures" (researcher notes). Teachers were clearly unhappy when answering this question during the interviews which signified that training and support in the area of ICE is something that needs to be given priority within the Irish education system. The questionnaire participants' (QP) dissatisfaction can also be seen in some of their comments:

> We have received no training at all from the DES. Any training that I have…I sought myself e.g. online research.

(QP 2)

> I have never received training in the area. The only supports I enjoy are those provided by colleagues.

(QP 9)

> Most of what I have learnt has been on the job and through experience in my own classroom.

(QP 37)

As can be seen in their comments, teachers in this study have learned how to cater for diversity through their own experiences, through staff support and through their own personal research. When asked in interviews how they would like more training to be administered, the most popular answer was Summer face to face courses. However, one Interviewee Participant (IP) pointed out that in-school training provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) would be very effective as each school would get training specific to their setting. Another IP also made the point that if the support was provided through centrally organised in-service it would be great as "every teacher would be getting it as opposed to it being an option" (IP 7: 5th class teacher). Pricope (2013) strongly recommends that complete training programmes and workshops be made available for educators. Devine (2017) points out that out of over one thousand CPD courses that were available in Ireland in 2016, only three addressed cultural diversity in schools. Evidently, based on the findings in this study, and other larger scale studies, more courses and support are needed.

The second finding of this study links directly to the first in that lack of teacher training and support can lead to many challenges in ICE. Teachers outlined issues that they had personally experienced when dealing with diversity in their classrooms. Such issues included lack of support for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL); creating an inclusive environment; ensuring all their pupils had access to the curriculum; sourcing suitable resources; celebrating different religions in a catholic school; lack of training to deal with diversity; and time constraints. A language barrier was the most prominent challenge for teachers in this study after teachers' challenges (e.g. lack of training) as can be seen in *Table 3*.

Table 3: Teacher-identified Challenges

Challenges on Intercultural Education

- Language
- Religious
- Teacher
- Behavioural
- Other
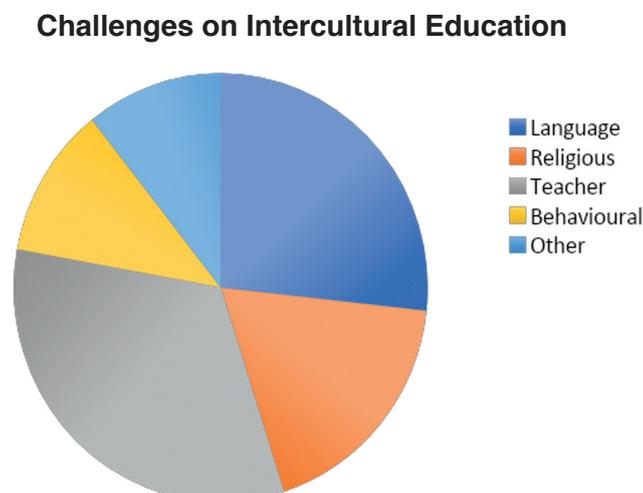
Barriers of an attitudinal nature emerged both in relation to the attitudes of other children and the attitudes of

teachers towards pupils from diverse backgrounds. Researcher reflections noted that the interview participants were very hesitant to answer this question about teachers' attitudes towards diversity. There were "long pauses" and "lots of stuttering and re-wording of sentences" (researcher notes). All but one teacher denied that their own biases and prejudices impacted their teaching. However, six out of eight interviewees believed that other teachers' attitudes probably did impact how they teach, with one interviewee stating, "I do think teacher's stereotypical views will be obvious to the children. If you have strong beliefs about something, I do think you pass it on the children unconsciously" (IP 3, 1st class teacher). Due to the lack of teacher diversity in Ireland (Devine 2005; Leavy 2005; Drudy 2006), it is vitally important for teachers to confront their own biases and beliefs (Derman-Sparks and Ramsey 2011; Davis 2016) to ensure that their prejudices or lack of information/misinformation about a particular culture, ethnicity or religion does not affect the social environment in their classrooms.

Teacher attitudes and biases also emerged as a challenge specifically in relation to working with children from the Traveller community (an Irish ethnic group). The scarcity of responses mentioning children from the Traveller community in the questionnaire responses was notable and surprising. As this was a sequential mixed methods study, the interview questions were altered as a result to include specific questions in relation to participants' experiences catering for and teaching children who are members of the travelling community. Some of the responses are provided here:

> A lot of our Traveller children might have behavioural issues, as they get older the fact that they can't read that well makes…their (bad) behaviour escalate.

> *(IP 1, Junior Infant teacher)*

> They don't have much support at home. Any homework I give them is not done. Also, their attendance is very poor…it is a case of one step forward two steps back.

> *(IP 4, 2nd class teacher)*

During interviews, it was noted by the researcher that teachers seemed uncomfortable when asked about teaching Traveller children and the benefits and challenges it might bring. One participant gave voice to this feeling of discomfort by reflecting after answering the interview questions:

> I did not know what to say, I did not want to come across bad…Traveller children are a handful because of their culture and the lack of interest in education and lack of respect for teachers…a lot of them are so academically weak that they just act out.

> *(IP 6, 4th class teacher)*

This comment highlights the tension that can exist in schools for children from the Traveller community. This teacher, while recognising this tension, blames Traveller culture for any academic or behavioural issues experienced in schools. This is mirrored by other participants who often grouped all Traveller children together and stated that children they had taught from the Traveller community had acted out due to schoolwork being too hard and that it got worse with age. These attitudes point to an education system which is failing children from the Traveller community as teachers demonstrated a lack of understanding of Traveller culture and how to support and cater for these children. This also shows poor implementation of ICE as the Traveller community is one of the largest minority ethnic groups in Ireland with an estimated 25,000 Travellers in Ireland (DES/NCCA 2005, p.12).

The *Guidelines for Traveller Education in Primary Schools* (DES 2002) state that there is a large dissonance between the social, linguistic, and cultural environments of the home and school for children from the Traveller community. It is further stressed in these DES (2002) guidelines that it may be difficult for children from the Traveller community to do their homework and that parents feel they cannot help their child due to their own "poor literacy skills" (DES 2002, p.60). Unfortunately, according to Titley (2009), "many so-called initiatives remain simply statements of intent and put unrealistic expectations on schools and teachers to deliver interculturalism without the necessary supports" (Titley 2009, p.11). More supports need to be put in place to tackle these challenges and to ensure the cycle of disadvantage for Travellers is broken.

Benefits of Intercultural Education

While there were many challenges discussed in this study in relation to ICE, it is important to note teachers' opinions of the positive contributions ICE makes to our education system. During the coding process, the benefits of ICE were merged into three categories: general benefits; educational benefits; and teacher benefits; with up to eight benefits within each category (see *Table 4*).

Table 4: Participant-identified Benefits of Intercultural Education

General Benefits	Educational Benefits	Teacher Benefits
Preparation to live in society	Learn about different countries	Teachers learn too
Opens children's minds	Learn about different cultures	Opportunity for rich discussion
Promotes respect	Learn new languages	Parental involvement
Teaches tolerance	Opportunity for peer teaching	
Celebrates diversity	First-hand accounts	
All benefit	Project work	
Natural immersion in diversity		
Normalises difference		

Preparation to live in society was the most often cited benefit and this strongly correlates with the literature. Osad'an *et al.* (2016) state that ICE will enable children to adapt more fully into a growing diverse society as they learn to reject prejudices and stereotypes and acknowledge that difference is a normal part of human nature. Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2011) reiterate the above point in stating that the lessons learned and the values taught in schools stay with a child throughout their lifetime and have a huge impact on the life they choose to lead and the decisions they make along the way. *Table 4* shows that teachers displayed a good understanding of ICE and its potential benefits.

Literature suggests that the environment of a school and a classroom has a huge impact on ICE. The final finding of the study is related to participants' attitudes and practices in relation to an ICE environment. When asked about the importance of a culturally rich physical environment, 35 of the 38 survey respondents selected the 'important to very important' category on the Likert scale. According to Roux (2002), it is the duty of the intercultural educator to create an environment that enables students to find their voice and to feel like they belong. This idea was reiterated in many of the participants' comments: "… the physical environment of the classroom should reflect the reality of the wider community" (QP 9); and "… if what they represent is not reflected back at them from their environment then they can feel alienated" (QP 33). Although most participants in this study stated that the physical environment was crucially important in creating an intercultural environment, physical environment was ranked as least important in the overall creation of an intercultural environment, with the most common response being having trusting and respectful relationships (see *Table 5*).

Table 5: Most Important Factors in Creating an Intercultural Environment

What do you perceive to be most important when creating and Intercultural environment?
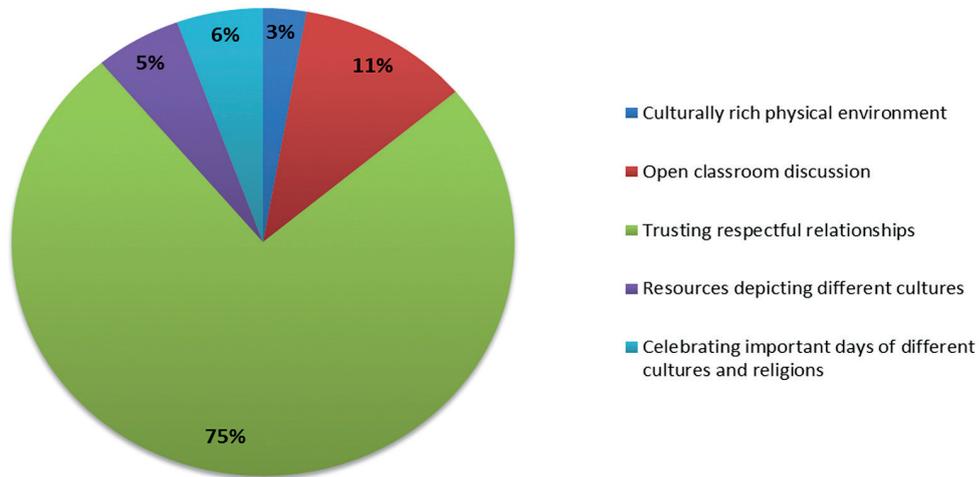
The above figure shows that the social environment was deemed much more important than the physical environment when creating an intercultural environment. Trusting, respectful relationships was the clear favourite, followed by open classroom discussion. These findings correlate with the literature, as Pricope (2013) states that teachers must build strong trusting respectful relationships with their pupils in order to create a safe social space for open intercultural discussion to take place. Correspondingly, Freire (1972) maintains that critical discussion and dialogue should be among the main methods employed to create a social environment targeted at ICE. This study also found that respectful relationships and open discussion led to a safe inclusive environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate an awareness of ICE and a genuine commitment from teachers who try to implement interculturalism into their daily practices. Having concluded the study and analysed all findings, some recommendations are discussed now under three main headings.

Recommendations for Policy

The DES/NCCA's *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools* (2005) is an excellent document to support teachers in catering for and celebrating diversity in their classroom, with sample lesson ideas and resources available. However, the results of this study showed that only half of participants were familiar with these guidelines, with only four stating they had a good knowledge of the guidelines. This suggests a lack of implementation of ICE in classrooms and a lack of familiarity with the guidelines and other supporting documents. The guidelines have had little impact on schools as they were not accompanied by in-service support, and the need for support has been widely recognised (Keane 2009; Smyth *et al.* 2009; DES 2010). Many teachers expressed an opinion that they felt unprepared when catering for all children in diverse classrooms and suggested it was a case of "trial and error" when it came to creating an intercultural environment and choosing appropriate methodologies and resources. There is a clear need for the reintroduction of ICE policies with training to support these policies, as despite the commitment at policy level, practical progress in the area of ICE has been slow.

The *Action Plan for Education* 2016-2019 (DES 2016) and the *Migrant Integration Strategy* (Department of Justice and Equality 2017) are the two current policies in Ireland in relation to ICE. The main aim of both these policies is to use education and training to break down barriers for groups at risk of exclusion, thus ensuring all have a place in Irish society. It is hoped that these policies will underline the importance of ICE and the benefits it brings. It is further hoped that these policies will be accompanied by training for both in-service and pre-service teachers, and that they will encourages educators to create intercultural environments and promote interculturalism in their classrooms and schools. Without support and training, these documents will follow the same fate as the DES/NCCA's (2005) guidelines, in that teachers will be unaware of the policies and they will not be implemented. Compulsory support and training for teachers in this area is the only way that the above policies will be realised in practice.

As mentioned previously, the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) is uniquely positioned to support the development of intercultural competencies throughout the curriculum but most especially through its second and third strands, *Myself and Others* and *Myself and the Wider World*. These strands aim to provide children with the opportunity to explore their own cultural identity and their relationships with others through placing a value on diversity and equality. However, research highlights that consistently, the third strand of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) at primary level *(Myself and the Wider World)*, is accorded less time than the other two (O'Sullivan 2014). Similar to the development of the ICE guidelines, while policy appears to support work in this area to take place in schools, it is not being mirrored in practice. It is our recommendation that as the new primary school curriculum in Ireland is being developed, a focus is placed on ensuring that all elements of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) can be realistically implemented with equal weighting in the classroom. This will require support for teachers through CPD in schools.

Recommendations for Initial Teacher Education

This study highlighted a lack of confidence felt by participating teachers when catering for diversity in their classrooms and promoting interculturalism. The teachers in this study ranged from NQTs to teachers with 30 plus years of experience. This shows that there is a need for both pre-service and in-service support in relation to ICE. Devine (2017) states that Irish teachers receive little pre-service training and CPD in the area of ICE despite recommendations being made for such training and support to be made available. Initial teacher educators must prepare pre-service teachers to address intercultural issues in schools effectively (*Forum on Patronage and Pluralism* 2012). Therefore, training in relation to ICE, and catering for and celebrating diversity, needs to be made compulsory in all teacher training institutions. This will ensure NQTs feel capable and competent in catering for all children in their classes, ensuring all feel valued and respected in the school environment.

Additionally, CPD courses need to be made available to all teachers in the area of ICE and catering for diversity. Policy makers will need to focus more on training and support if they are serious about increasing the implementation of ICE in our schools.

Recommendations for Practitioners

The Irish teaching population is predominantly made up of white, Irish, middle class female teachers, leading to a diversity gap between pupils and teachers (Keane and Heinz 2016). Due to the majority of teachers holding a privileged status in society, many may find it hard to personally relate to children in their classroom who are from diverse cultural, ethnic and/or religious backgrounds. It is essential for teachers to constantly check their own biases and prejudices and ensure fair and equal treatment of all children. In order for this to be achieved, teachers need to be reflective practitioners. They must challenge stereotypes and be good role models for the pupils.

It is recommended that teachers expand their own knowledge about the various cultures, ethnicities and faiths that are present in their classrooms and the wider school environment. This can be achieved through enrolment in CPD courses, sharing experiences with other members of staff, getting to know pupils, pupils' parents and wider family, and engaging in their own research. Teachers are in a unique position to teach about and prevent cultural and racial discrimination (Davis 2016) and play a huge role in supporting social cohesion and peaceful co-existence. Teacher fora should be established to provide a space for teachers to learn from each other, share best practice and ask for advice and opinions from other teachers around Ireland. As previously stressed, all teachers play a central role in the implementation of ICE, hence all teachers should share their knowledge and expertise with others to ensure that children across Ireland are receiving the best ICE possible.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to gain an insight into teacher's experiences of ICE in the Irish primary school classroom. It was found that teachers, for the most part, are committed to promoting interculturalism, however many do not know how best to realise this in practice. The majority of teachers were aware of the benefits ICE can bring when implemented correctly. The lessons learned and the values taught in our classrooms are the lessons and values that stay with a child throughout their lifetime and impact on the life they lead and the decisions they make (Derman-Sparks and Ramsey 2011). Every child should leave the education system ready to respect and celebrate the diversity around them and play a full and active role in a society that is grounded in values of empathy and respect. As Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world" (Mandela 2003). Educators must take the responsibility that comes with the profession and play an active role in positively shaping a society that is epitomised by acceptance and inclusion of all.

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CHAPTER 4

The Central Role of SPHE in Promoting Pupils' Wellbeing: Pupils' Perspectives

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INTRODUCTION

Wellbeing is taking an increasingly prominent position in Irish education and is now deemed an educational priority (Department of Education and Skills [DES] and Department of Health [DoH] 2015). However, wellbeing is a multi-faceted concept, meaning different things to different people, and without a universally accepted definition (Gillett-Swan and Sargeant 2015, p.138). According to the *Well-being in Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion* (2015), wellbeing is:

> …the presence of a culture, ethos and environment which promotes dynamic, optimal development and flourishing for all in the school community. It encompasses the domains of relationships, meaning, emotion, motivation, purpose and achievement.

> (DES and DoH 2015, p.9)

According to this definition, it is clear that the *Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum* (1999) addresses many of its components. SPHE contributes to pupils' development through "… the environment, the approaches and the variety of learning experiences" (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 1999, p.2). A pertinent question is, does the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) fit with the diverse wellbeing needs of pupils in Irish primary schools 20 years after its publication? The wellbeing needs of pupils span a very broad range of issues that can be transient or more long-term, and can include, but are not limited to, issues in relation to social skills, social awareness, resilience, decision-making, physical health, a sense of belonging and self-esteem.

This chapter describes some research with Irish primary-school pupils to identify wellbeing barriers and enablers. Themes that emerged as significant for pupils' wellbeing were relationships, environment, methodologies and school values. Throughout some of these themes, the sub-theme of diversity emerged. The results show SPHE not only retains its value in the curriculum in relation to enhancing pupils' wellbeing, but also highlights the increasing need for SPHE to be promoted at whole-school level, in consultation with pupils.

FRAMING WELLBEING

There is an evolving interest in the notion of wellbeing politically, societally and educationally, which is evident in national and international literature and policy. However, the lack of a universally accepted definition has led to a research base that is "… at times unclear and discrepant" (Miller *et al.* 2013, p.241). Wellbeing is sometimes presented as synonymous with mental health (Gatt *et al.* 2014), while the terms 'happiness' and 'wellbeing' are sometimes used interchangeably (Bache *et al.* 2016). Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2015) warn against the limitations of defining wellbeing from a subjective stance only, believing this fails to represent the holistic view of wellbeing. They emphasise the need for a definition that encapsulates "a long-term perspective of wellness, wellbeing and positive mental health across the lifespan" (p.138), thereby introducing the term 'accrued wellbeing'. Such a term has the benefit of implying skill development over time and the value of life experience.

In an educational context, wellbeing has been related to what Martin and Marsh (2008; 2009) call 'academic buoyancy' - a protective factor for students in relation to day-to-day school challenges. Academic buoyancy is calculated based on a number of measures, which include school engagement factors, psychological factors, family and peer relationship factors. The literature presents various barriers and enablers to student wellbeing. Loneliness in childhood and adolescence is associated with present or later mental health problems (Qualter *et al.* 2010) and higher somatic symptoms (Lohre *et al.* 2010). Teasing or bullying can lead to psychological damage (Crosnoe 2007) which in turn affects students' scholastic achievement (Franklin *et al.* 2006).

Student wellbeing and health is also negatively impacted by experiences of academic problems. For example, students with learning disabilities or with low academic achievement are found to have more emotional problems and lower social adjustment than children with average or high academic achievement (Heath and Ross 2000; Kemp and Carter 2002). By contrast, high-quality friendships can support student wellbeing and act as a protective factor against victimisation (Cuadros and Berger 2016). This is an area addressed in the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999).

Wellbeing in the Context of Irish Education

According to Nohilly (2018), wellbeing has gained a prominent position in curriculum because:

- A sense of wellbeing enables pupils to lead a more fulfilling life.
- Wellbeing and learning are connected.
- The quality of pupil-teacher relationships impacts on pupil outcomes.
- An ethic of care in schools has a very positive influence on how pupils develop.
- Schools play a central role in promoting the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of pupils.

(Nohilly 2018, p.2)

One of the issues of taking what is traditionally a health issue (wellbeing) and bringing it into educational spheres is that it tends to retain a medical model with a focus on deficits rather than strengths. As a result, research and interventions may over-emphasise children's deficits and "discount the potential to identify and promote children's strengths" (Pollard and Lee 2003, p.69). The 'educationalisation' of wellbeing leads to a new concept, that of positive education. This is defined as "education for both traditional skills and for happiness" (Seligman *et al.* 2009, p.293). It is the application of positive psychology in schools to promote student wellbeing (Kristjánsson 2012). The main positive education strategies adopted by schools consist of teaching wellbeing skills directly to students to increase their resilience, positive emotion, engagement and meaning. Such skills can be taught to students through independent short-term courses, or they can be integrated into the school's existing curricula (Zhang 2016).

Due to concerns about the lack of a "clearly defined and workable definition of wellbeing" there is a risk of the ineffective application of wellbeing programmes (Gillett-Swan and Sargeant 2015, p.146). Yet schools are also an excellent location for wellbeing initiatives. Children and adolescents spend much of their waking time in school. Thus, students' day-to-day interactions and experiences with peers, teachers and coaches are integral to their wellbeing and are important targets for wellbeing programmes (Seligman *et al.* 2009, p.295). School-based interventions focusing on emotional skills and prosocial behaviour have been shown to enhance academic achievement (Durlak *et al.* 2011). This makes sense because if pupils can pay attention, participate and engage in classroom activities and both give and receive support from peers, they are likely to succeed better than those who cannot. Thus, non-academic skills can enhance academic outcomes (Heckman *et al.* 2006). Indeed, a longitudinal Canadian study showed the early social competence of children, as rated by teachers, most strongly predicted fourth graders' self-report of their connectedness to peers, while emotional maturity in kindergarten most strongly predicted emotional wellbeing (Guhn *et al.* 2016). This study also found early social competence to be a significant predictor of academic achievement, over and above early cognitive abilities. Seligman *et al.* (2009) argue that wellbeing programmes can promote skills and strengths that are valued by parents, produce measurable improvements in students' wellbeing and behaviour, and facilitate students' engagement in learning and achievement.

In 1999, the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) introduced new content and skills for primary classrooms, with a focus on the development of the self in relationship with others. Many dimensions of SPHE can be interpreted as synonymous with wellbeing: self-awareness; decision-making; friendships; understanding and appropriate expression of emotion; understanding safety; and coping with change. Since that time, wellbeing has been more explicitly expressed. In *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (NCCA 2009), wellbeing is presented as a theme with two main elements, namely, psychological wellbeing (including feeling and thinking) and physical wellbeing. This is further developed in the *Well-being in Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion* (DES and DoH 2015), where wellbeing is presented in terms of mental health promotion. The guidelines make specific reference to the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) as "central to pupil development in its broadest sense" (DES and DoH 2015, p.14). Most recently, the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (DES 2018) requires all schools to engage in the promotion of wellbeing through the school self-evaluation process, in order to produce a wellbeing policy before 2023. The question remains - should we be investing in wellbeing programmes in Irish schools or should we be continuing to integrate social-emotional skill development through the existing *SPHE Curriculum* (1999), thereby promoting the central role of SPHE in the development of pupils' wellbeing?

METHODOLOGY

The research on wellbeing in schools is in its infancy in Ireland, although it is amassing a strong evidence base at remarkable speed. The research reported here is one section of a larger research project. Pragmatism provided a suitable epistemological and ontological framework for the overall research as it allowed the researchers to use a range of methodological tools to study the specific issue of wellbeing in schools as they arose organically from discussions with principals, teachers and pupils. Pragmatism sees knowledge as constantly changing, developing and adapting within a context (Baert 2005). It facilitates the unfolding of a research study that holds true to its aims, without the shackles of a particular methodological straitjacket. However, the principles of participatory research were also upheld in the study, with a focus on providing voice to participants and acknowledging power and power dynamics (Ferreira *et al.* 2013). This was particularly true of our work with pupils.

A case study approach was used. This can be difficult to conceptualise as "a simple definition of case study is elusive" (Hood 2009, p.68). It is frequently interpreted as an approach used to understand the particular rather than the general (Yin 2009). It focuses on "one particular instance of educational experience and attempt(s) to gain theoretical and professional insights from a full documentation of that instance" (Freebody 2003, p.81). This study used the multiple-case design, as described by Yin (2009), because the evidence from multiple cases can produce more rigorous findings (Herriott and Firestone 1983). Each case is seen as a unit of study defined by its boundedness (Pring 2000; Stake 2000): each 'bounded' by group (pupils and teachers in a school), place (Mayo, Clare and Limerick) and time (the school year 2017-2018).

This chapter presents the findings from one of the cases. The school in question was a small, rural co-educational school with three mainstream class teachers. It had little diversity in terms of pupils' ethnicity, mother tongue, religious beliefs or family structure. The school had a plan for SPHE and SPHE was being taught on a weekly or fortnightly basis by each teacher.

Information letters for both parents and children were distributed and children who returned consent forms took part in the focus group discussions. These discussions involved groups of between four and seven children and were based on class groupings; junior infants and senior infants, second and third class, fourth class, and fifth and sixth class. The focus group in this particular case was conducted by the first author. The research was explained to the pupils at the beginning of the focus group discussion and their right to refrain from answering any question and their right to withdraw from the discussion at any point was emphasised.

The focus group discussions lasted between 22 and 30 minutes. This included time showing each group how the digital recorder worked, introductions, getting to know the pupils and establishing a positive atmosphere, outlining the parameters and purpose of the research and reiterating their rights as participants. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to ensure certain questions were asked of each group, while allowing flexibility in following up on pupils' responses. Questions included; "What do you like about school?", "How do you feel going to school in the morning?", "What makes you feel happy at school?", "How does the school building affect how you feel at school?". Each discussion was transcribed and analysed thematically.

FINDINGS

Pupils were asked questions that centred on the enablers of and barriers to wellbeing in school. Pupils at all class levels were able to do this and the following themes emerged in terms of wellbeing enablers:

Table 1: Pupils' Perceptions of Wellbeing Enablers at School.

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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │  Wellbeing   │
                    │   Enablers   │
                    └──────────────┘
      ┌───────────────┬──────┴──────┬───────────────┐
┌─────────────┐ ┌─────────────┐ ┌─────────────┐ ┌─────────────┐
│Relationships│ │ Environment │ │Methodologies│ │School Values│
└─────────────┘ └─────────────┘ └─────────────┘ └─────────────┘
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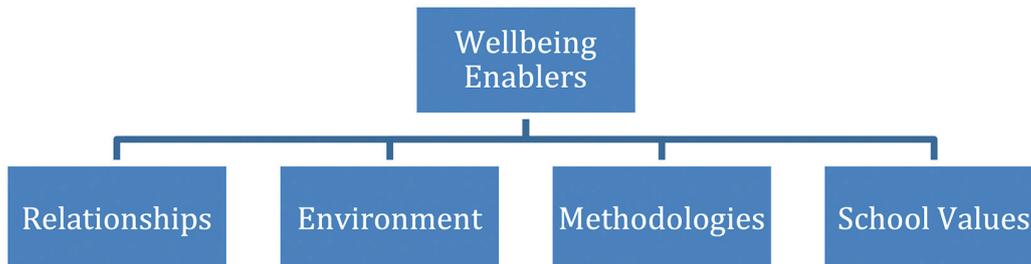
Considering the focus of this publication is on diversity, the above enablers will be considered within this context, as this emerged as a sub-theme for all of the above themes except for environment. This school had little diversity in terms of pupils' ethnicity, mother tongue, religious beliefs and family structure, so pupils frequently made reference to difference in terms of academic ability. The study highlights how this can impact on pupils' wellbeing but also indicates possible strategies for schools to use to support pupils with different learning needs. It was clear that pupils' awareness of diversity increased as they progressed through primary school. Younger pupils saw difference in more transient forms while older pupils felt a need for their 'differences' to be acknowledged by their teachers, but not highlighted among their peers.

Relationships

Friendships were an important aspect of pupils' wellbeing at all class levels. Break times which facilitated peer socialisation were the most commonly cited aspect of school enjoyed by pupils. Peer interactions were impacted by pupils' interests. Pupils with shared interests tended to play together and hence form friendships. One pupil in fourth class identified "how to make friends" as something that was learned at school. Younger pupils expressed the impact of emotion on friendships: "If you weren't happy maybe your friends won't be happy"; but also the challenge of understanding emotion: "Sometimes it might be your best friend that's sad, so you want to cheer them up, but you don't know how they're sad". In senior classes, from fourth class onwards, emotions were discussed around academic self-concept. Pupils had mixed views on the verbalisation of emotion. One pupil in fourth class indicated that he would be uncomfortable talking openly about his emotions to peers in relation to a test at school: "I would half feel embarrassed. They'd think like you're a scaredy cat 'cause you don't want to do the test". However, another pupil in the group indicated that with "good friends" this was not a problem.

Pupils' relationships with their teachers was another very strong enabler of wellbeing. For most pupils this was a very positive relationship. Only one pupil described a poor relationship with her teacher. Despite being in an infant class she articulated the impact of this very clearly:

> The teacher is usually very cross (…) I don't like when the teacher shouts at me (…) I feel kind of scared in my tummy. I feel like running away (…) She shouts because we don't do anything we're told, but I do and she just shouts for no reason at me.

(Infant girl)

Simple gestures like smiling and greeting pupils in the morning enhanced the pupil-teacher relationship. It was interpreted by pupils as an indicator that their teachers liked them and wanted to help them. One pupil in sixth class described the significance of this:

> I think if you have a good relationship with the teacher it doesn't just make you happy at school, it makes you happy at home because you're kinda looking forward to going to school the next day.

<div align="right">(5th/6th class boy)</div>

Pupils in senior classes indicated that having a good relationship with their teacher was a factor in their academic success: "The teacher makes a big difference". They also felt appreciated by their teachers: "They think we're really nice students, they're always complimenting us". They worked harder for teachers they liked and felt they could express their difficulties: "If you're scared of the teacher like if you're struggling you won't say". The pupil-teacher relationship was particularly important for pupils who felt they had learning differences, although it is discussed under school values later, as inclusion as a school value was a more important aspect of accommodating difference than just the pupil-teacher relationship.

Environment

The physical environment of the classroom and the school also impacted on pupils' wellbeing. This was primarily in relation to opportunities for socialisation which links back to pupil-pupil relationships. Pupils felt the facilities in the school were very good, with myriad opportunities for engaging in various break-time activities. One junior infant described the school as a happy school because "… it has nice stuff that we like to play with ... toys that we play with … the farm". However, senior pupils mourned the fact that they didn't have football goals as it caused frequent disharmony: "… if we put goals at the front [of the school] we wouldn't have the debate that like it's gone wide or it's gone over the bar". While football was the dominant activity for senior pupils, some pupils played yard draughts, tennis or running games. Younger pupils (boys in particular) sought places to hide and engage in imaginary games.

Within the school, pupils' work was displayed which was a source of pride for them. They enjoyed showing their work, particularly artwork and projects. Middle and senior pupils were involved in school murals in the general purpose hall. They felt the displays and the general use of colour across the school were important in making the school welcoming, relaxing and happy. One pupil indicated that the colours affected his mood. Environment was also important regarding how it was used to support learning.

Methodologies

Pupils at all class levels talked about subject areas they liked and disliked and how these impacted on their sense of wellbeing. They felt that the way in which they engaged with the subject mattered and that they learned best through interactive processes. One pupil in senior infants described the best way to learn, "… like walking around and doing". Pupils also mentioned manipulation of concrete materials, discovery learning, games and group work. However, pupils in fifth and sixth class were very measured in their responses. One boy commented that group work was only a good method if you were working in a group you liked, otherwise it prevented engagement and participation. Pupils in this focus group also indicated that games as a method should be focused on the subject, with specific outcomes, otherwise behaviour was affected.

However, by far the most commonly-cited recommendation for enhancing wellbeing in schools was an increase in breaks for short periods of time. Even in senior infants, pupils were pragmatic about breaks, indicating that "five or ten minutes" would help them to focus better because they "could be doing really hard work and then they could be stuck inside all day".

School Values

All of the findings presented thus far are heavily impacted by the theme of school values. The values of tolerance and inclusion were particularly expressed by pupils, but they went beyond the pupil-teacher relationship: they were value-based and evident at each class level. Arriving late for school was an example brought up by senior infant pupils. They indicated they weren't made feel bad for it, the teacher greeted them regardless, but they felt bad about it themselves. They appreciated the teacher's tolerance. One pupil described himself as "… giddy … I'm very giddy and I can't sit still". Despite being aware that he found it more difficult to stop moving than his peers, it was not an issue as the teacher allowed him to move and did not reprimand him for his restless behaviour. Therefore,

the teacher's tolerance ensured his behaviour wasn't consistently brought to the attention of his peers. This was also the case when pupils had difficulties in their learning. One pupil explained: "… they help you and they don't get discouraged with helping you". This gave a clear message to pupils that they were all capable of learning and that they would be supported with difficulties.

Pupils expressed an awareness of their ability and how it impacted on their wellbeing. This was particularly strong for pupils from second class upwards. From this age, pupils felt a lesser sense of wellbeing when they did poorly in a test or found work challenging. When pupils were asked about differentiation, they had mixed views. Pupils in the second/third class focus group felt they would rather do work in which they could succeed, even if it was different to others. This seemed to be due to the fact that they were already given differentiated work and they appreciated that whatever work a group was doing was challenging for them.

In the focus group discussion with four fourth class pupils, only one pupil was in favour of getting individualised work when classwork is too difficult and when s/he is likely to get it wrong. It was interesting to note that they believed their teacher could adequately cater for difference in their class and saw little need for doing different work: "… if you got it wrong you'd learn from your mistake and you'd be able to do it maybe the next time". This was explained in terms of, "We just ask [our teacher] and she explains because she's got some patience. She could stay there for an hour explaining the exact same thing until you get it" (4th class boy).

Fifth and sixth class pupils generally approved of differentiation, with the belief that pupils should "… start at a lower level so then you can build your confidence in that subject" (5th/6th class boy). This view was extended by another pupil: "… work your way up and feel really proud of yourself then". Others felt they wouldn't want to do anything different to their peers and one pupil felt that working at peer level was important so you were challenged and wouldn't fall behind as there was unlikely to be differentiation in post-primary school.

DISCUSSION

These findings in relation to pupils' perceptions of wellbeing enablers highlight a number of interesting issues for SPHE. They show that SPHE retains its value in the curriculum through discrete time (the teaching of skills, e.g., in relation to friendship) and the school atmosphere (related to school values, whole-school approaches and the physical environment).

Friendships were identified by pupils as a significant enabler of wellbeing. This is also a key finding of other larger research studies. This sense of connectedness to others is a protective factor (Cuadros and Berger 2016), enhancing participation and engagement in the curriculum (Heckman *et al.* 2006). The *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) addresses this topic at all class levels. The teaching of such prosocial behaviour impacts positively on academic achievement (Durlak *et al.* 2011).

The pupil-teacher relationship is also an important wellbeing enabler and one that is acknowledged in social-emotional research (Seligman *et al.* 2009). It is particularly significant for pupils with learning disabilities or with low academic achievement who typically have more social-emotional difficulties than children without learning needs (Heath and Ross 2000; Kemp and Carter 2002). The current study showed that the relationship was enhanced through many simple actions such as a teacher smiling, using encouraging language and greeting the pupils. More complex actions such as providing differentiation and being tolerant of pupil differences were influenced by school values. As recommended by Kyriacou (2009) and Bonfield and Horgan (2016), overly strict classroom management approaches should be avoided as they impact negatively on pupils' wellbeing. Such a relationship is addressed in the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) as part of the school atmosphere. This is also outlined as part of two of the ten actions presented in the *Wellbeing in Primary Schools Guidelines* (2015, p.34) under "Developing and maintaining a safe, caring culture and climate within the school where a sense of belonging and connectedness is fostered"; and "Building positive relationships between teachers and children to promote participation, social interaction and pro-social behaviour". It would be very useful for schools to have indicators of success to enable self-evaluation of this aspect of school life, considering its significance for pupils' wellbeing.

Pupils' sense of connectedness and belonging can also be developed through the school and classroom environment. Displaying pupils' work and creating a bright, colourful environment were both deemed important for pupils to feel welcome as well as impacting on their mood. Appropriate classroom displays can also enhance peripheral learning and scaffold pupils to become more independent (Muijs and Reynolds 2011).

Pupils' wellbeing was also enhanced through the use of activity-based methodologies. This is not related just to SPHE but to the full *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). Such methodologies enhance pupils' social skills, language skills, decision-making and tolerance (Tynan 2018). However, this study indicates that care needs to be taken with the selection of groups. Where pupils are uncomfortable in a group they participate less and have poorer self-reported outcomes. An activity such as a sociogram (see National Educational Psychological Service [NEPS] 2010) can support teachers in developing appropriate groups in a classroom to maximise the benefits of collaborative approaches.

The impact of the school's values cannot be overstated. In the case study school there was a strong communication of tolerance and inclusion to the pupils. It meant they felt safe to look for help, to express themselves authentically and to acknowledge their learning needs. While differentiation is consistently promoted as part of inclusive education (see, for example, Sousa and Tomlinson 2011), the views of pupils have rarely been sought on *how* this should be implemented. It is recommended that discussions take place with pupils with learning needs to ascertain their views on the differentiation strategies they favour. Universal Design for Learning (Meyer *et al.* 2014) is a successful approach, according to this case study school, whereby pupils are enabled to work in flexible ability groups and to access support from their class teacher. The 'My Thoughts about School Checklist' (NEPS 2010) is invaluable to start such a conversation. It can be supplemented with 'My Feelings about School Checklist' (Tynan 2018).

An appreciation of pupil diversity can be promoted very successfully through discrete SPHE lessons which promote self-awareness, relating to others and developing citizenship. Above all, a mindset of inclusion is imperative for pupils to feel they can achieve at their own level, feel proud of their success and feel they belong. This needs to be communicated through the school atmosphere and be part of the way that each teacher works.

The findings from this case study school are influenced by the findings from teacher focus group discussions in the larger research project where a majority of teachers explained that during a busy week, SPHE was frequently the subject that was not taught. This was despite the fact that the teachers participating in the research had an interest in the development of pupils' wellbeing. The case study school showed that pupils had a good sense of wellbeing in their school, a school in which the teachers taught SPHE regularly. If SPHE was to be given a more significant time slot in the weekly timetable, it would underscore the importance of this subject. The *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) 'ticks the boxes' for wellbeing development with its focus on the myriad aspects of wellbeing, but the wellbeing discourse in education is causing a sense of anxiety among teachers that they need 'a pack' or an initiative. Implementing what is already available would go a long way towards addressing pupil wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

The question was posed at the beginning of this chapter as to whether SPHE holds its value in the curriculum, 20 years after its publication and with a socio-political drive towards wellbeing in education. The findings from this study are emphatic. They show that pupils at all class levels could identify wellbeing barriers and enablers. The themes that emerged in relation to wellbeing enablers included relationships (peer and pupil-teacher), environment, methodologies and school values. Pupils' awareness of diversity increased as they went through primary school and impacted on their wellbeing. Wellbeing should not be discussed in Irish education without reference to the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) as this curriculum delivers many different aspects of wellbeing. A larger scale study to compare the wellbeing of pupils in schools where SPHE is taught regularly and with fidelity with pupils in schools where SPHE is infrequently taught would be a valuable contribution to this research area.

The authors argue that not only has SPHE retained its value, it is central to the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. Pupil populations are becoming more diverse, and with inclusive educational policy, there are more children presenting in schools with poorly- developed social and emotional skills. In many cases, these skills need to be explicitly taught. The question to be considered is whether the time allocation for SPHE should be increased to emphasise its value in the educational system. However, before that case could be argued, it is imperative that national figures on time currently spent on SPHE is evaluated. The promotion of wellbeing could simply involve going back to the drawing board and ensuring the integrity of the current 30-minute weekly time slot for SPHE.

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CHAPTER 5

Celebrating Diversities: A European Project to Tackle Gender-based Violence in the Context of SPHE

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INTRODUCTION

Background

This chapter provides information about a forthcoming school-based pilot project on promoting gender equality and tackling gender-based violence (GBV). Its genesis lies in a ground-breaking project undertaken by the authors (Collins *et al.* 2016) in 2015-16 in partnership with Belong To (www.belongto.org) who are an advocacy and support group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer (LGBTQ+) young people. Funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the earlier project aimed to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying in Irish primary schools. The classroom materials generated (called *All Together Now!*) are available for teachers to download at www.belongto.org/all-together-now/. The success of this project encouraged the authors to apply for EU funding to enable anti-bullying work to be enhanced and extended, which was granted in 2018. Titled *Gender Equality Matters* (GEM), the project is funded by the European Union's (EU) Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme under its "call to prevent and combat gender-based violence and violence against children" (ibid. p.1).

The Partners

The authors are joined in their efforts by partners in Italy (Fondazione Mondo Digitale), Greece (Family and Child Care Centre), Spain (University of Murcia) and the Netherlands (European School Heads Association). This dynamic partnership is led by the team in Dublin City University (DCU) who are based in the Institute of Education. The principal investigator (PI) for the GEM project is Dr. Seline Keating.

The Advisory Group

The project is assisted in its work by an Advisory Group (AG) which is drawn from various sectors within education and beyond. Included are primary and post-primary teachers; representatives from Educate Together and Community National Schools; National Parents' Council (Primary); Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI); and academics with expertise in the area. We are grateful for their commitment and their insightful and encouraging feedback which is helping to shape the GEM project.

KEY DEFINITIONS AND MILESTONES

Two concepts which underpin the GEM project are gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV). The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR 1968) unequivocally established equality as a fundamental principle of human rights, "…without distinction of any kind…", including on the basis of sex. The United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW 1981) addressed what was identified as a lack of progress in relation to equality for women. Article 1 defined this type of discrimination as:

> …any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

(UN CEDAW 1981, p. 2)

More recently, UN (2017) has included gender equality as a sustainable development goal (number 5) in their *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2017).

Various EU policies have sought to operationalise this fundamental right. For example, in the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (2007), Article 8 gives the EU the task of eliminating inequalities and promoting equality between men and women through all its activities. In 2015, the Council adopted the *Gender Action Plan 2016-20*, based on the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) joint staff working document on *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-20.*

GBV is defined by the European Commission (EC) as:

> …violence directed against a person because of that person's gender (including gender identity/expression) or as violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately.
>
> (https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender- based-violence/what-gender-based-violence_en)

A related term (violence against women [VAW]) is used by the UN in its *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* (1993), however the GEM partners adopted the EC definition because it recognised that violence on the basis of gender (or gender identity/expression) also applied to men and boys. It is noted here that violence against women has a much more developed research focus as outlined below.

Recent Research on GBV in the EU and Ireland

GBV has been described by Lange and Young (2019, p.301) as a "staggering but global phenomenon" best illustrated by the global #MeToo movement. The rationale for the GEM project (and other similar EU-funded projects) rests on clear evidence of the prevalence of GBV across Europe. The extent of this problem is outlined in research reports such as European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) *EU Survey on Violence Against Women* (2014) which was carried out across the 28 member states with 42,000 women being surveyed (including 1,500 face to face interviews with women in Ireland). This survey found that across the EU, one in three women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from the age of 15 onwards, while one in five had experienced stalking, with half having experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment.

In Ireland, the number of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15 is 26% (by any partner and/or non-partner). This compares with 22% in Spain, 27% in Italy, 45% in the Netherlands, 25% in Greece (reflecting our European partners), while in the UK the percentage is 44%. The wide disparity between countries is not explained in the report, however key factors in relation to acceptability of talking about GBV; increased gender equality; women's exposure to risk; overall levels of crime in a country; and different patterns of alcohol consumption are mooted as possible explanations for the striking differences. More investigation by FRA would be of benefit in terms of prevention. The survey will be repeated across EU countries in 2020-22 after which it will be possible to identify trends.

Safe Ireland describes itself as a national social change agency. In a snapshot of statistics from 2016, it highlighted that 50,551 helpline calls were received by domestic violence services across Ireland, with 10,101 individual women receiving support from these services. In the same year, more than 3,685 children received support from the same services (www.safeireland.ie/policy-publications/). This gives a clear rationale for the GEM project's focus on work in schools with children in Ireland, and for the training provided to parents through the project.

There is a large body of research which documents the effects of GBV on young people, including an increase in the likelihood of teenage pregnancy and sexual health problems among young girls who are subjected to such violence (Heise, Ellsberger and Gottmoeler 2002); early school leaving (Downes and Cefai 2016); increased depression, self-harm, anxiety and attempted suicide (LGBTIreland Report 2016; Berne, Frisen and Kling 2014); greater perceived stress and recurrent pain (Ostberg *et al.* 2018) and post-traumatic stress symptoms, particularly among girls (Baldry *et al.* 2018).

As our target groups reside mainly in the school community, we have identified key research which illuminates the prevalence and effects of school violence, including bullying. As shown by Downes and Cefai (2016) there

are key components in the prevalence of school bullying. Gender is highlighted as an issue in relation to bullying behaviours with both victimisation and perpetration being most common amongst boys (Downes and Cefai 2016), while relational bullying is highest amongst girls (Fekkes *et al.* 2004).

While much of the bullying literature as it relates to schools identifies differences in the way that boys and girls bully, the prevalence of GBV, as outlined earlier, suggested that a focus on cross-gender bullying in schools would be useful. The research in this area is less well-developed (Dytham 2018), but some interesting work is emerging. Paige *et al.* (2014) identify the onset of adolescence as a trigger for sexualised bullying. Their study found that boys were more likely to engage in sexual bullying of girls where gender was a salient component. Interestingly, a pro-bullying attitude was more predictive of sexualised bullying than the masculine sex role of the perpetrator.

In contrast, Dytham's (2018) research highlighted the prevalence of female bullying of boys and other popular girls among a 13-14 year old cohort in a secondary school in England. What is interesting about this study is not only the behaviour of the popular girls which included verbal and physical intimidation of both girls and boys, but the reaction of teachers, which differed depending on whether it was girl/girl bullying or girl/boy bullying. What this research confirms is that, in defining GBV, it is important to acknowledge that both genders can be perpetrators and victims.

In line with earlier work undertaken by the authors on homophobic and transphobic bullying, the GEM project has a secondary focus on GBV as it relates to LGBTQ+ students in schools. We know that school bullying takes many forms, including discriminatory bullying against minority groups, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community, and bullying against those who appear vulnerable to peers (Downes and Cefai 2016). Various reports (i.e. LGBTIreland Report 2016 which was undertaken by a team of researchers based in Trinity College, Dublin) confirm that 12 is the most common age for people to know they are LGBTI and that they negotiate coming out against the backdrop of a very challenging school environment where there has not been a significant reduction in LGBTI bullying in recent years (Downes and Cefai 2016). These reports also note that bullying perpetrator rates increase significantly from 11 to 15 years (coinciding with the onset of adolescence as highlighted earlier) which may have critical effects on an individual's ability to express their gender or sexual identities.

The effects of most forms of bullying have been well-documented (as outlined previously). However, it is important to note that just because someone is male/female, or LGBTI, or belongs to a minority group, it does not mean that they will automatically be bullied or victimised (Bryan and Mayock 2014). This message underpins our work with target groups. This is not to minimise the effects that such violence can have on individuals.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ecological Systems Theory

The GEM project has adopted a systems theory approach. As highlighted by Bronfenbrenner (1979), in ecological systems theory every person lives within a *microsystem* (e.g. family, peers, schools) inside a *mesosystem* (the relationships between the microsystems), which is embedded in an *exosystem* (e.g. community health services; neighbours; parents' workplace; extended family), all of which are part of the *macrosystem* (laws; traditions; beliefs and values). Each system has reciprocal effects and influences on each other (Bronfenbrenner 1979). This systemic approach is deemed to be the best approach to attain the objectives and aims of this project, which will move from a focus on microsystems to macrosystems during its lifetime.

As highlighted by Downes and Cefai (2016) and Horton (2019), interrogating school climate, institutional culture and relationships is a significant broadening of perspective beyond the bully, victim and bystander which is clearly reflected in GEM's selection of target groups and the participatory approach to be adopted. Furthermore, Downes and Cefai (2016, p.66) highlight that "top-down, information-based approaches" are not effective in parent education. There is a need for a more participatory, bottom-up approach which will actively engage parents and children in their own learning and skills development.

Children's Rights Framework

The GEM project is embedded in a children's rights framework. The UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC 1989) is a key instrument in our work in schools, as is the UDHR (1968). In addition, the project's own systems are underpinned by the EU's *10 Principles for Integrated Child Protection Systems* (n.d.). This means that every consortium partner and trainer is aware of their obligations for child safety in their dealings with all

target groups, that their interactions (including data collection) are conducted within an ethical framework, and that participants are made aware of where they can access support should any issues arise for them as a result of taking part in this project.

Participatory, Experiential and Reflective Approaches

A participatory learning methodological approach will be adopted drawing on models of experiential learning (Dale, 1946; Kolb, 1984) and reflective teaching (Schon 1983; Pollard, 2005) as these have been proven to be highly effective in education and training contexts. We are also mindful of the work of Lundy (2007), Hart (2008) and Simovska (2008) in relation to meaningful models of participation for all target groups: children; parents; educators. Finally, as our aim is to change attitudes and behaviours beyond the life of the project, we believe transformative learning theory (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2002) is a useful touchstone as it encourages deep learning which offers possibilities in this regard.

AIMS AND HOW TO GET THERE

Aims

The GEM project aims to raise awareness, build capacity and provide training for children, parents and educators, to promote gender equality through a rights and equality-based approach, to exchange good practices between the partner organisations (as listed earlier) and to empower the whole school and wider community to challenge attitudes and behaviours that undermine gender equality. We have committed to working with primary and post-primary schools, parents and educators (including individual teachers and whole school staffs).

How to Get There

While our primary focus is on fulfilling the requirements of our agreement with the EU to tackle GBV, we have identified strategies for doing this which add value not only for the schools and individuals involved during the project, but which facilitate the extension of the work beyond its proposed completion in September 2020. Based on learning from previous school-based work, we have developed a set of lessons for use in upper primary/lower post-primary classrooms. The lessons (samples of which are provided later in this chapter) will enable children to engage with the key ideas of gender equality and GBV in an age-appropriate way, and facilitate learning through real-life case studies and scenarios. These lessons will be refined during the project and will be available to all schools on completion, which will enable continuing education to take place in relation to GBV.

We believe that teachers have the teaching skills to implement the lessons as designed. However, we know that some teachers will find the topics challenging. To increase their confidence, the teachers will receive training in key aspects of the lessons, including various legal and EU instruments underpinning the work, recent research in the area, and exploration of relevant activities. In this way we hope to establish a cohort of teachers who are sensitised to these issues in their schools, and who will be in a position to continue this work into the future.

Towards the end of the project, we will provide extensive training to a small group of teachers (with a comprehensive training manual) to enable them to offer training through the education centre network. This might take the form of a series of workshops or continuing professional development (CPD) courses at school or individual teacher level, perhaps during Summer courses which are popular with teachers in the Irish context.

We are also interested in working with whole school staffs to enable them to assess their policies and practices through a gender equality lens and to develop a gender equality improvement plan if necessary. In this way, we hope to move beyond an individual teacher focus and promote a systemic approach to tackling these issues in the school community.

Parents will interact with the project in a number of ways. Firstly, the parents of those children who are taking part in the lessons will be contacted to outline the project to them and seek their approval for their child to take part. These parents (and any other interested parents in the school) will be offered an information session about GBV. In addition, we have included parent links in each of the lessons which encourages children to talk to their parents about what they have learned in the lessons and facilitates some reflection between children and parents on key themes and topics. This has the potential to engage parents who might not commit to attending an information session.

In relation to school recruitment, we have decided to cluster our recruitment efforts into three main areas: one in Dublin; one in Limerick; one in Wexford. This allows for efficiencies in training delivery and optimisation of access to support for schools. Our previous experience working in schools suggests that school recruitment will be a considerable hurdle, particularly when the topics are deemed challenging (as is the case with the GEM topics). We are also conscious that schools are increasingly busy places and that certain times of the year can be more conducive to engaging with teachers. For this reason, we will adopt a number of strategies for recruitment, including contact with schools that have previously piloted the *All Together Now!* materials; contact with teachers and principals who have undertaken CPD through the National Anti-bullying Centre (ABC); cooperation of the AG in relation to their databases of schools and teachers; on-going presentations at conferences (such as the SPHE Network Conference); contacts through networks such as the SPHE Network of which both authors are leading members. Where possible, we will endeavour to have a range of school types (e.g. denominational/non; same sex/mixed; urban/rural; large/small). Recruitment will be monitored on an ongoing basis in year one of the project and we are hoping that testimonials from year one schools will entice others to get involved.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Overview

The authors are qualified primary teachers as well as researchers and have endeavoured to ground the lessons in existing curricula, particularly the *Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum* (1999). The lessons have been designed for pupils in 5th and 6th classes in Irish primary schools, and are participatory, age-appropriate and teacher-friendly. An overview of lessons is shown in the following diagram:

Table 1: Lesson Overview.

Lesson Overview
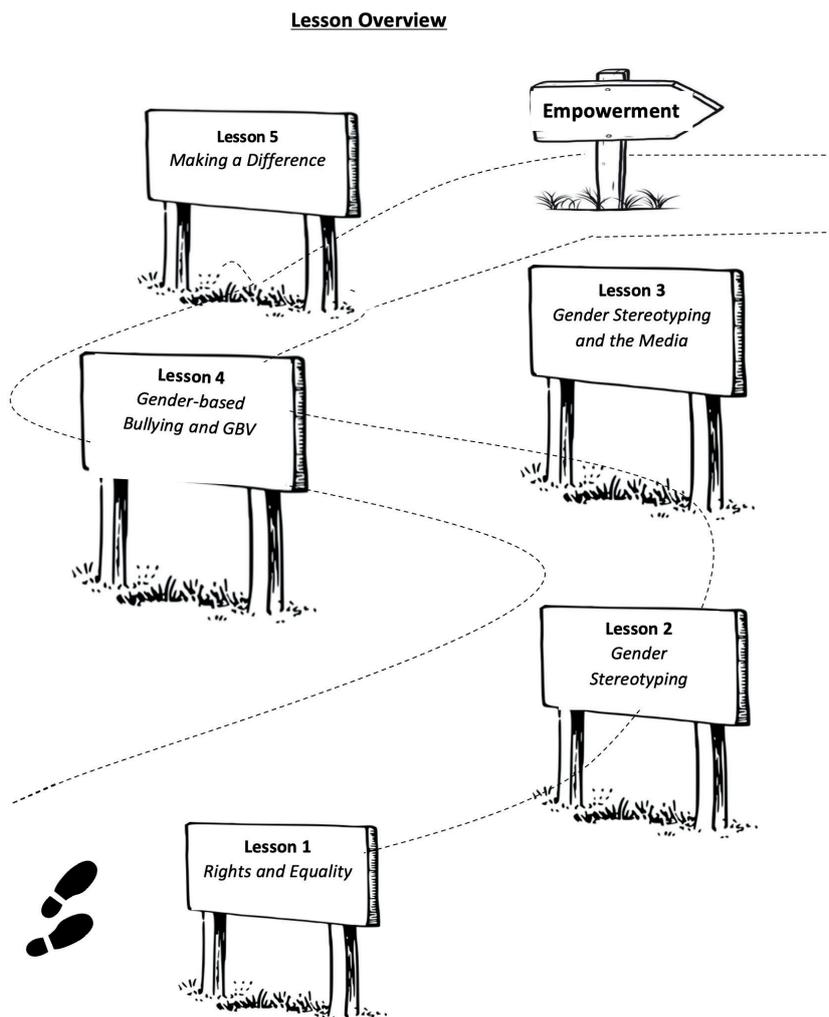
We recognise that some pupils will have completed work in aspects of the content previously (for example in human rights education). For that reason, the lessons are laid out in steps which allows the teacher to select the most appropriate starting point for their particular cohort of pupils.

Indicative Content

Lesson content will include information (e.g. *Equality Act* [2004]; *Charter of Children's Rights* [1989]); skills in handling stereotyping and bullying of all types to empower and enable children; exploration of attitudes in relation to respecting diversity and difference; and the fostering of dispositions of respect, inclusion and agency. We believe that the approach to lesson content is in line with effective programmes elsewhere (i.e. Crooks *et al.* 2019) as the lessons explore underlying attitudes and behaviours in an interactive and age-appropriate way.

The following activities from some the lessons give a flavour of the content and processes that have been designed:

Gender Equality Matters (GEM)

Lesson 1:

Step 1: *Rights and Equality*

The teacher writes the words *Rights* and *Equality* on the board to stimulate discussion.

Key Questions

Does anyone know what a right is?

Have you ever heard of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

What does universal mean?

Does that apply to Ireland then?

What about The Charter of Children's Rights – have you heard anything about this before?

In what context?

Lesson 3

Step 2: *Media Portrayals: Stories*

The pupils are divided into groups and receive a list of well-known stories with a set of key questions. These can be fairy stories (e.g. Cinderella; Sleeping Beauty; Little Red Riding Hood), or the fictional example provided in this lesson), or an extract from novels such as *The Boy in the Dress*.

Key Questions

What kind of stereotype is being portrayed in your story?

Is it about gender? Sexuality? Other stereotypes?

Why do you think that?

What would make it not stereotypical?

Lesson 5

Step 2: *People Who Have Made a Difference*

The teacher divides the pupils into small groups. Each group receives a **People Who Have Made a Difference Factsheet** with a photo, text and some quotes. Teachers select which ones to use from those provided, or substitute their own. Key questions are provided as an activity sheet for each group. Whole class discussion can follow, where one member from each group presents their **People Who Have Made a Difference** to the class who are invited to comment or ask questions.

Note: examples of people who have made a difference include Nelson Mandela, Greta Thunberg and Malala Jouszafi.

REFLECTIONS ON INITIAL RESPONSES TO GEM

Since the SPHE conference in November 2018, the GEM project has begun recruitment of schools and training with teachers and parents. While it is too early to share any data from the teachers involved in the project, some useful insights have been gained in relation to recruitment and attitudes of the target groups.

Firstly, it is apparent that it is difficult to find a time in the school calendar that is amenable to pilot work. While a small number of schools did commit to piloting in May and June, more opted to leave the work till the start of the new academic year (2019-2020). It remains to be seen if that time of year will be more conducive to engagement with schools and teachers.

Secondly, teachers and parents have been positive about the training offered. It is too early to ascertain if this is enough to foster attitudes that will help to prevent GBV in the future, however analysis of pre- and post-piloting/training data (when available) will allow for measurement of effects.

Finally, while parents could choose to have their child opt of the programme, in the six schools that were involved in the initial piloting phase, only one parent objected. This bodes well for future engagement with this target group. The difficulty of getting parents to attend on-site training has already been encountered, however the feedback from those who have attended has been very positive. We will work with schools to try to maximise parent engagement throughout the project.

MOVING FORWARD

The GEM project has the potential to empower young people, their parents and their teachers to combat gender inequality and GBV. At the end of this project, we hope to be in a position to say that attitudes have changed; dispositions have been fostered that promote inclusion and openness; and skills have been internalised that will transform the target groups' motivation and ability to effect change in their own communities. Importantly, we hope to be in a position to identify what particular aspects of the pilot project were most successful in this regard. We are mindful of the obstacles ahead to engage whole school communities in this work, and the difficulty of implementation and evaluation of such programmes (Cahill *et al.* 2019). This will inform all stages of the project.

Our greatest hope is that the work will have a ripple effect on others who have not been directly engaged with the GEM project. At the very least, we will have created resources for schools and teacher trainers which will potentially extend this work beyond the project life. To quote Nelson Mandela, "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Mandela 2003). We look forward to sharing more detailed findings with the SPHE Network and other interested parties in the coming year.

Acknowledgements

To keep up to date with this research project; the classroom materials; training modules and school self-evaluation tool due to be produced, please visit www.genderequalitymatters.eu

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CHAPTER 6

Can SPHE Challenge Citizen-peers' Exclusionary Treatment of Each Other at Primary School?

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INTRODUCTION

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) promotes social constructs such as 'citizenship' and 'diversity'. Indeed, SPHE is *the* primary school subject which makes explicit provision for children's citizenship education. In this chapter, citizenship is recognised as encompassing all citizens' social, political and civic rights that enable and entitle them to participate in democratic processes for the common good, if they so wish. Yet research highlights that younger children tend not to be asked for their opinions about citizenship or other related constructs such as diversity (Deegan *et al.* 2004).

In this chapter, I question if the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) can be used by educators to challenge children's exclusionary behaviour towards each other at primary school. The first section of this chapter provides a brief overview of the key issues associated with the implementation of SPHE at primary level. Literature discussed in the first section also provides the rationale for my doctoral research. Section 2 outlines my research, which aims to contribute towards our knowledge about children's understandings of 'citizenship' and 'diversity'.

The primary focus of my research was on children's understandings of citizenship; attitudes to diversity as discussed in this chapter were a more minor focus. Section 3 describes the research paradigm and methodology. In Section 4, I discuss my findings in relation to 1) children's ideas about citizenship, diversity and difference, and, 2) children's treatment of fellow *citizen-peers*. I developed the term *citizen-peer* through a process of inductive analysis; it is an explanatory term, which identifies children as citizens of their peer groups at school. Overall, I found that participating children self-conceptualised themselves as citizens in name but not in practice. My participant observations also revealed children's exclusionary behaviour towards each other. I suggest this demonstrates how some children treat peers who fall outside of their social criteria for who is 'normal' and who is different. Based on my findings, I propose some questions for future qualitative research to investigate children's understandings of diversity and difference, with a view to challenging their exclusionary behaviour towards each other.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION FOR AND ABOUT DIVERSITY THROUGH SPHE

SPHE Teacher Guidelines (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 1999) make several recommendations for the delivery of the subject at primary level. They emphasise the need for schools to identify approaches which help to create a positive school climate, and suggest some specific strategies which contribute to the creation of a positive climate. These strategies include developing democratic processes, enhancing self-esteem, and, fostering respect for diversity (NCCA 1999, p.22). Specifically, in the context of the third strand of SPHE ('Myself and the wider world'), the NCCA guidelines promote the use of pedagogical practices that support and encourage children to recognise when their own behaviour may be discriminatory towards others.

It is important for children to have opportunities to engage in activities such as group decision-making, voicing their own opinions and listening to others' points of view, as these activities allow abstract concepts such as democracy and social justice to become "real and meaningful" for children (Nohilly 2016, p.42). However, embedding democratic principles and practice into school life is a challenging process and this is reflected by the small number of published examples of democratic practices and initiatives in Irish schools. As a result, Deegan *et al.* (2004, p.7) assert that gaps remain in our knowledge about children's "own understandings of diversity, and how these meanings become embedded in their everyday judgements and lived experiences". Correspondingly, Share *et al.* (2007, p.218) note

that "micro-level analysis is rare in the Irish sociology of education", with "little' space provided for children's voices, even though they are the main consumers of education". More recent research conducted by Waldron *et al.* (2014, p.37) highlights that there is "little direct evidence of the implementation of citizenship education in a primary context" (see also Deegan *et al.* 2004; Waldron and Oberman 2016; Devine and Cockburn 2018).

A study by Kavanagh (2014) demonstrates one primary school's efforts to encourage "human-rights democratic practice" through pupils' participation in a school council (Kavanagh 2014, p.58). Although shortcomings were found in relation to pupils' limited influence in their student council, Kavanagh (2014) argues that pupils were given the chance to experience the democratic process. Pupils had the opportunity to represent their peers' interests and engage with group decision-making. Likewise, Collins (2014) draws attention to the merits of integrating regular circle time sessions as part of wider democratic pedagogical practices in the Irish primary school classroom. While the broader benefits of circle time are not "readily quantifiable", she suggests that its use by teachers shows that it is valued by practitioners in the field. She argues that circle time has the potential to be "a powerful force for change" in terms of its "empowerment potential…for children on a personal, social and wider world level" (Collins 2014, p.71). Notwithstanding isolated examples of good practice, it appears that democratic education policy rhetoric is largely discordant with primary schooling practices.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPHE

Under the revised *Primary School Curriculum* (1999), SPHE promotes the notion of active citizenship (Faas and Ross 2012). It also puts a "stronger emphasis on the celebration of diversity" which takes account of the growing cultural diversity of Irish society (ibid. p.586; Kavanagh 2014; Waldron *et al.* 2014). However, the research literature identifies key factors which affect the integration of citizenship education into school policy and practices (Jeffers 2014; Waldron *et al.* 2014; Waldron and Oberman, 2016). I now outline these in relation to, school ethos, pedagogical approaches, and, the positioning of SPHE within the wider school curriculum.

School Ethos

School ethos and management are identified as independent variables that can affect the delivery of SPHE. This is recognised in curriculum documentation where the strong "moral and …spiritual dimension" of SPHE is acknowledged (NCCA 1999, p.2). This is a pertinent factor for consideration because most Irish primary schools remain under the patronage of the Catholic Church. Figures from the Department of Education and Skills (DES 2013) state that the vast majority (96%) of Irish primary schools are under the patronage of the Catholic Church. In this context, Waldron *et al.* (2014) examine the aspects of SPHE that are taught and the role schools' individual ethos and pedagogical approach plays in this process. They are also interested in the extent to which the values of inclusivity, diversity and participation (as encouraged by SPHE) are facilitated by school ethos and practice to "permeate all aspects of school life" (Waldron *et al.* 2014, p.253).

Pedagogical Approaches: Teacher-directed Activities

In addition to school ethos and management, literature highlights the important role teachers' approaches towards in-class activities play in facilitating democratic participation between children (Deegan *et al.* 2004; Waldron 2004). Literature asserts that democratic practices around decision-making ought to be encouraged by teachers to facilitate children's learning of democratic processes (Horgan *et al.* 2015; Waldron and Oberman 2016; Horgan 2017; Devine and Cockburn 2018). Yet children's absence from decision-making at school is reported in the DES Inspectorate's evaluation of SPHE in the primary school, which states that "[o]nly 5% of the schools sought the pupils' views during the planning process" (DES Inspectorate 2009, p.19). This finding is reflected in other research reports which highlight that children are less than happy with sporadic opportunities to voice their opinions and to participate in decision-making processes at school (i.e. Horgan *et al.* 2015; Waldron and Oberman 2016; Horgan 2017; Devine and Cockburn 2018).

Positioning of SPHE

Concerns have also been raised about the ambiguous curricular status attributed to SPHE, indicated by schools' tendency to position it as a non-core subject within the wider primary curriculum (Deegan *et al.* 2004; Coolahan *et al.* 2012; Faas and Ross 2012). The DES *Inspectorate Report* (2009) also found variations in the implementation of the 'Myself and the wider world' strand of SPHE at primary school level. Specifically, DES (2009) reports that areas of content on "citizenship and media education" receive "less attention" (DES Inspectorate 2009, p.79), with "fewer resources...readily available" to address curricular areas concerned with developing citizenship (ibid. p.87). This is a pertinent finding because SPHE is the only curriculum that has a strand which specifically focuses on citizenship education. *A Primary Curriculum Review* conducted by the NCCA (2008) concurs with this finding.

Roe's (2010) consultation with Dáil na nÓg[6] (compiled on behalf of the Minister for Health and Children) draws attention to students' recommendations for more SPHE classes. Her finding demonstrates that students also recognise that SPHE is not given the same status as other subjects at school. This situation raises questions about the extent to which SPHE can engender ideas about inclusivity, diversity and an active sense of citizenship if it continues to be attributed a lower curricular status and less teaching time relative to other subjects (Deegan *et al.* 2004; Waldron 2004). Deegan *et al.* (2004, p.253) assert that without "core curriculum status, there is real threat that diversity will be treated sporadically and strewn across the broad sweep of the curriculum in fractured bits and pieces".

This brief review outlines some of the key areas of concern in relation to the implementation and delivery of SPHE at primary level. In the following sections, I introduce my research, a key aim of which is to reveal some new insights into primary school children's understandings of citizenship.

RESEARCH PARADIGM AND METHODOLOGY

The primary focus of my research project was on children's understandings of citizenship; attitudes to diversity as discussed in this chapter were a more minor focus. I followed the philosophical perspectives of interpretivism and constructivism, which are premised on the notion that humans construct social reality (O'Leary 2010; Schutt 2012). I adhere to the view that children engage and interact in interpretation to reach an understanding of what 'exists' in their social worlds and how they understand and categorise these things (Schutt 2012). I recognise children as agentic social actors - their lived experience constitutes the central aspect of analysis.

I chose a qualitative and ethnographically-led methodological design, which is appropriate for exploring people's reasoning, motivations, opinions and subjective experiences at a deep level (Snape and Spencer 2003; Green and Hill 2005; Watson and Till 2009; O' Leary 2010; Schutt 2012). To explore how younger children understand citizenship and 'do' citizenship at school, my ethnographically-led research methods included semi-structured group interviews, focus groups, participant and direct observations. My research adhered to grounded analysis, which involves a process of analytic induction of the data generated (Glaser 1965; Charmaz 2006). This allowed the categories of analysis to emerge from the data rather than imposing my own pre-determined interpretative framework on it. I used MAXQDA for initial coding of audio transcripts and field notes. I then used the constant comparative method to organise codes into research themes to develop and refine explanatory concepts in order to identify their properties, explore their relationship to one another and to integrate them into an explanatory/ conceptual model. In addition, research literatures, theories about citizenship, citizenship education and, childhood development supported my data analysis. Findings discussed in the next section were generated through a process of inductive analysis of audio transcripts, field notes and observations of children's peer-to-peer interactions at school. I received consent from participating children's parents and children's assent to record focus groups, group interviews and in-class group work sessions with them. Furthermore, I gave all participating children pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

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6 Dáil na nÓg is a national youth parliament in Ireland, representing young people under 18 who do not have a vote in national elections. It was established by the Government so they could have a say in provision of local services and policies.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

From 2016 to 2017, I worked with approximately 160 children from six co-educational primary schools (Catholic and Educate Together patronage). Children's ages ranged from 9 - 12 years old (fourth to sixth class). In this section, I discuss findings in relation to two research themes: children, citizenship, diversity and difference; children's treatment of fellow *citizen-peers*.

Children's Ideas about Citizenship, Diversity and Difference: 'Someone who's Normal'

I aimed to explore children's understandings of citizenship. During group interviews and focus groups, I asked children if they knew what a citizen was. The children, who had some knowledge about what a citizen was, related it to "*someone who lives in a country*". The majority of children related citizenship to adulthood. For instance, when I asked them if they thought that they were are citizens too, the kinds of responses children gave to me were: "*We are just children*" (Tom age nine); "*We are halfways there*" (Mary, age 12); "*I don't know what that means*" (Julie, age nine); "*Is everyone a citizen?*" (Rebecca, age nine). Some children assuredly replied "Yes!" to my question. However, when I asked them what kinds of things they could do as citizens, they were unable to respond. This suggests that they predominantly self-conceptualise themselves as citizens in name as opposed to in practice. Children overwhelmingly associated citizenship duties with adulthood - something with which they largely did not want to be concerned. Children mentioned keeping your neighbourhood clean and tidy, not vandalising property, paying your bills on time and, going to work as duties they associated with (adult) citizenship.

I also wanted to explore the relationship dynamics between *citizen-peers*. I found that the differences the children identified between each other related to nationality; physicality/ability; appearance; social class; social capital/ mobility; ethnicity; culture and/ religious heritage. Children used these social criteria as a social standard for themselves and their peers in terms of who was 'normal'/different and who was not.

As part of my participant observations, I asked children to complete a worksheet in class which inquired about who they would most like to sit beside in class, and who makes a good friend. I made it clear to children that they could not name specific classmates in their responses. The aim of this exercise was to tease out the kinds of attributes and characteristics children value in their fellow peers and/ friends at school. My analysis of children's responses revealed that children from different schools used the word 'normal' to describe the kind of person they would most like to sit with at school. Children also used this word when they spoke to me (during informal playground chats) about the attributes they would like to be seen to have (by their peers), and what they would expect of their fellow peers.

The opposite of normal is abnormal. Children's use of the word 'normal' suggests it is a social criterion for acceptance used by them. I observed that children who were deemed to be different/diverse from the majority (i.e. the norm) were not accepted into the peer group. I observed that for children to be accepted, they must learn and adhere to peer group norms and values, otherwise, they cannot fully participate in peer-led activities or worse, they could be excluded from peer group activities. This is the worst fate for children at school because their relationship with their peers is perhaps *the* most important aspect of their school lives. My findings suggest that children use 'diversity' and difference as a social criterion (determinant) for their treatment of each other, namely, in relation to how they include or exclude their fellow *citizen-peers*.

The Exclusion Zone: Children's Treatment of Fellow Citizen-peers

I found children often used exclusion as a social tactic to exert their power by denying adults' and other peers' access into their peer groups. I refer to this as the *Exclusion Zone*, the 'conceptual' space which excluded children and adults occupy until they are granted access to participate in peer group activities. I noted that children's collective exclusionary actions were mainly aimed towards other children as a way of asserting their social hierarchy in the peer group. This aligns with Devine (2009) who asserts that children's interactions are:

> … deeply implicated in processes of power and control; dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in their social world in the context of what is considered as normal or "other" in the society at large.

<div align="right">(Devine 2009, p.59)</div>

My findings reflect Devine's (2009) analysis, as I frequently witnessed how children used exclusion as a strategy to secure their own social position, whilst positioning others at a lower status within the peer group. Here I refer to an extract from my field notes, which demonstrates a form of children's exclusionary treatment towards children who do not fit in with group norms:

> At break-time, children from 4th, 5th and 6th classes continued their game of Rounders from where they had left off after little break. They got into their teams and the game was soon in full swing. The group split into two sides - the opposing team's task was to get all the members of the other side 'out' by hitting them with a ball when it was their turn to do the circuit. The circuit was marked out by orange plastic cones, which spanned the width of the small schoolyard. The children must run over and back three times to complete it. If they made it through the circuit without being hit, they returned to their team. However, if they were hit, they were 'out'. Children's body language suggests that it is boring when you are 'out' as all you can do is watch from the sidelines. I noticed that players did everything they could (within the rules of the game) to make sure they stayed in for as long as possible. It was Finn's turn to throw the ball to knock 'out' someone from the opposing team. His face lit up as he held the ball in his hand, I could tell he was looking forward to having a go. However, when Colm (peer leader, 5th class) realised that Finn had the next throw, he shouted over to Lorcan (his friend): 'Make him sacrifice! Make him sacrifice!' At this, Finn, without protest, handed the ball over to Lorcan. He looked very deflated: shoulders hunched over, and head bowed as he walked back to the end of the line. Finn was excluded from the game: the others in the group also witnessed this and did nothing to stop it.

(Excerpt 1, field notes, St. Joseph's)

This cohort was a tight knit group and had been in the same class group from Junior Infants. It was obvious that Finn was not a member of this peer group (yet). He had just recently moved to this school. Finn was on the autistic spectrum and he had a different ethnic heritage[7] to the main 'White-Irish'[8] demographic of this school. I infer Finn represented an 'unknown' to the larger group and I noted he was frequently excluded from games, conversations, group collaborations and group work in class. He was also not privy to what this group regarded as being cool or important: he had not yet 'learned' their social rules of engagement. I observed Finn struggling to grasp this group's social criteria and rules, which were formed and reiterated through their years of interaction from junior infants to sixth class. Finn was grappling with this and I witnessed none of the children helping him to 'learn' this group's social norms (suffice to say, I cannot infer that no one in this group ever helped Finn; I can only infer from what I recorded during my observations).

Finn's low social status within this group was demonstrated by his exclusion from group activities. I observed that he had little voice/say within group activities. This could have impacted on Finn's sense of belonging and membership to this peer group. It also meant that he could not fully participate as a *citizen-peer* in this group. Finn was an outsider, cut adrift with little social security or support. The peer groups' intolerant and exclusionary behaviour towards Finn also suggests they were "enculturing" (Nelson 2014, p.246) and/or disciplining him into the correct social protocol for their peer group. I was relieved when both the school principal and class teacher spoke directly to this group about their treatment of Finn. I observed adults at St. Joseph's regularly spoke to this group about their exclusionary behaviour. Yet, I noted the group continued to exclude Finn. This suggests that children were adhering to their peer social norms and values as opposed to adults' instruction on how to treat others. Furthermore, I observed that when children fell out of favour with their friends, their body language inferred they were glum and downcast[9] which shows that exclusion from friendships and wider peer-to-peer interactions can be a source of unhappiness and isolation at school.

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7 Finn did not have long-standing Irish heritage. I was unable to confirm if he was born in Ireland or if he relocated to Ireland at a young age.

8 'White-Irish' is a term used in the 2016 Census.

9 Physical indicators of unhappiness included: head bowed; shoulders hunched; hands in pockets (boys); and downcast facial expression.

DISCUSSION

SPHE makes specific provision for fostering both human and cultural diversity. Correspondingly, *SPHE Teacher Guidelines* (1999) recommend pedagogical approaches which encourage children to listen to others' viewpoints and ensure that groups are regularly changed and not chosen by individual children (NCCA 1999, p.25). However, my findings draw attention to children's exclusionary behaviour and, they prompt questions relating to the wider (and possible longer-term) impacts that children's experiences of exclusion could have on their formation of ideas about diversity and difference. In addition, I query the impacts exclusion could have on what I refer to as *citizenship-esteem*. I define *citizenship-esteem* as relating to citizens' feelings of self-worth as recognised and valued members (social actors) who can contribute towards issues that matter most to them in their everyday lives within different social contexts. The notion of *citizenship-esteem* could be extended to issues relating to mental wellbeing.

Jones (1995) highlights the psychological impacts on children who are bullied, isolated and excluded by their peers. She notes that victimised children blame themselves as they see that they are the reason/cause of their peers' nasty treatment of them. Furthermore, research conducted by Nesdale *et al.* (2010, p.138) found that children who were rejected by their peers displayed "significantly more anxiety than children who were accepted by their peer group, regardless of age". Nesdale *et al.* (2010) assert that one-off experiences of rejection do not have long-term impacts on children's self-esteem. However, if children experience repeated incidences of rejection, "… it is plausible that substantial decrements in self-esteem would more likely occur" (Nesdale *et al.* 2010, p.138). Moreover, they found that "peer rejection also has the capacity to instigate prejudice" towards minority and less powerful groupings (ibid. p.142). Nesdale *et al.*'s (2010) findings highlight the importance of peer group membership and "the impact it can have on a range" of children's responses and attitudes (ibid. p.143).

I query if consistent peer rejection and/or exclusion could lead young citizens to develop negative and hostile attitudes towards others. Furthermore, what kinds of implications could this have on children's treatment of minorities who do not fit the 'standard' social criteria laid down by the peer group? My observations also suggest that adults' verbal instructions are sometimes not enough to evoke empathetic feelings in younger children. Although I observed children listening attentively to their teachers when they challenged their exclusionary behaviour, it appears they chose not to (or could not) apply the compassionate and fair treatment espoused by adults towards their peers. I suggest that children's apparent disregard of adults' pleas for better treatment of their fellow peers is an example of them using their limited autonomy as social actors during childhood. This means that they chose to do things on *their* terms in their peer group as opposed to adults'. It could also indicate strong social bonds within the main peer group, which inhibit children from including children who are deemed to be 'different'.

My findings concur with other research that asserts that children need to be taught *about* and *for* citizenship and diversity (McLaughlin 1992; Heater 2002; Deegan *et al.* 2004). Children need to learn how to put the theory of citizenship and ideas about other social concepts such as diversity into practice. My findings also reveal how children's experiences of these social constructs are manifest in their treatment of each other as *citizen-peers* at school. Deeper insights into children's social worlds at school could help educators to challenge children's exclusion of peers who represent 'the other' or who are an unknown to the wider peer group.

CONCLUSION

Informed conversation between educators, professionals, policymakers and researchers could help us to develop new and innovative ways of applying SPHE which is more congruent with children's lived experiences as *citizen-peers*, as well as actively challenging children's exclusionary behaviour towards each other. To achieve this, SPHE needs to be positioned as a core curriculum in school timetables. In addition, I suggest more qualitative research is needed to investigate what children mean when they use the word 'normal' in the context of diversity and difference. I propose the following questions for further investigation and discussion: what kinds of criteria do children use to delineate who is normal and who is not? Who/what is informing children's ideas about 'normality'? Answers to these questions would be useful to educators both at home and in schools to address exclusion and promote difference as 'normal'.

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Taking Care of Whose Body? Interventions Supporting the Wellbeing of Children with Physical Disabilities in Mainstream Classrooms

Barry Morrissey, Limerick School Project

INTRODUCTION

The composition of Irish classrooms has changed dramatically from a needs perspective in the last twenty years, with the drive towards inclusive practices replacing a model whereby children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) were educated in separate settings (Griffin and Shevlin 2011). The resulting new diversity of learners in Irish mainstream classrooms presents teachers with unique challenges and opportunities in terms of providing meaningful learning experiences for all children (Kinsella 2009). This chapter will explore the challenges and opportunities presented by the presence of a pupil who used a wheelchair in a mainstream Irish classroom. Specifically, it will examine how his wellbeing was nurtured by the implementation of two interventions which were aimed at increasing his independence. Fostering the positive wellbeing of all "members of the school community" is a key ambition of the *Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 1999, p.11) – an ambition which has been given greater impetus with the recent publication of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (Department of Education and Skills [DES] 2018). Schools must now engage with this framework, in order "to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to enhance their wellbeing" (DES 2018, p.1). As the presence of a disability is specifically identified as a "wellbeing risk" factor (DES 2018, p.13), the exploration of initiatives aimed at reducing the risk is timely. This case study research makes a modest contribution toward realising that objective.

CONTEXT

This project was undertaken during the 2018/2019 academic year in order to promote the wellbeing of a child with a physical disability, using interventions which empirical research literature demonstrates are effective for that purpose (Bottos *et al.* 2001; Rodby-Bousquet and Hägglund 2010; Bray *et al.* 2014; 2017)14 females; mean age 6 years 3 months, age range 3 to 8 years. The objective of the project was not to confirm their efficacy - rather its purpose was exploratory to determine Mark's response to them and whether or not they could be integrated effectively into a longer term plan of work for him.

Pupil Profile

Mark (pseudonym) had a diagnosis of Ataxic Cerebellar Atrophy and a moderate general learning disability. He was ten years old and in a mainstream fourth class when this research was carried out. He was unable to walk independently due to his muscle weakness and utilised both a wheelchair and a Buddy Roamer™ Posterior Walking Aid to assist him. Despite his mobility difficulties, Mark had significant strengths. He did not view his inability to walk unaided as a disability and had learned many adaptive strategies to navigate the school environment. He had a good level of proficiency with information and communication technology (ICT) and utilised a touchscreen laptop every day to support him in school. He had a passion for sports and loved getting involved in team sports with his peers. This involvement had a positive influence on his behaviour and general disposition, in line with findings from international research suggesting that sport can be transformative for wheelchair users (O'Brien *et al.* 2016)

Rationale

Mark's greatest difficulty in school was frustration. In order to prevent him from injuring himself, his teachers often curtailed his activities due to his mobility difficulties. This reduced independence frequently caused considerable upset. The purpose of the interventions detailed in this chapter were to improve his overall wellbeing by increasing his capacity to safely and independently engage in activities that many of his able-bodied peers took for granted. The long-term aim was to improve his resilience, increase physical fitness and reduce the risk of falls, by embedding skills that he could steadily augment on his journey towards increased independence.

DEFINING WELLBEING

Defining wellbeing is a complex task with broad and narrow interpretations debated from both ends of a spectrum (Dodge *et al.* 2012). Historically, a narrower definition prevailed whereby wellbeing was viewed as psychiatric and psychological in nature (Bradburn 1969; Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999). Latterly however, research indicates that wellbeing is a more comprehensive, multi-dimensional construct (Diener 2009; Dodge *et al.* 2012), encapsulating philosophical and sociological elements, in addition to the psychological component (O'Brien and O'Shea 2017). Positive relationships, being autonomous and independent, self-acceptance (Ryff 1989; Ryff and Singer 2008), resilience, physical stimulation and a sense of belonging are all synonymous with a wide-ranging conception of positive wellbeing (Bray et al. 2017). In the Irish context, this more recent, expansive view has been adopted in the design of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (DES 2018). Irish schools enacting this framework will ensure that wellbeing is embedded as "a multi-component" endeavour in their classrooms, from a curricular and pedagogical perspective (DES 2018, p.13). This includes children with disabilities who, along with their siblings, are more susceptible to lower levels of wellbeing than those without disabilities (Emerson and Giallo 2014; DES 2018). The implementation of targeted and universal wellbeing programmes for these children is, therefore, a key feature of the framework (DES 2018).Wellbeing and Independence

Wellbeing and Independence

The question, then, turns to what targeted measures educators might utilise to promote positive wellbeing for pupils with additional needs. Research indicates that "for young people with disabilities, a central barrier to experiencing friendships is a lack of independence" (Foley *et al.* 2012, p.382). For children in wheelchairs, this barrier is exacerbated by a lack of physical mobility, which serves to further restrict their movement, and can reduce their capacity to socialise with other children (Bray *et al.* 2014). Given that nurturing friendships and fostering a sense of community belonging is a key aspect of positive wellbeing (Bayer *et al.* 2018), unlocking these mobility issues is vital in order to promote independence and encourage socialisation (Bray *et al.* 2017). The efficacy of targeted wheelchair interventions for dealing with these issues has been established worldwide (Bottos *et al.* 2001; Rodby-Bousquet and Hägglund 2010; Bray *et al.* 2014; 2017), with evidence showing that they reduce the need for adult support, improve social and play skills, increase functional movement and refine driving skills (Bray *et al.* 2014). This has the net outcome of increasing the volume of activities that wheelchair users can carry out independently, with the knock-on psychosocial effects of improved lifestyle and social participation, augmenting the individual's overall wellbeing (Bray *et al.* 2014).

Wellbeing and Physical Activity

The potential for "adapted sport" to enhance the psychological ability, wellbeing and life experience of children with physical disabilities is well-established (Shapiro and Malone 2016, p.385; Zwinkels *et al.* 2015; Barg *et al.* 2010). Participation in such activities is strongly associated with improved social competence, self-efficacy, peer-support and friendships (Powrie *et al.* 2015). It also has a significant positive impact on physical wellbeing, which is important considering that research indicates that children with a "physical disability have lower fitness levels compared to their non-disabled peers" (Zwinkels *et al.* 2015, p.1). This leads to a higher prevalence of obesity in children with disabilities than those without (Bandini *et al.* 2015), causing additional secondary health problems which impact on their general health (Shapiro and Malone 2016). The evidence underscoring the importance of adapted sport in mitigating these problems and improving the overall wellbeing of those with disabilities is persuasive:

> For individuals with physical disabilities, participation in adapted sport has resulted in…improvements in feelings of depression and anxiety leading to higher levels of positive mood, the development of physical fitness and physical skills, positive perceptions of physical competence and athletic identity, expanded and increased social support, peer interactions and quality of social life across a variety of contexts, and overall enjoyment with life.

<div align="right">(Shapiro and Malone 2016, p. 387)</div>

The design of interventions supporting the participation of children in wheelchairs in sporting activities is therefore essential in promoting their overall wellbeing. Safety is a key issue and concern for teachers, and it is for that reason that such interventions must be accompanied by instruction for these children on how to safely manoeuvre their wheelchairs to ensure that risks of dismounting are minimised (Bray *et al.* 2014).

METHODOLOGY

This research was situated within the case study domain. A case study is:

> … a detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena…it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases.

<div align="right">(Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1984, p. 34)</div>

The use of the case study approach was adopted here because of its potential to illustrate and illuminate one child's experience of being in a wheelchair, in a mainstream primary classroom (Wellington 2015). It was used to explore possibilities of what might work for Mark in the future, in the quest to improve his school experience. Case studies such as this are more accessible to a wider population of teachers (Nisbet and Watt 1984), because they are contextualised and can readily be trialled by practitioners in their own classrooms who may identify similarities (Adelman *et al.* 1980). The fact that a case study can be efficiently undertaken by a single researcher with limited resources was an added benefit which impacted on its selection for this research (Cohen *et al.* 2018). However, as with all case studies (Yin 2009), no claims of generalisability to the broader population of juvenile wheelchair users can be postulated from this research.

Interventions

In line with the multi-component approach to effective wellbeing initiatives recommended in the Irish context (DES 2018), two interventions – one targeted and one universal – were implemented with Mark. The success of the first intervention would bear heavily on the second intervention, and for that reason, both interventions were set five months apart so that Mark could practice, internalise and generalise the skill being explored in the earlier intervention. Written parental consent was received in advance of the case study and Mark himself assented to participating in the research. Assurances of confidentiality were given, and both parents and child were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any point.

Evaluation Tools

A variety of evaluation tools were utilised to establish the efficacy of the interventions used in this research. Capturing "pupil voice" (Herz and Haertel 2016, p.1040) was key to the approach undertaken, and Mark completed a questionnaire following both interventions and was interviewed following the second intervention. His parents also completed questionnaires following each intervention to outline their impression of the success or otherwise of each one. Observational data collection was a key ingredient in this study and, to that end, checklists were also used by the teacher to collect data accurately in real time. To add another layer of perspective to the overall observations, both the child's teacher and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) also maintained a research diary.

INTERVENTION 1: GETTING ABOUT SAFELY

The *Getting About Safely* intervention took advantage of the well-established benefits of ICT for those with disabilities (Brodin 2010; Starcic and Bagon 2014; Westwood 2015) while reality shows that many children with disabilities are still segregated. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve Mark's independence, by developing his ability to safely self-transfer into both his roamer and wheelchair. Designed with input from all members of his multi-disciplinary team, it was intended to reduce the likelihood of falls, by providing a step-by-step guide on how Mark could transfer himself. PowerPoint was identified as the most appropriate ICT tool to reinforce the step-by-step guide, because Mark was both a visual and auditory learner. Crucially, PowerPoint facilitated the use of photographs, audio clips and videos which played to those dominant learning styles (Parette *et al.* 2011). That enabled the employment of a quasi-social story based approach (Gray 2010), where Mark's own voice narrated how he should transfer to his mobility vehicles in a reaffirming way, before using them.

Design Process

Once the efficacy of the PowerPoint-based approach was established to support the self-transfer objective, Mark's physiotherapist and occupational therapist provided advice and guidance on the best self-transfer procedure to ensure safety and success for the child. Mark was then photographed engaging in the self-transfer, with prompts from both his teacher and SNA. When the relevant photographs were taken, Mark was presented with them and asked to explain what was happening in each one. His explanations were documented and, with some amendments, were used to create a story around the photographs. This story was read to Mark multiple times and he practiced reading the story himself. He then engaged in sequencing the photographs and matching pieces of text to them. When he was fully familiar with the steps, he was recorded explaining what was happening in each photograph. These recordings were then used as the backing audio for each slide. When all the photographs and audio recordings were gathered, they were put together to form the PowerPoint.

Utilisation of Resource

On average Mark had two daily transfers to his wheelchair and four daily transfers to his roamer in school. In advance of each transfer, his SNA reminded him to open the PowerPoint which was kept minimised on his laptop. Depending on the transfer, Mark selected either the roamer or wheelchair option on the PowerPoint and played the relevant section so that he could internalise the process. When the relevant section was completed, Mark's SNA brought the appropriate mobility vehicle close to him, where he could engage in the self-transfer. Initially, his SNA also played the PowerPoint in the background, but as Mark's proficiency for transferring himself safely increased, the need for this reduced. As he became familiar with the steps, he recited the script to himself as he engaged in the transfer.

Effectiveness of Resource

To establish an empirical basis for the effectiveness of the Getting About Safely resource, Mark was observed engaging in transfers for the first ten days of the PowerPoint's use. On Day 1, Mark played the PowerPoint before self-transferring. Although the PowerPoint was also playing in the background, Mark still engaged in some unsafe manoeuvres in the transfer process. This included failing to check that his brake was on and not holding on to the legs of his roamer. When he engaged in these unsafe manoeuvres, his SNA prompted him to engage in the correct manoeuvre. This pattern was repeated in Day 2 and Day 3. By Day 4 however, Mark had started to say the script as he was engaging in each manoeuvre and, as he started doing this, his performance began to improve. By Day 10, Mark had acquired the skill and the need for the PowerPoint was reduced somewhat. Reminders were provided to Mark in subsequent weeks to say his script in order to safely self-transfer and within four weeks the need for reminders was eliminated entirely.

The resource was highly effective in fostering Mark's independence. As he was able to transfer himself, he could move around safely with minimal requests for assistance. It reduced his frustration levels, which in turn further increased the level of success he was having in transferring safely without falling. This improved his self-confidence, as his interactions with peers became more spontaneous due to his increased levels of mobility. Mark's SNA also reported that the intervention improved how other children viewed Mark. While it is a limitation of this research that a research tool was not included to establish an empirical basis for this assertion, it was an important observation, nonetheless.

Pupil Response

Mark enjoyed utilising the resource, as the survey which he completed demonstrated. His favourite aspect of it was hearing his own voice narrating what he was supposed to do, as opposed to having an adult telling him what he should be doing. This improved his self-esteem. When asked if he would like to use PowerPoint in a similar way again, he answered very clearly in the affirmative: "definitely!". His parents reported that his levels of frustration also reduced in the home and that his mood generally appeared more upbeat, as he was enabled to do more activities independently. The experience of increased independence, however, did lead to further demands for even more independence. Acceding to these requests, in the context of maintaining the child's positive wellbeing, had to be balanced against the safety risks that might follow with more autonomy.

INTERVENTION 2: PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Despite the wellbeing benefits of participation in "adapted sport" (Barg *et al.* 2010; Zwinkels *et al.* 2015, p.385; Shapiro and Malone 2016), opportunities for children in wheelchairs to engage in it with their able-bodied peers are minimal (Carter *et al.* 2014). This intervention sought to address that dearth of opportunity by adapting curricular provision in Physical Education (PE), to ensure maximum participation in an upcoming Sports Week in the school for Mark. While Intervention 1 was targeted only on Mark, this second intervention was implemented with the whole class and was guided by the principle of "universal design for learning" (Grenier *et al.* 2017, p.51).

Design Process

In advance of the school Sports Week, three formal meetings involving school personnel were held to plan the scheme of work. When the proposed programme was designed, the teachers engaged with Mark's physiotherapist and occupational therapist to ensure that the activities planned were safe. His physiotherapist completed a risk assessment and recommended two amendments to the programme. Both amendments were accepted by Mark's teachers, and the programme proceeded with pupil and parental support.

Implementation

To augment the effectiveness of the five-lesson programme implemented with the whole class, it was differentiated extensively by content, process and product, in line with evidence showing that such an approach increases learning potency (Tomlinson and Imbeau 2010).

Differentiation by content
The selective approach to content design proved essential for Mark, in order to increase his likelihood of experiencing success (Tomlinson and Imbeau, 2010). Certain activities that were usually completed during Sports Week were deselected, due to their limited differentiation potential. For example, the speed of movement required for tennis would not have been practicable for Mark and so it was replaced with hockey. The traditional "sack race" was substituted with seated precision activities, which were pre-practiced by Mark in a withdrawal-context to increase his chances of experiencing success. If substitutions such as this had not taken place, the effect on Mark's confidence may have been detrimental, as opposed to beneficial, because his capacity to experience success would have been negligible.

Differentiation by process
The success of this programme was contingent on a process approach to differentiation because running races, the staple of many sports days, were not accessible to Mark. To counteract this, a "choice" dimension was introduced on a whole-class basis. Children could choose whether they wanted to engage in a conventional running race or a short three-participant wheelchair race. This involved providing prior instruction to all pupils on how to use the wheelchair correctly using the *Getting About Safely* interactive resource. The traditional obstacle course was modified to a "crawling obstacle course", and an "exercise station" that included all of Mark's physiotherapy exercises was also introduced. The freedom to choose activities increased the autonomy of all children, which research shows is beneficial for an individual's overall wellbeing (Deci and Ryan, 2013).

Differentiation by product

The manner in which success is interpreted for any educational intervention is dependent on the intended outcomes envisaged for children. There were three levels of outcomes expected of Mark and these varied from activity to activity. Level One outcomes were reserved for activities that Mark was expected to participate in, with a purpose that differed from the other children, for example stand for eight minutes while participating in a hockey game. Level Two outcomes were applied to activities that Mark was expected to be competitive in and may win, for example the crawling obstacle course. Level Three outcomes were reserved for activities that Mark was good at and that he was expected to win, for example wheelchair activities. These activities also allowed Mark to see other children struggle with movement, using a mode of movement in which he was highly accomplished. The fact that he could assist and advise was very beneficial for his self-esteem, which in itself is an indicator of overall positive wellbeing (Du *et al.* 2017).

Effectiveness of Intervention

To establish an empirical basis for the intervention's effectiveness, a checklist was completed over the course of Sports Week. This indicated that Mark achieved all targets set for him. Crucially, it noticeably improved his physical fitness - of particular note was the fact that Mark increased his standing time from six to ten minutes, because he was motivated to stand due to the team game. His attitude towards his wheelchair also improved and he came to recognise it as a very flexible tool which he could mobilise to significant advantage over his peers in some sports. Overall, the intervention facilitated interaction, socialisation and competition, which augmented Mark's wellbeing in the physical, emotional, psychological and social spheres (Ryff 1989; Ryff and Singer 2008; Powrie *et al.* 2015).

Pupil Response

Mark's response to a questionnaire indicated that the programme was successful from a wellbeing, curricular, skill, and motivation perspective. He recognised that his curricular access increased: "I done the same stuff as everybody else. I didn't have to sit out for anything". His movement skills also improved, and he recognised that in some domains his skills were more advanced than other pupils': "… some people definitely need to improve their steering on the wheelchair". A Paralympian, who was invited into the school as part of the programme, had an inspirational effect on Mark because, in his own words, "… he is like me and he went to the Olympics. I want to go to the Olympics too!". This had a transformative effect on how Mark viewed himself and how his peers viewed his disability. His parents reported that his general outlook improved, and he requested to join a para-athletic club. The potential impact that long-term participation in this will have on his physical fitness and general wellbeing has been highlighted in previous studies (Shapiro and Malone 2016).

DISCUSSION

In designing wellbeing initiatives for primary school pupils, the importance of targeted as well as universal interventions is critical (DES 2018). This case study took account of this principle. Intervention 1 was targeted and aimed at promoting Mark's independence, as a means towards improving general wellbeing given the positive correlation that exists between the two concepts (Foley *et al.* 2012; Bray *et al.* 2017). The fact that he attained the skill and refined it to a high level increased his capacity for engaging with the second intervention, which was more universal in nature insofar as all of his peers were also involved. This second intervention increased his ability to socialise, as well as his physical fitness, both of which are associated with positive wellbeing (Bray *et al.* 2014, 2017; Shapiro and Malone 2016). The sequential design and structure of these interventions accorded with what is advocated in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (2018), and its key principles of child-centredness, inclusivity, evidence-informed, outcomes-focused and partnership approaches (DES 2018, p.9).

This case study did not include an empirical evaluation tool for establishing a baseline for Mark's wellbeing, or for scientifically determining his wellbeing when both interventions had concluded. While this is a limitation of the research, the ethics of any professional other than a trained psychologist undertaking such wellbeing assessments would be questionable. Given that this was a small-scale piece of research, undertaken independently by a teacher, without funding, acquiring such a psychological service was impractical. In any case, the purpose of this research was to design something that teachers could competently implement themselves in their own classrooms. For this reason, in line with the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (2018), the focus was placed on utilising evidence-informed interventions aimed at mitigating wellbeing "risk factors" and increasing wellbeing "protective factors" (DES 2018, p.13). Notwithstanding this, observations from his parents and SNA subsequent to

the interventions that his mood and self-confidence improved, accord with empirical research findings suggesting increased psychological functioning following interventions such as these (Shapiro and Malone 2016).

Going forward, the impact of these interventions on children other than the focus child needs further exploration. While the positive effects of "disability visibility" within wider society generally are established (Harma *et al.* 2013, p.312), there is a relative paucity of scholarly literature on its effects in a classroom situation. While Mark's SNA reported that his peers had more positive interactions with him after the interventions, replication studies should capture the peer voice in a more systematic way.

CONCLUSION

Wellbeing is a multi-component construct, affected by many different variables (O'Brien and O'Shea 2017; DES 2018). This chapter sought to explore that hypothesis by increasing one child's overall wellbeing using a targeted and universal intervention. The case study aimed to improve the child's overall wellbeing by increasing his independence, encouraging socialisation and improving his physical fitness, since the presence of these variables have been identified as being strongly associated with positive wellbeing (Bray *et al.* 2017). The results of the case study were positive. Mark, a wheelchair user, reported higher levels of independence and physical fitness, and his socialisation capacity improved. The limitations of the study are clear, however. The nature of case study research means that the findings are not generalisable and replication studies are required to add further to the discussion (Yin, 2009; Cohen *et al.* 2018). In addition, although the child's independence, socialisation and physical fitness improved, the finding that his wellbeing also improved is premised on an evidence-based assumption that these aspects improve overall wellbeing (Bray *et al.* 2014, 2017; O'Brien *et al.* 2016; Shapiro and Malone 2016). His actual wellbeing was not empirically tested as part of this research.

Notwithstanding this, this case study has some important lessons for practitioners. It has demonstrated how research literature can be used to plan transformative programmes of work aimed at improving wellbeing predictors for children with physical disabilities; and it has offered a roadmap on how the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (DES 2018) can be mobilised at school level to improve the overall wellbeing of pupils, in universal and targeted ways.

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CHAPTER 8

Critical Thinking and Picturebooks: Learning from the Stories of Refugees and Asylum - seekers

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INTRODUCTION

Migration has shaped our world culturally, socially, economically and politically. It is a natural phenomenon. For instance, less than a century ago Irish people emigrated to the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (US) to look for a better life. Today many British and Irish citizens seek their fortunes in Dubai, Canada and Australia. However, distressing scenes of children separated from their parents at the US-Mexico border, Brexit and the European response to migration have raised serious questions about migration, borders, racism and human rights. There are 65 million people displaced from their homes and 25 million refugees globally (United Nations High Commission for Refugees 2018). Teachers are facing new challenges in making sense of forced displacement and its complexities. Hence the need to understand and engage with migration is important in terms of intercultural, human rights, citizenship and global education. Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is essentially the ultimate location for exploring the broad ranging and sometimes controversial area of migration in an Irish school context. From an SPHE perspective, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers together with their diverse stories bring rich sources of real life experiences to the classroom.

When teaching about refugees, teachers should be aware that the classes they teach may have children from a refugee background in them. They may have suffered traumatic events that are not easily discussed openly. Understandably, they may also be worried about family members left behind, or feel insecure in Ireland if still awaiting a decision if they can stay. Indeed, there are many reasons why teachers need to be sensitive to refugee children and in all migration-related discussions. However, many refugee children appreciate increased awareness and understanding about their experiences. Some benefit from opportunities to share their own experiences either with their teacher or fellow pupils. Picturebooks about refugee experiences provide a safe space for both refugee and indigenous children to discuss the story of migration, to make connections, and to share experiences. By promoting critical thinking, picturebooks can play a powerful role in teaching the themes of SPHE with a particular focus on the theme of refugees and asylum seekers.

This chapter explores migration in the context of the *SPHE Curriculum* (1999). It provides a rationale for the development of critical thinking and critical literacy and it explores the intercultural theme of migration through picturebooks. Three picturebooks are discussed in detail. Finally, the chapter provides signposts for teachers seeking more information regarding teaching strategies for promoting dialogue about refugees and asylum seekers.

SPHE, INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND PICTUREBOOKS

The *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) provides a unique opportunity to explore migration in general and the stories of refugees and asylum seekers in particular. The primary curriculum for SPHE is presented through three strands: *Myself; Myself and Others; and Myself* and the *Wider World*; with the unit *Developing Citizenship* placed in the third strand. This unit encourages schools to include the study of refugees and other related human rights and global issues. The *SPHE Curriculum* (1999) aims to "develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship and an appreciation of the democratic way of life" (NCCA 1999 p.9). From an SPHE perspective, teachers need to help children navigate their way through the pervasive anti-immigrant rhetoric which currently dominates the narrative of migration. Picturebooks about the refugee experience assist teachers to explore the complex issue of migration in an age-appropriate way for primary children.

Picturebooks include a variety of stories and illustrations from a range of different ethnic groups and cultures around the world. The beauty of the illustrations and the quality of the stories provide a strong visible statement which affirms the importance of valuing diversity. These books can be used to integrate multicultural content into the primary curriculum and, in turn, can help to create an inclusive classroom atmosphere. The importance of the picturebook as a conveyor of cultural values is becoming increasingly significant in the lives of young and not-so-young children. Numerous authors have argued that a considered use of multicultural literature in the classroom has the potential to promote intercultural competencies and to equip students to live in an increasingly diverse society (Dolan 2014).

CRITICAL THINKING AND CRITICAL LITERACY

Drawing on critical literacy theories (Freire and Macedo 1987; Comber 2001; Andreotti 2014), teachers can help children to critically engage with the topic of migration in general and refugees and asylum seekers in particular. Commentators such as Comber (2001) argue that simple conceptions of literacy, so much promoted today, are inadequate. Critical literacy "transcends conventional notions of reading and writing to incorporate critical thinking, questioning, and transformation of self or one's world" (McDaniel 2004, p.472). According to Keyes (2009), critical literacy:

1) widens the definition of literacy and encourages students to read with an inquiring stance;

2) prompts students to recognize connections between their lives and the lives of real or imagined story characters;

3) promotes exploration of text in order to reveal and discuss possible author bias and subtle messages; and

4) guides reflection on how to take social action to create more compassion and equity in the world.

(Keyes 2009, p.48)

Critical literacy has been traced to the work of Paulo Freire, who taught adult learners to "read the word" in order to "read the world" and to engage in a cycle of reflection and action (Freire and Macedo 1987, p.36). It is the ability to actively read text in an active and reflective manner which promotes a deeper understanding of socially constructed concepts such as power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships. Transformative learning and transformative knowledge which embraces critical literacy involves questioning the supposedly neutral nature of powerful socio-economic messages which are communicated to us on a daily basis through the media and through a range of social institutions. These messages constitute a view produced by particular combination of historical, social and political influences. It is important to remember that alternative combinations of these influences could produce different views. Teachers and children need to have the freedom to pose a range of critical and *what if?* questions to explore alternative constructions of society and the world around us.

Critical literacy is more than just understanding what we are reading. It is about asking questions, looking at different points of view, and asking, 'which perspective is included in what we are reading?' Promoting critical literacy is multi-faceted and complex. Educators, including parents and teachers, need to help children develop their own perspectives, as well as understanding the perspectives of others in order to participate as citizens in our multicultural world. For Andreotti (2014), critical literacy generates new questions and directions for re-framing issues such as migration.

The development of critical literacy skills enables people to interpret messages in the modern world through a critical lens and challenge the power relations within those messages (Dolan 2014). Educators who facilitate the development of critical literacy encourage children to interrogate societal issues such as migration. Children's literature, including picturebooks, provides endless opportunities for teaching critical literacy and for incorporating global and justice perspectives in the classroom.

EXPLORING THE INTERCULTURAL THEME OF MIGRATION THROUGH PICTUREBOOKS

Within the intercultural theme of migration, there has been a significant increase in children's literature that deals with the issue of seeking asylum in a foreign country (Dolan 2014; Hope 2018). Refugees are defined according to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention as those who have fled their country and are unable to return due to a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" ((Article 1 (A)(2)). An asylum seeker is someone who is seeking protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed.

Refugees are a painful living reminder of the failure of societies to exist in peace and our responsibility to help those forced to flee. Flight often follows human rights abuses and violations as well as various forms of social breakdown, including war. These issues are linked to concepts such as justice, equality, tolerance, freedom and minority rights. Refugee and asylum seeker issues are constantly in the media, yet many people are still unaware of who refugees are and do not understand the reasons why they flee. Sometimes the media misrepresents migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, creating stereotypes and fuelling myths and misunderstandings. At a time where one in every 100 people in the world has been forced to flee persecution, violence or war, it is important for all citizens, including children, to understand the complex issue of seeking refuge. Sometimes it is difficult for children to fully comprehend refugee issues. Therefore, it is important to bring a human face to this complex issue and bring it closer to the every-day lives of the children.

While it is important for asylum seekers and refugees to see their stories feature in classrooms, it is also important for indigenous learners to hear these stories and to learn about the experiences of others. These stories are important for showing that refugee children are ordinary children in extraordinary circumstances (Hope 2018). Picturebooks about refugees and asylum seekers address a range of universal emotions, including fear, grief and confusion. Several picturebooks pay homage to the resilience of children placed in difficult situations. These books provide ideal teaching opportunities for exploring issues such as compassion, empathy, tolerance, justice, conflict resolution and a respect for human rights. Reasons why refuge and asylum are sought are often misunderstood and many people do not realise how much suffering is endured by asylum seekers and refugees, including children. Part of the story- telling process should include some teaching about refugees. Words such as *refugee, asylum seeker, border* and *citizen* need to be explained. While children may have a superficial awareness of these words, clarification is essential.

The following three picturebooks present three different perspectives of the refugee experience, namely, the journey to a new home; the initial period of culture shock with associated feelings of displacement; and finally dreams for the future.

The Journey by Francesca Sanna (2016)

The *Journey* by Francesca Sanna is inspired by real life stories of refugees. This beautifully illustrated and timely book explores the daunting prospect facing a family forced to leave home due to the turmoil of war. Told from a child's perspective, the book opens with a family (Mum, Dad and two children) making a sandcastle city on a beach. Following the onset of war, the widowed mother faces the difficult decision of whether to leave or stay. Sanna traces the family's long journey, highlighting the children's reluctance to leave their home and the sheer difficulty of their efforts: "The further we go the more we leave behind" (n.p.), she writes as the family switch from vehicle to vehicle sometimes hiding behind fruit or clay jugs.

Like all great picturebooks, this book requires multiple readings. The time and setting of the story are unspecified without many cultural and historical details, leaving space for the reader to interpret the story from a personal perspective. The picturebook codes of shape, position, tone and colour, used dramatically and effectively, provide a source of rich analysis and personal reflection for children.

Sanna (2016) captures the enormity of this family's journey through evocative, distinctive illustrations and interchanging palettes of colour. Dark suffocating double spreads communicate fear, uncertainty and exhaustion, whereas the brighter spreads indicate hopefulness. A mixture of realistic and fantastical illustrations provides the reader opportunity for multiple interpretations. From insurmountable waves to images depicting the mother's determination, from the dark hands of danger to the birds of freedom, the illustrations depict the family's life in turmoil. While the children trust their mother to find a solution, the graphic illustrations convey personal anxiety, maternal love and fear for her children's safety. Fear is communicated through the use of the colour black, images of a menacing sea full of mysterious pictures, and the magnified image of the border guard in contrast to the smaller images of the family. Yet, the images also convey small measures of hope. The birds in the air that the family see are free, while the refugees must find a place for themselves.

The resilience of refugees is strongly illustrated by the mother, the super heroine of the story. Sanna (2016) uses a recurring image throughout the book of the mother encircling her children, protecting and shielding them from harm. The pictures and words work together presenting a dual narrative: how the children perceive their mother and how we, the reader, perceive her is very different. While she stays strong for her children, the illustrations demonstrate her vulnerability. Her strength in the midst of tremendous stress symbolises the resilience and determination of asylum seekers and refugees, qualities which should be applauded rather than demonised.

An excellent teacher's guide for working with this picturebook has been developed by Amnesty International (n.d.). *Using Fiction to Explore Human Rights* can be accessed here: https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/exploring_the_journey_together.pdf.

The Colour of Home by Mary Hoffman and Karin Littlewood (2003)
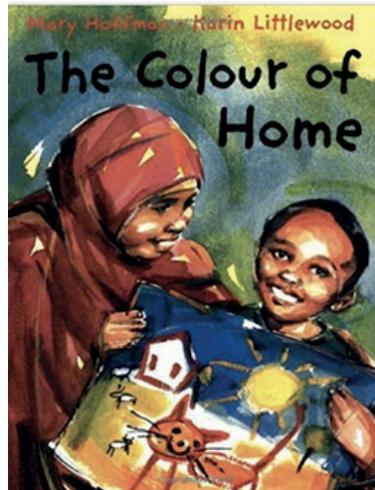
The Colour of Home, by Mary Hoffman and illustrated by Karin Littlewood, features Hassan, a child refugee from Somalia, who has just started school in England. When he arrives, everything is so different that he is unable to respond to his new classmates' friendliness. It is a total culture shock for him. He doesn't speak English, he is not used to the damp cold weather or having classes indoors, he can't eat lunch as he doesn't recognise the food, and the country and their new home "seemed all cold and grey" (n.p.).

When the teacher asks him to paint a picture he chooses bright warm colours to depict a scene from his former home in Somalia. Then he paints over it with violent dark splashes and images including a stick figure with a gun and bullets. Slowly, through the picture and with the help of a translator, his teacher and classmates begin to understand his story and help him build a new life a long way from his first home. We learn that his family had to flee when soldiers came to his house, killing his uncle. For a long time they lived in a camp in Mombasa. But then *The Colour of Home* shows Hassan adapting to his new environment with the help of his school. He also starts smiling again in the book's pictures as the story develops when he notices there are bright colours and hope in his new home.

The Colour of Home uses different colours to illustrate the story and to communicate Hassan's emotions. Vibrant watercolour, imitating the bright and happy colours associated with Somalian light and its colourful fabrics, contrasts with darker more menacing hues. Red and black represent anger and war, various tones of brown and grey help the reader see Hassan's sadness and loss. But gradually things change. When Hassan's parents put up his next picture on the wall, Hassan notices the maroon prayer mat, a bright green cushion and his sister Naima's pink dress - the new colours of home.

This is a warm, ultimately hopeful story about the world of a refugee child, and the compassion and understanding shown to him by his teachers and schoolmates. *The Colour of Home* is an excellent book in the classroom to help children understand not only children from different cultural backgrounds but especially why some of them had to flee their former homes.

Tomorrow by Nadine Kaadan (2018)
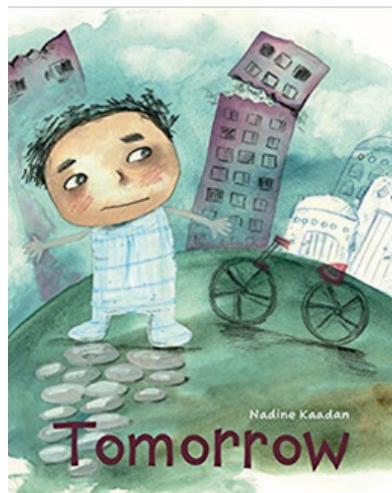
Nadine Kaadan's *Tomorrow* is a poignant picturebook offering a window into what life might be like for children living under conditions of the Syrian war, portraying the all-consuming darkness that war brings to family life. The author grew up in Damascus and believes that it is important for Syrian children to see their story reflected in children's literature. Editions of the picturebook are available in both Arabic and English. Many Syrian children, along with their families, have been forced to seek refuge in Ireland and the UK. A book such as *Tomorrow* provides an opportunity for Irish children to reflect on the real life experiences of Syrian children.

A young boy called Yazan lives in a war-torn Syrian town. Yazan senses everything changing around him as he is no longer allowed to visit the park or to enjoy playing outside in the street. Even Yazan's parents are changing. His mother watches the news with the volume turned up and his father fearfully makes phone calls before daring to leave the house. Fear and anxiety invade the household like a dark cloud filling each room with gloom and despair.

The reality of war forces children to stay inside. However, Yazan is bored of being 'stuck' inside and decides to cycle to the park by himself. Venturing outside, he sees the once lively streets are now desolate and crumbling. To Yazan's relief, his father appears in time to take him back home and the family work together to create a new way to bring some colour and joy back to the house despite the troublesome circumstances outside.

Kaadan (2018) uses pattern and colour as tools for telling her story. She notes that her own illustration style and colour palette has become gloomy and dark in response to the war. Images of the war-torn streets are projected onto clothes and furnishings inside the house, demonstrating the terrifying emotional impact on the family of what is happening outside the window. Almost everything becomes coloured by the dark palette that represents the war, with only the most precious objects of joy retaining a splash of brighter colour. The reality of war is conveyed through the carefully crafted illustrations of broken buildings, the falling debris and worried faces.

Although the subject of war itself is challenging, the story is told with such sensitivity that young children with little or no understanding of the context will be able to understand how the boy's family life has become much darker and less safe due to changes happening outside his home. Children can engage with this picturebook in accordance with their own conceptual understanding. Those children who are familiar with the war in Syria can make political comments about this story whereas younger children may interpret this story in more personal terms. Some six-year old children have compared this story with their own experiences of being stuck inside all day because of torrential rain outside.

In a note on the final page of *Tomorrow*, Kaadan notes, "The situation continues to worsen for Syrian children, especially those who are living away from their homes and who have missed years of school" (n.p.). *Tomorrow* does have a happy ending of sorts. Yazan's mother paints a park on the walls of her son's bedroom featuring "everything you've ever dreamed of" (n.p.). The book, for all its ominous implications, will still delight young children – there are bicycles and paper planes and annoying parents. The splashes of colour and the joyful final page leave the story with hints of hope, as does the author's note at the end, in which she discusses how the title reflects the "wait for a time when "*Tomorrow*" can be a better day for all Syrian children." (n.p.).

PROMOTING DIALOGUE ABOUT REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Picturebooks have the potential to promote critical thinking through critical literacy in the classroom (Dolan 2014). Numerous strategies have been devised to support teachers in maximizing the learning potential from picturebooks (Dolan 2014a). Roche's (2015) critical thinking and book talk encourages children to become critical thinkers. Roche's approach is about fostering thinkers, speakers and readers who enjoy reading, and discussion and dialogue about books. *Journeys* (Golden and Roche 2017) is a whole-school resource on the theme of migration, rights and integration. It includes multiple classroom activities based on four themes: Stereotypes; Culture; Journeys; and Protection. However, it is important to remember that teaching about asylum and refugees can also be seen as controversial. Teachers must be ready to create a safe and supportive environment for any children who may be unsettled by the issues discussed. Regular displays about the lives of refugees and visits by refugee speakers can also be helpful.

CONCLUSION

Discussions about migration become dehumanised as terms such as *refugee, asylum seeker* and *migrant* are used without understanding, empathy and full knowledge. Introducing children to stories about migration help to counter the biased narrative broadcast through some traditional and social media. While it is important for asylum-seekers and refugees to see their stories feature in classrooms, it is also important for indigenous children to hear these stories and to learn about the experiences of other children. This can be done by exploring personal testimonies through children's literature in general and picturebooks in particular. These stories are important for showing that refugee children are ordinary children in extraordinary circumstances (Hope 2008). Without access to these stories, it is difficult to expect children to understand the experiences and lives of refugees.

Picturebooks provide an invaluable resource for SPHE in general and for the theme of migration in particular. Children's literature, including picturebooks, can facilitate the development of empathetic understanding (Evans 2018; Dolan 2014). Picturebooks about refugees and asylum seekers develop children's understanding about the plight of people who have to leave their homes, the circumstances of their journey, and the challenges faced upon arrival at a new destination. Through empathetic and thoughtful teaching, picturebooks can help nurture children's empathy, tolerance and appreciation of human rights.

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