

Understanding Well-being in Changing Times:

The Role of SPHE

Proceedings from the
2nd SPHE Network Conference
St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra
4th October, 2014

Edited by:
Bernie Collins, Sharon Moynihan, Anne Marie Kavanagh,
Alanna O'Beirne and Seline Keating



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Acknowledgements

On 4th October 2014 we gathered in St. Patrick's College for our 2nd national conference *Understanding Well-being in Changing Times: The Role of SPHE*. The delegates came from all over the country and we had an array of presentations and workshops for them. We also had representation from many organisations at our stalls which delegates visited throughout the day. Each element contributed to the overall sense of a job well done. We would like to thank the following for supporting the conference and contributing to its success:

Our Sponsors: *safefood*, Amnesty, DICE;

Stall Holders: Rainbows Ireland, Trócaire, Barnardos, *safefood*, The Youth Drug and Alcohol Service, Amnesty, the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, the Road Safety Authority, Irish Childhood Bereavement Network, McAfee Online Safety, AkiDwa, Media studies project by Joseph Fogarty.

We are delighted to be launching the conference proceedings, and wish to thank the following for their contribution to making this a valuable and worthwhile addition to the SPHE literature:

The contributors: Prof. Mark Morgan, Dr. Bernie Collins, Dr. Anne Marie Kavanagh, Dr. Margaret Nohilly, Dr. Audrey Bryan, Dr. Paula Mayock, Eva Devaney, Dr. Frances Murphy, Dr. Maura Coulter, Susan Marron, Sinéad Keenan, Dr. Carol O'Sullivan, Aoife Titley, Dr. Sancha Power, Fiona Joyce, Fiona McAuslan, Therése Hegarty;

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We would also like to thank the delegates who attended the conference whose enthusiasm and energy on the day has sustained us in our continuing work in SPHE.

We were deeply saddened to hear of the untimely death of Bianca Ní Ghrógáin, our conference administrator, who did great work in managing and promoting the conference. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.*

Introduction

I am delighted to present the proceedings of the conference *Understanding Well-being in Changing Times: The Role of SPHE*, which took place in St. Patrick's College on 4th October 2014. We believe that the promotion of well-being in all its aspects is enhanced where teachers implement SPHE effectively in their classrooms. We hope that this publication will inform and inspire teachers and those in leadership positions in schools and colleges to re-commit to this important work.

The SPHE Network was established in 2000 by Dr. Carol O'Sullivan (Mary Immaculate College) and Dr. Bernie Collins (St. Patrick's College) as a forum for providing support and continuing professional development for those wishing to promote SPHE in schools and colleges. Our membership has grown in recent years, and we have a wide variety of members including lecturers, teachers (primary and post-primary), research students, and representation from a number of organisations with a health promotion remit. We meet regularly to share ideas and organise events such as conferences and teach meets. We are delighted to be launching our website sphenetwork.ie with this publication and hope that you will find it a useful site for getting resources and information to inform your work in SPHE.

This set of proceedings is laid out under four themes. These are: mental well-being, physical well-being, myself and the wider world and relationships and sexuality. We are extremely grateful to all our presenters and facilitators on the day of the conference and those who agreed to submit an article for this publication.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of the editorial team who showed great commitment to the task of producing a high-quality publication:

Sharon Moynihan, Anne Marie Kavanagh, Alanna O'Beirne, Seline Keating.

We hope that this publication will become a useful and valuable resource for all those who work to promote SPHE.

Bernie Collins, editor



Well-being of Irish Children: The Current Picture Based on the Findings of ‘Growing Up in Ireland’

Professor Mark Morgan, St. Patrick’s College, Dublin.

INTRODUCTION

Well-being is important in its own right but also is of major significance for all domains of development. There is a substantial body of evidence that suggests emotional well-being has a major impact on school achievement, as well as on self-esteem and physical development (Durlak *et al.* 2011). Here we examine two major related areas of research, viz, the picture of well-being of Irish children emerging from the National Longitudinal Study ‘Growing Up in Ireland’ (GUI), and evidence regarding the most important influences on the development of well-being, including personal, school and family influences. A major background emphasis here is on school influences both through the formal curriculum as in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and also through the informal factors including relationships with teachers and peer relationships.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF GROWING UP IN IRELAND

As noted above, the main themes discussed here draw on GUI, which focuses on a broad range of child outcomes, with a view to documenting how well children in Ireland are developing along a number of internationally recognised dimensions. In doing so, it facilitates comparison with findings from similar international studies of children, as well as establishing norms for Ireland. GUI involves two cohorts of children, a nine-month cohort of approximately 11,100 infants (Infant Cohort) and a nine-year old cohort of approximately 8,500 children (Child Cohort). The nine-month cohort was surveyed for the second time at age three, and again at age five, while the nine-year old cohort was surveyed for a second time at age thirteen years. The data examined here are based on the latter cohort and data collected at both age nine and thirteen years are included with the order of presentation being determined by the topic.

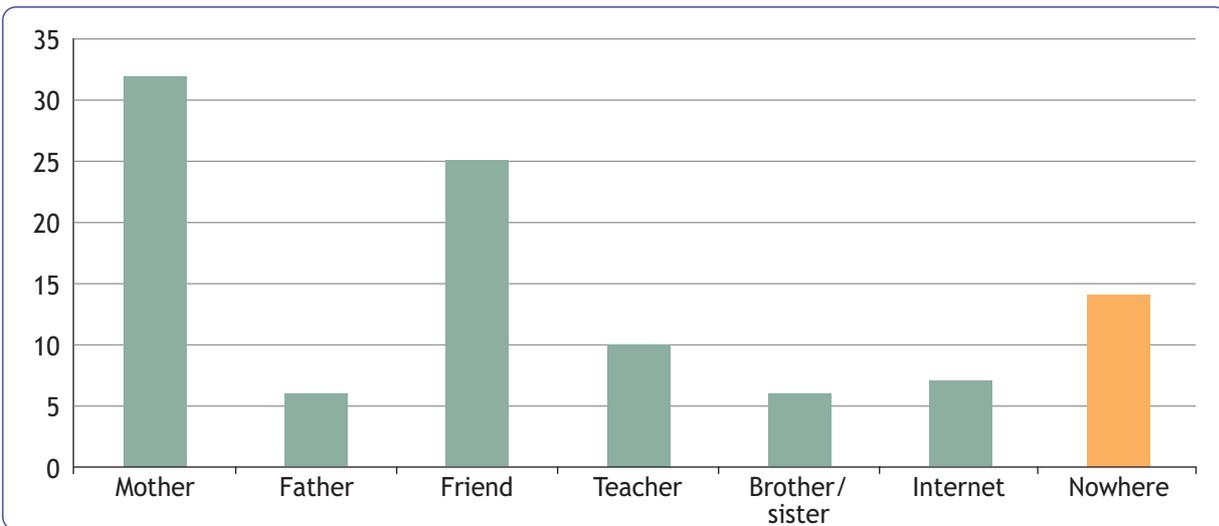
With regard to the major outcomes that are associated with well-being, particular attention is given to satisfaction of children with their family relationships, with well-being at school and the central findings regarding the self-esteem of children. We also consider some of the outcomes of adverse events and how such events impact on well-being, as well as factors associated with depression at age thirteen years.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

An important finding is that virtually all of the 13 year olds had good relationships with their parents. Over 98% said that they got on well or very well with their mother and father. Furthermore, the interactions with their parents were very positive, with over three quarters saying that they could count on their parents to help them out if there was a problem. Even more parents (nearly 80%) were perceived by their children as respecting their privacy and over 67% said that they can do ‘fun things’ together with their parents. Only a small minority (less than 15%) said that their parents let them ‘get away’ with things and only a slightly greater percentage (18%) said that their parents’ ideas should not be questioned.

On the other hand not all aspects of interactions were quite as satisfactory. The 13 year olds were asked about the most likely source for advice on sexuality/relationship issues. It is striking that 32% said their mother was the most likely source and the corresponding percentage for fathers was only 6%. In fact, virtually none of the girls in the sample indicated that they would seek advice from their fathers, and boys were twice as likely to approach their mother as their father. Just 10% said they would approach a teacher, but the biggest concern arising from the results (displayed in Table 1) is that 14% said that they had nowhere to seek advice. Furthermore, boys were twice as likely as girls to indicate that this was the case with them.

Table 1: Most Likely Source of information on Sexuality/Relationship Issues



Note: Table entries refer to the percentage indicating the most likely source of information; the question allowed just one selection from the list.

WELL-BEING AT SCHOOL

A critical matter is the extent to which children like school. The effect of liking for school and especially liking for teachers has been demonstrated in Roorda *et al.* (2011) who used a meta-analytic approach to explore the association between affective dimensions of the teacher-student relationship and student engagement as well as achievement, in almost one hundred studies, with students from preschool to high school, and involving over 130,000 students. The results of the analysis led the authors to conclude that liking for school and teachers had a strong beneficial effect on engagement with school and also had a positive impact on achievement even after controlling for social background. For this reason the finding from GUI that 93% of nine year olds always or sometimes liked school is especially important. Almost the same percentage indicated that they always/sometimes liked their teacher, and nearly 90% looked forward to going to school. When children were asked about their liking for school subjects, Reading emerged as the most popular, with 58% of nine year olds reporting that they always liked Reading and only 5% saying that they never liked it. Maths was also quite popular, with 47% saying that they always liked it and just 10% never liking it. In contrast, Gaelge was not especially popular: 29% said they never liked it and only 22% said that they always liked it.

Engagement with school is another important aspect of well-being in the educational context. In GUI, engagement was measured through levels of absenteeism and homework completion. Teachers recorded absences for pupils in the sample at age nine. Across the total group, the average number of days missed was 6.4 - a figure that was very similar for boys and girls. While international comparisons are difficult to make, due to different lengths of the school year in various countries, this figure is satisfactory based on

comparisons that are available. When teachers were asked to say whether or not the children in the study came to school with their homework completed, only 5% were reported as 'regularly' coming to school without homework completed. While there were some minor differences associated with family structure and gender, this is a very satisfactory picture and indicates the seriousness with which children and their families view involvement with school.

An important influence on children's development is the expectation that parents have regarding their progress in education. In the GUI study of nine year olds, parental expectations were extremely high. Less than 1% expected their child to obtain the Junior Certificate only, while 49% expected their child to get a degree and a further 22% expected the young person to get a postgraduate/higher degree. There were some slight gender differences, with girls thought to be somewhat more likely to get to the degree stage. However, the most significant influence on expectations was maternal education: only 55% of mothers who themselves had completed lower secondary education expected the child to progress to a degree, while in the case of mothers who were themselves graduates, the corresponding figure was 93%.

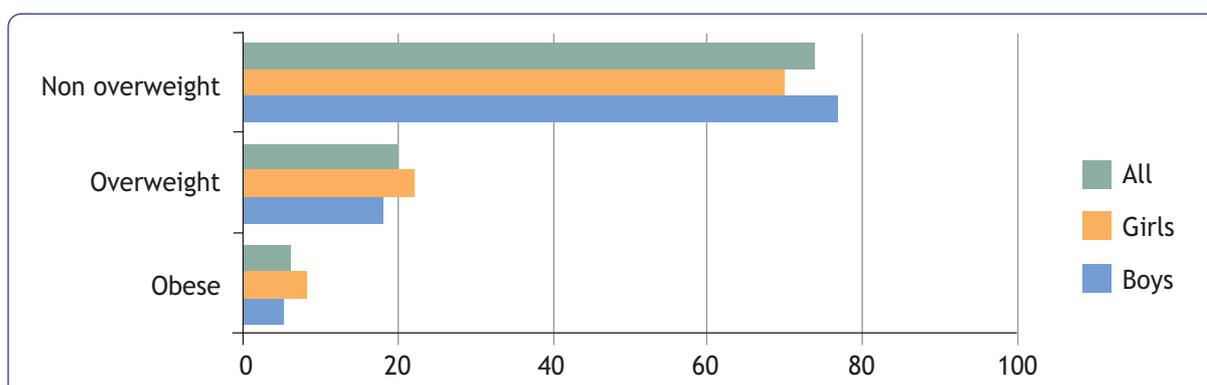
It is especially important to note the connection between positive attitudes of children towards school at age nine years and their views at age 13 years when most had transferred to post-primary school. Those children who were positive about school at age nine years tended to maintain that perspective. In particular, pupils who said that they liked Reading and Maths at the earlier phase were more likely to be positive about school four years later than were those who had said that they disliked these subjects.

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Physical well-being including weight and fitness is important in its own right (Hallal *et al.* 2006) but has also been shown to be important for social-emotional adjustment and for school achievement (Strong *et al.* 2005). Children and adolescents who are overweight/obese are also significantly more likely to experience bullying compared with their non-overweight peers, and weight status has been shown to influence patterns of social interaction and behavioural intentions among peer groups, with adolescents indicating greater willingness to engage in social, academic and recreational activities with peers that are not overweight (Greenleaf *et al.* 2006).

In the GUI study at age 13 years, height and weight measurements were used to calculate Body Mass Index (BMI) which is widely accepted as a valid measure of healthy body weight. In line with other studies, GUI used a threefold classification as follows: not overweight, overweight and obese. Table 2 shows that just less than three quarters of the 13 year olds were non-overweight (which includes underweight), while over a quarter were either overweight or obese. It can also be seen that girls were more likely to be in the overweight/obese category.

Table 2: Overweight and Obesity at age 13 Years (in percentages)



There was a strong relationship between weight status at age nine and at age 13 years. For example, 90% of the children who were obese at age nine were either overweight or obese at age 13. A strong relationship emerged between frequency of exercise and weight status. For example, a relatively smaller number of 13 year olds who were obese were involved in sporting activities (beyond the PE class) than was the case with non-overweight adolescents. In fact, over 34% of obese 13 year olds participated in no sporting activities.

An especially important outcome related to the major discrepancy between the young people's self-perception of their weight and their actual BMI classification. Nearly 50% of the adolescents who were overweight saw themselves as 'just the right size' and in the case of obese young people, over one-fifth saw themselves as 'just the right size'. This is an important finding for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the major discrepancy between actual and perceived weight indicates a problem in altering the behaviour of the relevant groups with regard to involvement in sporting activities and exercise. Secondly, self-perception of weight was found in the GUI study to have had a profound impact on self-esteem and propensity to low mood and/or depression.

SELF-CONCEPT

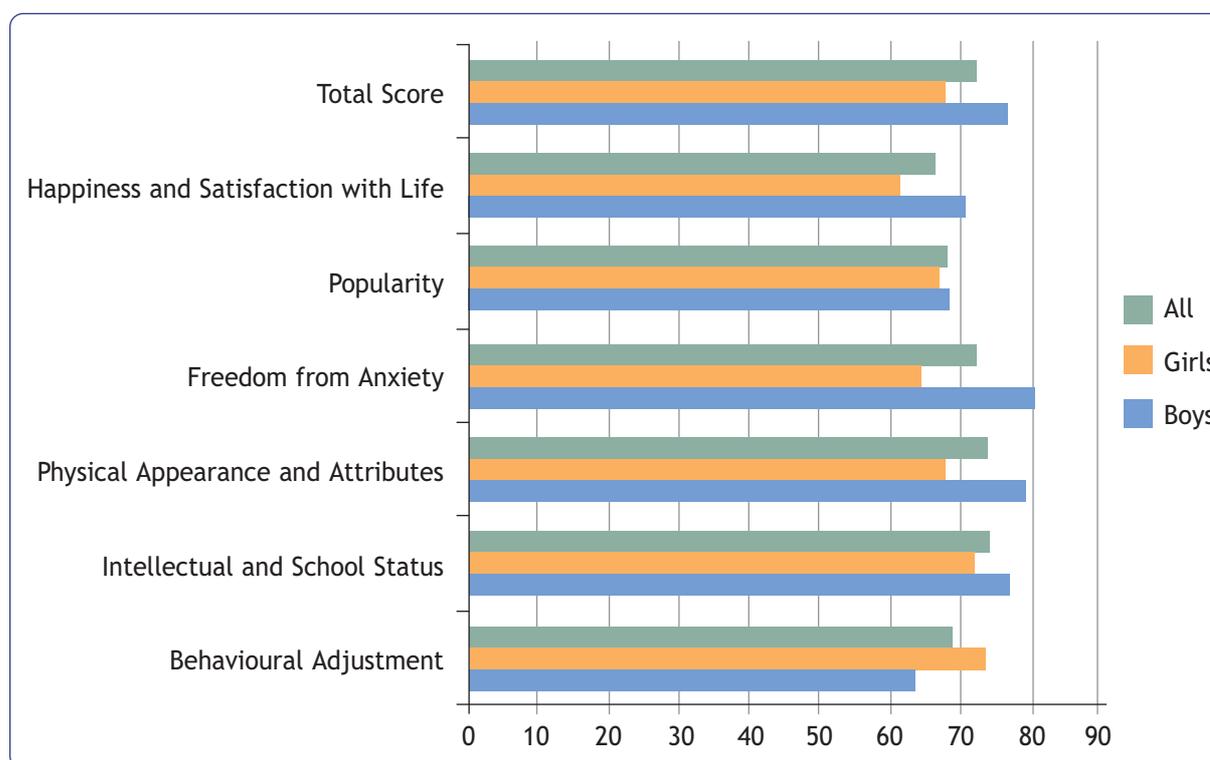
Recent research on self-esteem at adolescence has focused on specific domains as opposed to the notion of global self-worth (Harter 2006). In other words, it is appropriate to differentiate between perception of self with regard to academic competence and views on the self in relation to popularity or physical appearance. During adolescence there is a proliferation of 'selves' that vary as a function of the social context. It is not unusual for an adolescent to be cheerful with friends, in a low mood with parents, intelligent in school and shy with people who are strangers to them.

It could be argued that the number of domains in which self-esteem can be measured is potentially so great that a meaningful overall picture is difficult to come by. What is vital is the perceived success of an adolescent in the specific domain and the importance to which they attach to that area. Thus, adolescents who report success in domains that they deem important are those with the highest reported levels of global self-esteem (Harter 2006).

The Pier Harris II scale which was used in GUI at age 13 years is designed to assess the self-concept of children and adolescents between seven and 18 years, and consists of statements about how they feel about themselves. Examples of the items included are: 'I am a happy person'; 'I worry a lot'; 'My family is disappointed in me'; and 'I am good-looking'. For each statement the young person answers 'yes' or 'no'. The test targets seven domains as follows: *behavioural adjustment* that is the admission or denial of problematic behaviours; *intellectual and school status* is meant to reflect the young person's perception of their abilities with respect to cognitive and academic tasks; the *physical appearance and attributes dimension* is concerned both with the perception of their appearance and other features such as leadership and ability to express ideas. *Freedom from anxiety* is focused on perceptions of feelings including fear, unhappiness, shyness and feeling left out of things, while *popularity* is concerned with the perception of the young person's own functioning with peers. Finally, *happiness and satisfaction with life* is a measure of the perception of how happy young people see themselves and their satisfaction with life.

Each of the measures (including the total score) is broken into six categories as follows: 'very low', 'low', 'low average', 'average', 'high', and 'high average'. Table 3 shows the percentage of 13 year olds who scored average or above for each measure. Between 66-75% of the 13 year olds are in the 'above average' categories on the various self-concept scales. While this overall figure is satisfactory, the most striking features are the major gender differences that emerge in the total scores and in the subscales. On all of the subscales, with the exception of behavioural adjustment (and to a lesser extent with popularity), more boys than girls are in the 'above average' category of self-esteem. It is particularly interesting that more boys are in this category with regard to school and intellectual status, given girls perform better in school and are much less likely to be in the below average category in actual achievement.

Table 3: Children's Self-Concept Scale: Percent Average or Above



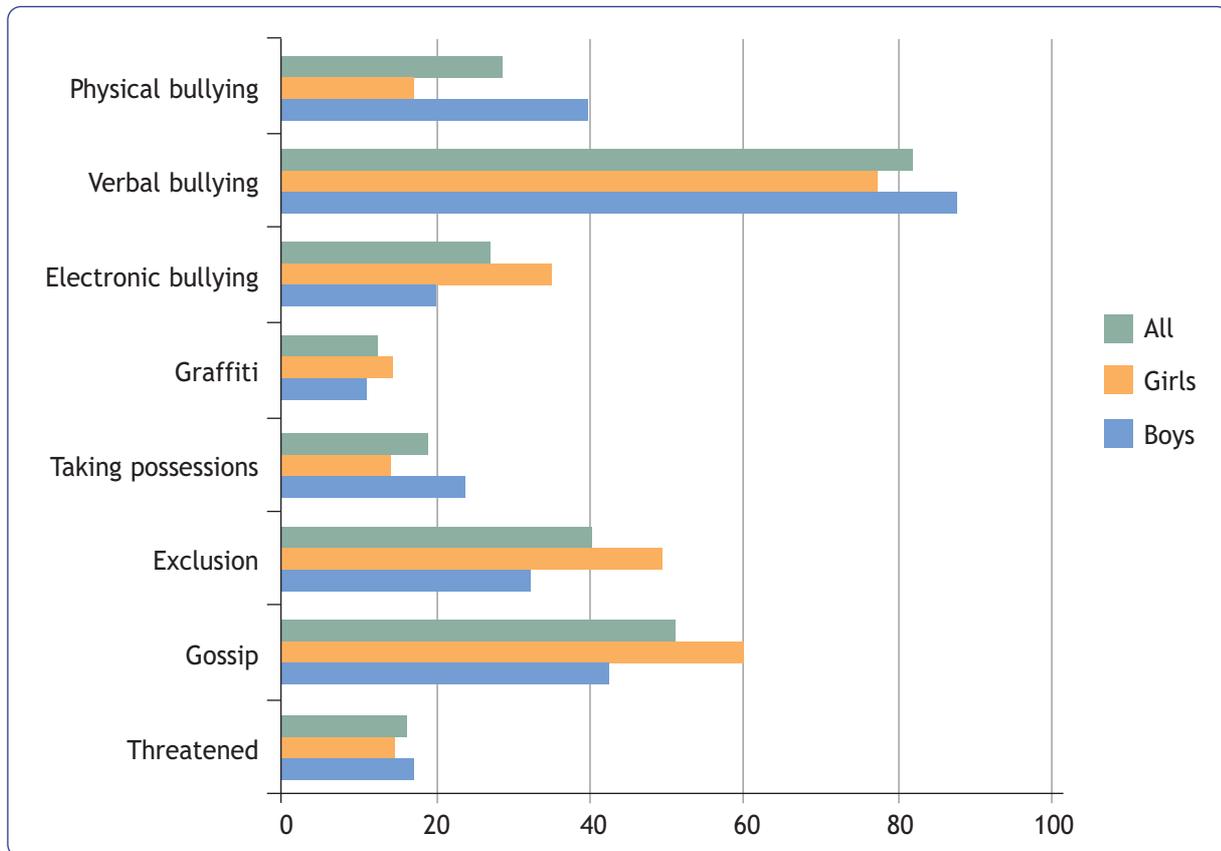
The differences in self-concept associated with gender have received substantial attention in the literature over the last 30 years. A number of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies in several countries have found that adolescent males score higher on global self-concept than females (Harter 2006). It is particularly interesting that a study of adolescents in Northern Ireland (Cairns *et al.* 1990) found that females scored significantly lower than males on global self-concept. In earlier studies, when specific domains are taken into account, gender emerges as an important moderating factor. In a number of studies it has been found that boys have higher self-perceptions relating to physical appearance, while in contrast, girls have higher opinions of themselves in socially related domains (e.g. Shapka and Keating 2005). What is perhaps surprising about the GUI outcomes is that boys rate themselves higher on almost all dimensions.

BULLYING AND VICTIMISATION: EXPERIENCES AND CONSEQUENCES

Fewer than 10% of 13 year olds reported that they had been bullied in the last three months. Those who had been bullied were asked to say what form the bullying took, with the option of indicating more than one form. As can be seen from Table 4, *verbal bullying* was by far the most common form, with more than 82% of those who reported being bullied, indicating that they had undergone this experience. *Gossip* and *exclusion* were the next most frequent forms, while *physical bullying*, *electronic bullying*, *taking possessions* and *being threatened* were experienced by a substantial number of those who said they had been bullied.

It is worth noting that there were substantial gender differences with regard to virtually all forms of bullying. Boys were more likely to have experienced *physical bullying*, *verbal bullying*, *having possessions taken* and were slightly more likely to be *threatened*. In contrast, girls reported more *electronic bullying*, *graffiti*, *exclusion* and *gossip*.

Table 4: Form of being Bullied (Percentages of those who reported being bullied)

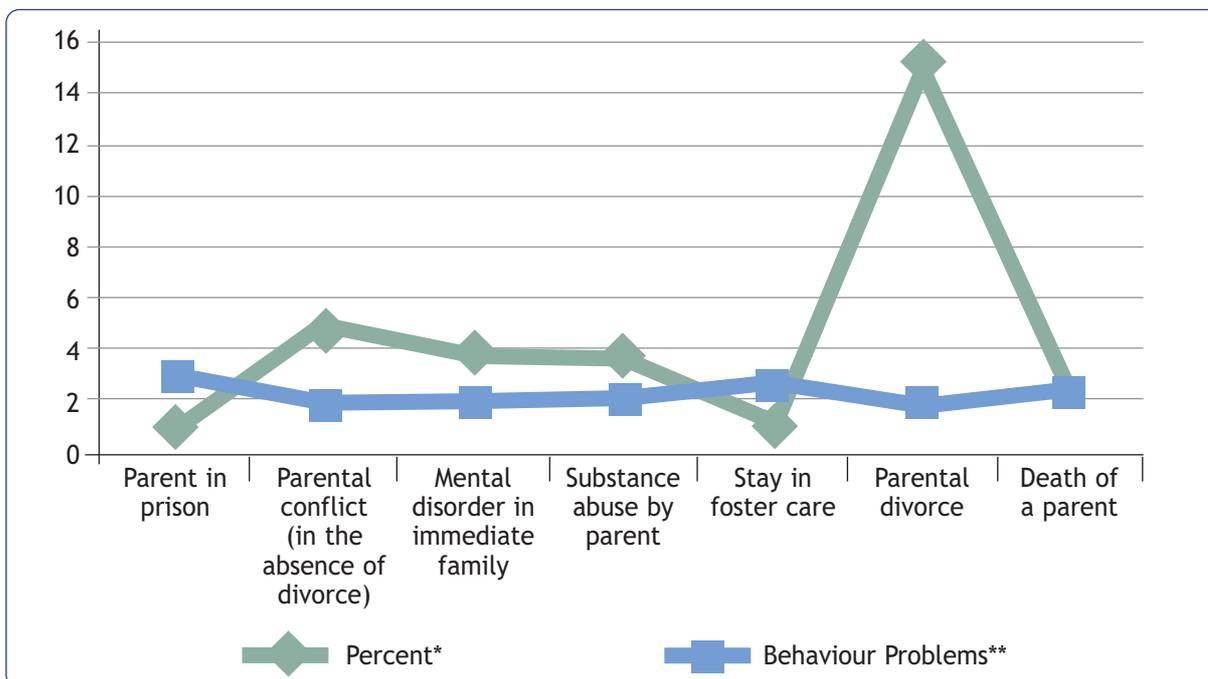


ADVERSE EVENTS IN CHILDREN'S LIVES

It might be expected that children's feelings of well-being will be affected by adverse events over which they have little control. In the literature, while studies of undesirable events in childhood continue to proliferate, several important issues remain unclear, deriving from conflicting findings and disagreement on underlying processes. These include two issues that are the focus of GUI at age nine years: (i) the extent to which adverse events inevitably have negative consequences; and (ii) the impact of one versus several adverse events. The first issue is of particular importance since in recent years the consensus regarding likely negative outcomes has been challenged by theoretical conceptualizations of how adversity can generate beneficial outcomes. The research of Seery *et al.* (2010) has shown a curvilinear relationship between experience of adversity and mental health. Specifically, those who experienced some adversity had better outcomes than those who had encountered either no adversity or a great deal. Somewhat more controversial is work on 'benefit finding', where one of the arguments is that traumatic events can shatter our beliefs about the world to such an extent that we function in a wiser way afterwards (Linley 2003).

Experiences of adverse events were captured using a list that was completed by the parent of the study child. The items are shown in Table 5 together with the percentage of those who were reported to have experienced the event.

Table 5: Proportion of the GUI sample who have experienced each type of Adverse Childhood Event and Associated Behaviour Problems



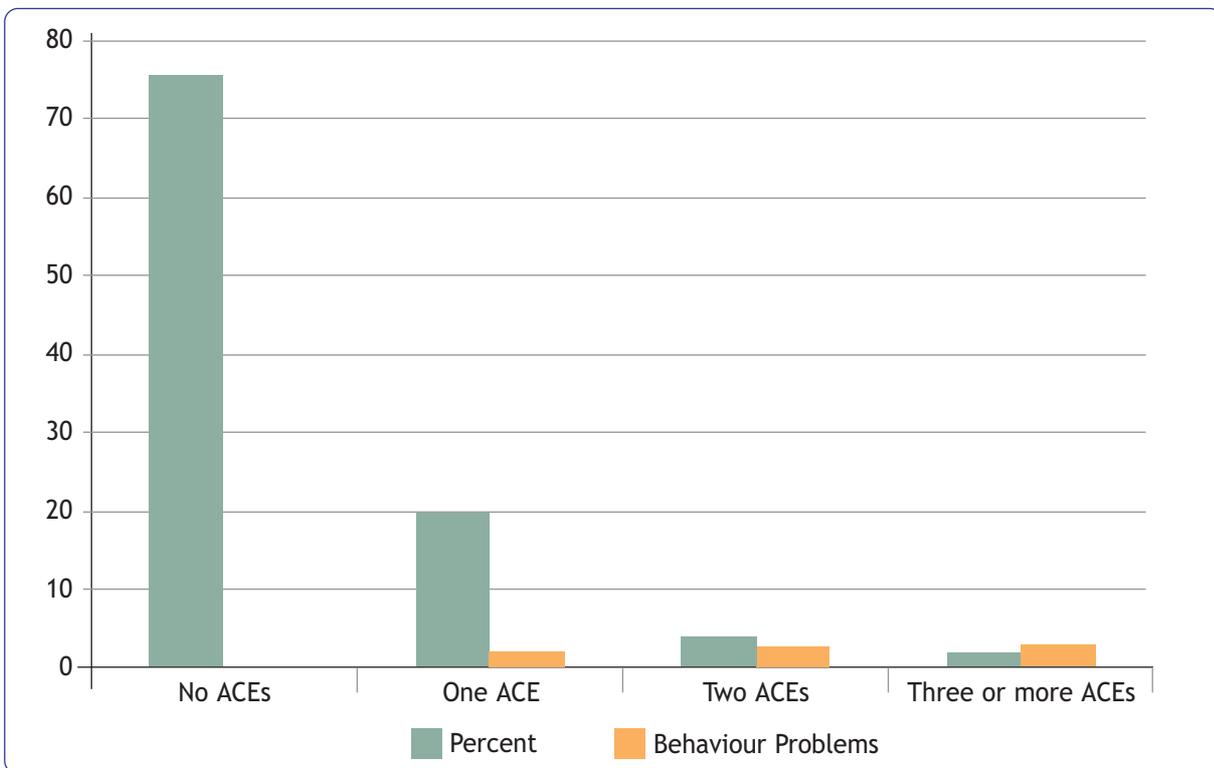
*Refers to percentage experiencing that event

**Refers to probability of being perceived by their teacher as having a behaviour problem

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman 1997) was used to assess children's behavioural profile. The SDQ is a screening questionnaire designed to assess emotional health and problem behaviours which can be completed by the parents or teachers of children aged 3-16 years. The behavioural problems reported in Table 5 are based on teacher reports. The SDQ produces scores for emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention as well as peer relationship problems. Higher scores on the problem-oriented scales are indicative of more problems. A common practice in many studies is to use the 90th percentile on the total difficulties score as the criterion for serious behaviour difficulties, that is children rated in the top 10% for behaviour problems. Table 5 shows the probability that a child experiencing a particular adverse event has been identified as being in the group (top 10%) for behaviour problems. The implication of the results shown in Table 5 is that all of the adverse events substantially increase the probability that a child will be rated as experiencing behaviour problems. For example, the experience of the death of a parent increases this probability by a factor of 2.3, while having a parent in prison makes it almost three times more likely that the nine year old will be rated by their teachers as having behaviour problems.

In addition, the total number of Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) was then added for each child to create a composite index to check for the effect of multiple as opposed to one or no childhood event. Table 6 displays the percentage who experienced no ACE, one ACE, two ACEs or three or more ACEs.

Table 6: Number of Adverse Childhood Events experienced by GUI participants and Associated Behaviour Problems



A particularly interesting finding emerged with regard to the number of adverse events. While a child who experiences one adverse event is nearly twice as likely to be rated as experiencing behaviour problems, the odds increase substantially for children with two adverse events and are also high for those with three or more such events. This finding suggests that multiple adversities are especially likely to be a risk factor in a young child's life.

OVERVIEW OF INFLUENCES

It is beyond the scope of this paper to give a comprehensive account of factors that influence children's and adolescents' development as these emerged at age nine and 13 years. Nevertheless an overview of the important influences on social-emotional development at adolescence based on a study that is currently in press (Thornton *et al.* *in press*) is especially pertinent to understanding the findings sketched above. It is especially interesting to look at the extent to which socio-economic factors are influential and whether some factors like parental influence decline in importance from childhood to adolescence. It is also important to establish whether different domains of social and emotional development are susceptible to different patterns of impact and the extent to which there are gender differences in these processes.

The pattern of results for several aspects of social-emotional development (including anti-social behaviour and low mood) suggests that socio-economic influences have little direct influence but rather have indirect effects, especially on parenting. It has often been suggested that family structure has influential outcomes especially in the case of non-traditional family types. The most noteworthy finding is that

change in family structure has a greater impact on adolescents' development than family structure *per se*. For example, changing from two-parent to a one parent family was associated among girls with a greater likelihood of property offences as well as violent offences. This same change was also a predictor of low mood among girls, but not boys.

With regard to parenting, there was a relationship between level of monitoring and anti-social behaviour: young people who perceived their primary caregiver as responsive were less likely to be involved in various kinds of anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, young people who indicated that their parents had a high level of responsive and autonomy-granting behaviour were less likely to report low mood. In contrast, where there was regular conflict between parent and adolescents there was a higher probability of reporting low mood.

Of the various child attributes, gender emerged as an especially important factor for some but not all domains of social and emotional development. There was a large gender difference in relation to anti-social behaviour, with boys being three times as likely to be involved in violent behaviour and also in property offences. There were also differences in the influences that impact on such behaviour. For example, hanging out with larger groups of friends was associated with higher frequency of property offences in the case of boys but not girls. With regard to low mood, girls were more likely to report these feelings than boys, although the difference was not nearly as great as the gender difference in anti-social behaviour. There were also gender differences in the important influences on social and emotional development, with maternal depression emerging as a significant factor for girls but not for boys.

CONCLUSION

The picture emerging from GUI with regard to the well-being of Irish children is a positive one. Virtually all children said that they had good relationships with their parents and a high percentage (over 90%) liked school and were engaged with school in a positive way. Additionally, the majority of children recorded high self-esteem as judged by international standards.

However, the outcomes give rise to serious concerns in relation to a number of issues. The fact that a significant number of young people saw themselves as having no source of information and advice regarding relationships and sexuality is a concern, as is the fact that many girls experienced feelings of low self-esteem with regard to important features of their lives. It is also a major challenge that even young children had experienced adverse events (sometimes multiple events) by age nine years.

With regard to influences on social and emotional development (including various indicators of well-being), a range of factors have an important impact, but especially the immediate environment including parents and peers. Changes in the family structure and the way these impinge on the child and adolescent are rather more important than the type of family *per se*. Some differences between boys and girls are evident not only with regard to the prevalence of certain kinds of behaviours including anti-social behaviour and low mood but also in the important determinants of such behaviours.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The data presented here are based on the National Longitudinal Study of children 'Growing Up in Ireland'. Thanks are due to staff involved in this project. A special thanks to James Williams and Maeve Thornton for their analysis of the data of the child cohort and to referees for comments on an earlier draft.

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Circle Time and the Promotion of Well-being: A Double-edged Sword?

Dr. Bernie Collins and Dr. Anne Marie Kavanagh, St. Patrick's College, Dublin.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in the revised Irish primary school curriculum in 1999 heralded an increased focus on the social and emotional well-being of Irish primary school children. While previous curriculum documents were concerned with the physical health of children (Collins 2011), there was a definite shift evident in the revised curriculum documentation that placed “health and well-being” as a legitimate aim not only for the children in the classroom but each “member of the school community” (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 1999, p.24). This move was met with criticism in some quarters (explored later) but became a catalyst for the developments which are the subject of this paper.

Circle time is a widely-used method in Irish primary schools (NCCA 2008). Its rise in this context was facilitated by the introduction, in the revised Irish primary school curriculum, of the curriculum area SPHE. Within the *SPHE Teacher Guidelines* (NCCA 1999), teachers are encouraged to use various facilitative learning methods, and circle time (or circle work) is presented as a particularly useful strategy for “promoting discussion and dialogue with children” (NCCA 1999, p.79).

Since the early 1990s, Jenny Mosley (a well-known author on circle time) had been providing in-career development sessions to practising teachers and whole school staffs at both primary and post-primary level in Ireland. The timing of curriculum revisions facilitated the inclusion of this method in the curriculum documentation circulated to teachers. Although reference to the method can best be described as lukewarm (NCCA 1999), its already-established appeal on the ground has sustained it over the years, to the point that 81% of teachers surveyed by the NCCA stated that they used the method “frequently” or “sometimes” (NCCA 2008). As the Mosley model (Mosley 1996) of circle time is the one most familiar to Irish primary and post-primary school teachers, it is this model that is examined in this paper. While it is outside the scope of this paper to describe this model in any detail, readers may refer to the extensive Mosley literature or Collins (2011, 2013) for more information.

RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH

The authors of this paper have (or have had) responsibility for SPHE modules at undergraduate and post-graduate level in a large teacher education college in Dublin. As part of the suite of active learning methods promoted on the SPHE module, student teachers experience circle time in at least one of the module sessions. They are also provided with reading material and exemplars (in the form of a DVD) around good practice when using this method. Students who have been in primary and second-level education since 1999 have potentially had the most exposure to both SPHE and circle time, as they would have been educated in the revised primary school curriculum and may also have experienced SPHE at post-primary level. As teacher educators, we felt that research into student teachers’ prior experiences of circle time would inform not only our teaching of the method, but could potentially enhance the students’ ability to facilitate the method themselves. We could find no existing research of this type, which provided further motivation to engage in the research that is described in this paper.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Interestingly, the concept of well-being is not one that is prominent in the circle time literature, which focuses more on self-esteem and emotional intelligence. It may be that different concepts wax and wane in popularity, with self-esteem becoming discredited or less popular (Craig 2007) and well-being in the ascendant. As Watson *et al.* (2012, p.25) indicate, well-being (sic) is “a social construct that is fluid in nature and has an ever-evolving and contextual set of definitions”. Well-being is presented as an umbrella term in some of the literature which encompasses social and emotional aspects of self (Watson *et al.* 2012), while for Seligman (2011) it is a construct and, as such, may encompass self-esteem as defined by Miller and Moran (2007). It is outside the scope of this paper to engage with the contestations that are evident in the literature on well-being and related concepts. We instead focus on how their pursuit in education (and Irish primary and post-primary school classrooms in particular) relates to specific practices such as circle time.

In identifying a theoretical base for well-being to inform the selection of data to be presented here, the work of Seligman (2011) was chosen as it appeared to be a good fit with the documented aims of circle time (e.g. Mosley 2006).

Seligman's Work

Unlike those who identify happiness as the key element in well-being (e.g. Scoffham and Barnes 2011), Seligman suggests it is a construct so that “no single measure defines it exhaustively” (Seligman 2011, p.15). Echoing Gardner's (1999) work on intelligence, Seligman adopts strict criteria for inclusion of elements in his well-being theory. Each element must have the following properties to be included in the construct:

- It contributes to well-being;
- It is pursued for its own sake;
- It can be measured and defined independently.

(adapted from Seligman 2011, p.16)

Applying these criteria to the construct of well-being, Seligman (2011) chooses the following five key elements:

Positive emotion

This element includes life satisfaction and happiness, both of which can be measured subjectively. However, by themselves they do not constitute a measurement of well-being for the individual.

Engagement

When we are engaged in a task we may experience what Seligman calls “flow” - this occurs for example when we lose track of time during a particular activity. Seligman posits that it is only in hindsight that we can assess if we experienced “flow” as we temporarily suspend thought and feeling in the flow state (*ibid*, p.17).

Meaning

Seligman defines meaning as “...belonging to and serving something that is bigger than the self” (*ibid*, p.17). This differs from the previous elements in that the measurement of meaning may not just be subjective. Others may judge whether our lives are meaningful (as well as ourselves), and there is no guarantee that there will be agreement as to what constitutes meaning. In the context of our research, this allows us to ascribe meaning to students' experiences in a way that might not align with their own subjective meanings.

Accomplishment

There are two aspects to accomplishment, according to Seligman. One focuses on the “now” or what he calls its “momentary form”, while he also posits that there is an extended form that lasts over a lifetime

of “the achieving life” (*ibid*, p.19). In our research, the possibility of students experiencing a sense of accomplishment in its “momentary form” during or after a circle time experience was explored.

Positive Relationships

This particular element echoes Watson *et al.*'s (2012) focus on the social aspect of well-being in their work. This element is also a key focus in circle time as evidenced in the work of Jenny Mosley (e.g. Mosley 2006). In common with elements of accomplishment and meaning, Seligman suggests that the measurement of positive relationships can be done both subjectively and objectively, with the possibility of disparity or disagreement between these two assessments. As a key element of the promotional literature on circle time, our research questions invited students to evaluate relationships within the practice of circle time, including those with peers and the teacher(s) conducting the sessions. Before addressing these questions, a critical analysis of aspects of the well-being literature is presented in the following section.

Relevant Literature

The literature indicates that well-being is a dynamic and multidimensional concept encompassing diverse foci and a profusion of conceptual definitions and measurement indicators (Watson *et al.* 2012). It commands significant academic and policy interest as is evident in its broad research literature and the profusion of school-based intervention programmes which seek to improve children's well-being (Watson *et al.* 2012; Coleman 2009). A range of factors have contributed to its ascent, most prominent among them an interest in the relationship between the cognitive, affective and emotional domains of learning, a concern for a perceived decline in children's mental health and a growing emphasis on the role of schools in health promotion (Coleman 2009). According to Ecclestone and Hayes (2009), a populist well-being discourse, subjected to little critical interrogation, has been gathering momentum for over four decades. A shift in government policy in the late 1990s, most notably in the UK, has firmly placed well-being on political and educational agendas and has garnered significant attention from the academy (Watson *et al.* 2012; Coleman 2009). In the Irish context, a growing interest in and emphasis on well-being is evident in curricular policy development. Well-being is one of four strands in the Early Year's *Aistear Curriculum* (NCCA 2009) and one of eight principles which underpin the revised *Framework for Junior Cycle* at second level (NCCA 2012). While the prominence of the discourse and its impact are undisputed, many scholars have voiced concerns about the uncritical acceptance of, and lack of empirical evidence for, the promotion of well-being in schools (Watson *et al.* 2012; Ecclestone and Hayes 2009; Craig 2007).

Having conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on well-being, Watson *et al.* (2012) sought to address the definitional and theoretical morass which surrounds the concept and to bring some clarity to the concept in general and more specifically, its place in schools. While acknowledging that the concept of well-being is “...fuzzy and intangible...” (p.2), Watson *et al.* (2012) stress the social and emotional aspects of well-being (SEWB) which echoes Mosley's focus on relationship-building and self-esteem in circle time (Mosley 1996).

Coleman (2009) identifies five different approaches to well-being, each equating to different but related concepts. These include happiness, emotional literacy and emotional intelligence, resilience, professional well-being and philosophical interpretation which incorporate concepts of freedom and choice. The delineation, while instructive, further underscores the broad scope of the concept, its diverse foci and the serious challenges of evidence-based measurement and evaluation. Advocates like Seligman *et al.* (2009) argue that well-being can and should be taught in schools for three reasons: “...as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking” (p.295). However, they stress the need for evidence-based evaluation. While their own research on the *Penn Resiliency Programme* indicates evidence of improvement in students' well-being (2009), the authors acknowledge that the data is based on self-reported symptoms and requires further triangulation through more objective measures. In terms of broader comparative studies, researchers frequently are not equating like with like as there is no agreement on measured outcomes and timeframes. Some evaluations are based on short-term outcomes, e.g. whether people feel better after involvement in a

particular programme, while others focus on whether a programme has more long-term effects on behaviour. Coleman (2009) maintains that this in part accounts for many of the disparities that exist in the academic literature. Despite a lack of evidence, the combination of governmental and corporate spin has ensured that well-being has assumed “a strong hold in our language, policy and practice with children and young people” (Watson *et al.* 2012, p.39).

Some writers argue that children’s greater participation in society can actively promote their social and emotional well-being (Graham and Fitzgerald 2010). De Winter *et al.* (1999) argue that “...encouraging children’s participation should both be considered a basic right, and as a precondition for the promotion of health and well-being” (p.16). Graham and Fitzgerald (2010) maintain that this can be realised by the promotion of a dialogical approach where children are recognised as active agents who have valuable contributions to make to discussions about their lives, most particularly their social and emotional well-being, and should be given a voice in the decision-making process. While more empirical research is required in this area in order to substantiate claims, there is much literature to support the idea that authentic participation by children leads to positive outcomes for children and young people (Howe and Covell 2005).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods methodological approach was selected for the research in order to provide breadth and depth to the study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). The two largest colleges of initial teacher education in Ireland were selected for data collection because of the access they provided to significant numbers of first year student teachers (c.800) and due to the researchers’ personal contacts in each college (St. Patrick’s College and Mary Immaculate College). First year students were selected as they are among the first groups of students to have experienced SPHE during both primary and post-primary schooling. As SPHE is not offered in first year college courses, students’ dispositions and attitudes towards circle time could not be influenced by their experiences at third level. The methodological framework is presented hereunder:

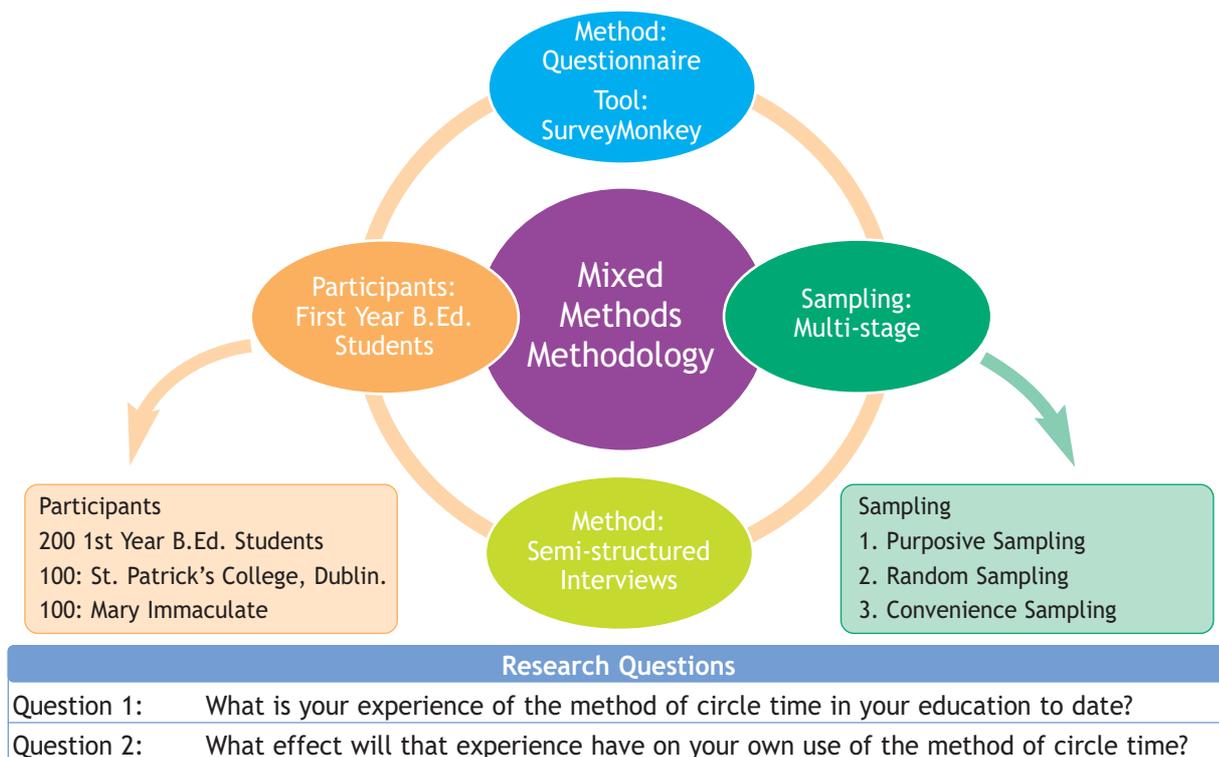


Figure 1: Methodological Framework

Two hundred student teachers were randomly selected from the identified group of first year student teachers. These students were emailed a covering letter and a web link to a SurveyMonkey questionnaire. Question types were a combination of multiple choice and open-ended.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was awarded by the Research Ethics Committees of both colleges. Ethical protocols were carefully adhered to during all stages of the research process. Steps taken to protect participants' privacy and anonymity and the possible benefits and any risks associated with participation were clearly delineated. The voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any stage were clearly communicated. Following a small-scale pilot study, data collection was undertaken in the academic year 2012-13.

Data Gathering and Analysis

SurveyMonkey was selected as the most effective method for gathering, storing, managing and analysing data. Its accessibility and efficiency in generating surveys, collecting web-based responses and its provision for coding data through its "categories" structure made it a practical and effective research tool (SurveyMonkey.com).

A response rate of fifty one per cent was achieved for the online survey. Despite proactive efforts to encourage students to partake in focus group interviews, a very poor response rate resulted in only one semi-structured interview being held involving two students. This is a source of regret for the researchers but was beyond our control. The quotations from student teachers used in this paper are drawn exclusively from the questionnaires, and provide rich insights into participants' previous experiences of circle time.

Data were read and reread and recurring language and themes identified within the SurveyMonkey programme. As these themes emerged, the data was coded line by line. Open codes were therefore grounded in the raw data. This approach is similar to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory approach of "open coding" (as cited in Creswell 2007). The constant comparative method was used and the content of particular themes (outlined in the next section) was continuously reread and examined and data transferred between categories when necessary.

Data Validation

In order to maximise the study's validity and reliability, every effort was made to ensure that the methods used to collect data and the data itself were appropriate for the purpose of the study, recorded accurately and precisely, and analysed carefully (Denscombe 2007). The researchers endeavoured to present balanced findings by being reflexive and self-monitoring throughout the research process (*ibid*).

FINDINGS

It is argued by some that circle time plays a key role in promoting pupils' social and emotional well-being (Mosley 1993, 1996, 1998). In this context, drawing on Seligman's (2011) conceptualisation of well-being, findings will be analysed and discussed under the following conceptual headings: Positive Relationships; Engagement; Meaning and Achievement; and Positive Emotion.

Positive Relationships

Reflecting the focus in SPHE in developing pupils' capacity to form friendships and relationships with others, relationships emerged as the second most discussed theme during circle time sessions (after bullying). In addition to discussing relationships, there is evidence in our research to suggest that participating in circle time sessions improved interpersonal relationships. Research participants indicated that through circle time they, "Got to know classmates better", "Bonded with others in their class" and

“Enjoyed the connection it helped [them] to gain with their classmates and teacher”. This inevitably contributed towards students’ well-being. Pedagogically, participants cited “Good relationship with pupils” as the most important teacher skill in conducting effective circle time sessions. This was followed by teachers’ ability to show empathy and understanding and the ability to make the circle a safe space. Conversely, a poor rapport between teacher and pupils was seen as a serious obstacle to effective circle time sessions. Participants cited two principal reasons for this: the personal characteristics of teachers, for example a teacher being “quite strict and unapproachable”; and not knowing the teacher well enough. One participant stated, “A lot of the time, circle time was where bullying was discussed. This was often with a teacher we didn’t know well, therefore there was not a relationship between the teacher and pupils. This resulted in an ineffective circle time”. Although this participant didn’t specify, it is likely that it is second level to which s/he is referring.

Engagement, Meaning and Achievement

De Winter *et al.* (1999) argue that facilitating and providing children with opportunities to voice their opinions promotes their health and well-being. Circle time sessions appeared to provide opportunities for participants to be meaningfully engaged and to feel a sense of achievement. This was primarily facilitated by circle time’s capacity to facilitate student voice. Participants stated that circle time provided opportunities to “... voice my opinions/thoughts”, “express myself”, and “... to clearly hear everyone’s opinions”. One also spoke of “... enjoying hearing other people’s thoughts”, and others spoke about the opportunities circle time provided to share ideas and stories.

On the other hand, it is arguable that engagement, meaning and achievement may be undermined by teachers’ propensity to agenda-set, thereby limiting student voice, as evidenced in this research. Whether at primary or post-primary level, teachers dominated theme selection, although at post-primary level, participants were given significantly more opportunities to negotiate theme selection with teachers. Thirty-seven per cent of participants indicated that theme selection was negotiated with teachers at post-primary level, in contrast to 4.8% at primary level. A lack of student voice and autonomy in this area was also an aspect of circle time that participants did not enjoy. Reflecting this, one participant stated: “The teacher didn’t want us to discuss other topics than the one she had chosen”; while another stated that, “When the teacher was talking, i [sic] preferred listening to my classmates.” It can be argued that by agenda setting, teachers’ voices are privileged over that of children’s and in this context, the extent to which children’s engagement is meaningful and the extent to which children feel a sense of achievement may be undermined.

Positive Emotion

While there were positive emotions associated with circle time, circle time could also be a time of considerable anxiety for less confident students. For example, one student stated: “It was a bit scary sometimes having to speak out while everyone watched you”, while another asserted that circle time “... could be quite nerve-wrecking as your turn to speak approached!” While the non-hierarchical nature of the circle is intended to symbolise equality, it can also result in participants feeling overly visible and “on display”. One student stated: “Sitting in a circle enabled everyone to look at you when speaking in contrast to people sitting in rows in front or behind you”. It could be argued that rather than enhancing participation, the circle may make some pupils less likely to participate in the discussion.

A number of participants also articulated the view that more confident students frequently monopolised sessions, with less confident students feeling too intimidated to voice their views. One participant stated: “Sometimes the quieter students would be overpowered by the more outgoing/opinionated students in the circle.” This suggests that, counter to its aims, circle time can be a forum which marginalises less confident pupils, rather than giving them an equal voice and may actually undermine their sense of well-being.

Similarly, circle time was also viewed by a quarter of participants as a forum which heightens feelings of self-consciousness. This was followed by feeling under pressure to speak (n=16). Reflecting this, one

participant stated: "... sometimes you were put on the spot and some students felt too shy to say what they really felt in front of their peers." Another stated: "The whole class was paying explicit attention to you." With regards to feeling undue pressure to speak, one participant described feeling "... pressure to say something at times when your name was called." Similarly, another reported disliking the fact that "We had to have an opinion on everything because we couldn't move along unless we said something." Again it is arguable that this potentially undermined students' sense of well-being. It is important to note here that putting pressure on pupils to speak diverges from the "pass rule" espoused in the Mosley model of circle time.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a theoretical base for evaluating the practice of circle time from a well-being perspective. On the positive side, students reported that interpersonal relationships were enhanced through circle time, but that this depended on the relationship with the class teacher - in other words, this is not a given. Circle time potentially promotes children's voice, which may be linked to health and well-being (De Winter *et al.* 1999), however when there is little choice about what is discussed (as our findings suggest), or where children are pressured to speak, this undermines the potential of circle time as a forum for the promotion of well-being. Furthermore, where children feel that there is unequal access to the right to a voice, with more vocal children allowed to dominate, this can also undermine its *raison d'être*. The importance of the role of the teacher as facilitator cannot be underestimated. Where students reported a warm relationship with the class teacher, this appeared to be decisive in terms of circle time's potential to promote well-being. Mosley (1996) also emphasises this when she encourages teachers to become self-aware and make time to nurture their own self-esteem, as well as taking responsibility for children's sense of self. It may be that teachers need to establish this positive relationship before embarking on the practice of circle time, as there are no guarantees that it will be developed in the circle sufficiently for children to feel safe - a prerequisite for the promotion of well-being.

In addition, it appears that for some teachers, circle time is a tokenistic forum in relation to children exercising their voice. This came through strongly in our findings, where teachers set the agenda (particularly at primary level). While it is acknowledged that very young children may need some guidance in relation to agenda-setting, there is potential for scaffolding their inputs even at a young age, and as they become used to the circle time format. Only then will circle time become a democratic forum with genuine participation.

Furthermore, there appears to be an erosion of children's rights in some circle time sessions in relation to the pass rule. While children have a right to exercise their voice (UNCRC 1989), they should also be in a position to choose where and when they exercise that right. Too often, oral contributions are valued over other types of participation in circle time (Collins 2011). Putting pressure on children to speak (as evidenced in our research), with the resultant anxiety, may be counterproductive in terms of facilitating children's authentic voice. Likewise, allowing some children to dominate goes against the underpinning principle of equality in circle time. It also suggests that teachers' facilitation skills, particularly around discussion in the classroom, need further development, a finding that confirms a similar point in the *Inspectorate Evaluation Studies* (DES 2009).

The title of this paper reflects the ambiguity surrounding circle time's potential to promote well-being. If circle time is to truly realise this potential, the following key issues will need to be addressed:

- children's right to a voice and participation, and to choose if/when to exercise this;
- a conscious attention to building relationships between the teacher and the children in order to create and maintain a safe and welcoming space;
- equality within the circle reflected in teachers' ability to regulate contributions in a fair and equitable manner.

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Child Protection – The School Story: Reflections From Designated Liaison Persons

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INTRODUCTION

“Childhood confers a special status on children, including recognition of their vulnerability and need for protection” (Wulczyn *et al.* 2010, p.5). Outside of the home, children spend a large proportion of their time in school and teachers, and indeed others working in the field of education, are in a unique position to contribute to child abuse prevention:

Teachers are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse and neglect. They are the main care-givers to children outside the family context and have regular contact with children in the school setting.

(Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011 p.23)

The Department of Education and Skills’ (DES) *Child Protection Procedures* require that all Boards of Management nominate a designated liaison person (DLP) with specific responsibility for overseeing child protection matters in the school (Department of Education and Skills 2011). The findings of an investigation into the “lived experience” of the role of the DLP are presented in this paper and consideration is given to the educational implications for child protection work.

LITERATURE ON THE TEACHER’S ROLE IN CHILD PROTECTION

Challenges for Teachers in Relation to Child Protection

Schools and teachers play an important role as guarantors of their students’ welfare. The *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (Teaching Council 2012) outlines the centrality of the ethos of care in the ethical values that underpin the code and standards that apply to teachers.

However, it is clear from the literature that the role of teachers in child protection work has never been easy. Buckley and McGarry (2010) highlight the impact of training, competing pressures on teachers’ time, inter-agency collaboration and teachers’ reluctance to report abuse as the issues that are the most common to Irish studies that have researched the challenges for teachers in child protection work. Bourke and Maunsell (2015) categorise barriers to teacher reporting as both explicit and implicit. Explicit obstacles include lack of knowledge or awareness in relation to child abuse issues, including lack of necessary awareness of the signs of child abuse, and lack of knowledge of the appropriate procedures to follow. Implicit obstacles to reporting among teachers may be located across three domains: the personal, the professional and the cultural domain. Within the personal domain, each person’s unique theory about child protection and abuse will influence how they respond to information that does or does not fit with their own implicit theory. In relation to the professional domain, the theories that teachers hold about the services that are available to children from a protection and welfare perspective and their role in same are identified as a potential obstacle. Finally, the wider cultural view of children and attitudes towards, for example, child protection intervention in family life can influence an individual’s implicit theories.

Bourke and Maunsell (2015) argue that education and training should aim at targeting both explicit and implicit obstacles to reporting. Providing teachers with an opportunity to become aware of and reflect on their own implicit theories in relation to child protection may raise awareness of obstacles across the personal, professional and cultural domains that they are not aware of. Gilligan (1995) highlights a number of “Rs” in relation to teachers playing an effective role in child protection: (i) readiness to recognise the possibility of abuse (ii) identification of risk of abuse (iii) timely referral (iv) resource person for those involved in the process of investigation and (v) rehabilitation and recovery.

Child Protection and the Curriculum

Through both the formal and informal curriculum, children learn personal safety skills that encourage them to “tell” if they are in situations that are threatening, dangerous or abusive. The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum (NCCA 1999) provides a framework for teachers to foster the personal health, development and well-being of the child in the context of a positive school culture and climate. In addition, since 2011 “all primary schools must fully implement the *Stay Safe* programme” (Department of Education and Skills 2011, p.6). This was developed in the late 1980s when it was decided that a positive preventative approach was necessary to deal with the problem of the significant rise in the number of official reports of child abuse (An Roinn Oideachas 1995).

The *Stay Safe* programme is “a culturally sensitive, developmentally staged child abuse prevention programme” (MacIntyre *et al.* 2000, p.200). The programme seeks to enhance children’s self-protective skills through participation in lessons on safe and unsafe situations, bullying, inappropriate touch, secrets, telling and stranger danger. It aims to give children the necessary skills to recognise and resist abuse and victimisation. It is multi-systemic insofar as it involves teachers, parents and children. The *Stay Safe* programme is currently being revised for primary schools, and is due for publication in the 2015-2016 school year.

In addition to curriculum requirements, teachers share a moral responsibility towards children in their care. The nature and work of a primary school teacher both demands and fosters an ethical orientation towards care, and teachers, through their emotions and actions, inspire, motivate and help their students. Children build a relationship of trust with teachers and this trusting relationship in a caring and nurturing school environment can provide the conditions for a child that foster disclosure of abuse.

The Role of the DLP in Irish Schools

Personnel in the role of the DLP in Irish schools vary from an administrative principal of a large urban school to a teaching principal of a small school and indeed to a member of the teaching staff of a school. The awareness of all teachers and school staff is the cornerstone in enabling the DLP to fulfil his/her role. Teachers may be the eyes or ears for a child in a vulnerable and unsafe situation and are the key link in the chain of events whereby the DLP fulfils the responsibilities required of him/her as outlined in the DES *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures* (2012).

The responsibilities of the DLP are significant, according to DES policy, however little literature or research exists that is specific to the Irish context in relation to the role of the DLP. In 2008, the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) conducted a review of a sample of their members acting in the role of DLP. The aims of the survey were to identify training and other needs, and to identify the positive and negative experiences of DLPs in dealing with other agencies (INTO 2008). This study focused on a key aspect of the DLP’s role in communicating with other agencies, and identified training and other support needs. However, the central aim of the research presented in this paper was to explore the participants’ “lived experience” of the role. The research sought to understand the multifaceted nature of the DLP role within its environment, by combining an in-depth focus on potential supports and challenges with a wider exploration of the role of teachers and schools in child protection work.

METHODOLOGY

Implicit in this research is an exploratory approach. Specifically, the research holds to the philosophical assumptions of the advocacy/participatory approach. This worldview is typically seen with qualitative research and holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda. The research thus contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live and the researcher's life. Advocacy research provides a voice for these participants, raises their consciousness and advances an agenda for change to improve lives. It becomes a united voice for reform and change (Creswell 2009). Ultimately, through the voices of the DLPs, this research addresses a most pressing social issue of children's protection and, in doing so, aims to advance an agenda to guarantee greater protection and safety for vulnerable children.

There were two phases of study in this research. Initially, a survey questionnaire was sent to thirty two DLPs in primary schools: sixteen DLPs working in schools that are designated with disadvantaged status and are participating in the school support programme under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan for educational inclusion (DES 2005) and sixteen DLPs working in non-DEIS schools. The purpose of the survey questionnaire was to identify a range of participants for the interview with a variety of years of experience and also, as limited research has been carried out on this topic in Ireland, the researcher wanted to gain some insight into the most salient issues that would guide the schedule for the semi-structured interviews. From the responses received, sixteen participants were chosen for interview: eight DLPs from DEIS schools and eight DLPs from non-DEIS schools, working in a variety of size and category of school and with various experiences in the role. The decision to choose eight DLPs from schools designated as disadvantaged was taken in order to capture the richness of the lived experiences of DLPs.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the most appropriate approach for investigation of the qualitative phase of this study. IPA incorporates both inductive and iterative processes which takes account of the researcher offering an interpretative account of what it means for participants to have concerns in the particular context of the work. Given the particularly sensitive nature of the study ethical considerations were foremost in the researcher's mind when distributing the questionnaire and during the enrolment of volunteers to participate in the research, during the interviews and in the transcribing and analysis of the data.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the five-stage process of IPA, a master list of themes was produced and a list of superordinate and subordinate themes emerged, referring to the major and minor themes which were identified. The five superordinate themes incorporating subordinate themes are as follows:

- (1) The DLP Role;
- (2) Outside Agencies and Child Protection;
- (3) The School Story;
- (4) Children Telling;
- (5) Guidelines and Training.

These themes represent the researcher's interpretation of the DLP's accounts of what their role involves and the themes were chosen to reflect shared aspects of the experience of all participants.

The DLP Role

An analysis of the role of the DLP highlights it as a multifaceted, complex role which is open to interpretation in various circumstances. The person generally nominated as the DLP in schools is the

principal. Given the varied nature of the principal's role in a school, with continuous and competing demands on their time, priorities can shift. Fear of legal consequences and potential personal consequences of taking action renders the role undesirable. Many challenges present in the role, including dealing with newcomer children and dealing with cultural practices at odds with the Irish system. The greatest challenge that presented for all DLPs interviewed in the study related to knowing when there was enough information to refer on cases of neglect. The responsibility of isolated decision-making as a DLP is especially highlighted by one participant: "Apart from disclosures, it is all judgement calls" (Participant 9).

This research highlighted the responsibility of the role, serving to illuminate it as a difficult job to undertake which was heightened by the sense of little to no support available. Bolstering support for DLPs could possibly be provided through the establishment of a care team within each school, or through establishing protocols for information sharing between a DLP and a Deputy DLP, or allocating a social worker to each school that would support a DLP in their child protection work. This could prove effective in helping to minimise the often overwhelming sense of isolation and responsibility for DLPs, while keeping in mind the confidential nature of the subject matter.

In addition, the findings suggest that although the responsibilities of the Board of Management include "monitor(ing) the progress of children considered to be at risk" (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011, p.23), this study highlighted that there are a lack of established monitoring systems in schools. Further support needs to be made available to ensure that schools establish such systems, and that there is some evaluation of these monitoring systems, either by the Inspectorate or through Tusla (The Child and Family Agency). Monitoring records are essential in noting patterns of events and would support DLPs in reaching the point of referral, particularly in cases of neglect.

Outside Agencies and Child Protection

The experience of dealing with Tusla in relation to child protection concerns elicited a range of responses from participants, from positive to very negative. Positive responses included that there was follow up made with the school, good advice given and referrals acted upon. By contrast, some participants felt frustrated and disillusioned, particularly with slow response rates to reports and the low level of feedback offered to schools. The adequacy of supports put in place for children and the level of follow through was a common concern raised, with one participant questioning:

You go through all this process and at the end of the day does it really make a difference to the lives of children?

(Participant 2)

The realities of the challenges of interagency communication and cooperation between schools and Tusla were illustrated, particularly through the case conference process. Implementation and follow through of decisions taken, the challenges of being completely honest in the case conference forum and the lack of trust in the relationships between schools and Tusla and the absent voice of the child were among the issues raised.

This study has served to highlight that a mutually supportive relationship between Tusla and schools need to be established and could provide an opportunity for the school perspective to be considered in decision-making relating to a child. The valuable insights that schools and school personnel have of children seem to be often overlooked in child protection proceedings in spite of the fact that these have the potential to be very beneficial to overall child protection decisions. A more effective method of communication needs to be established between Tusla and schools, incorporating structured levels of feedback and adequate response rates to referrals being processed. Some of the findings highlight that there presently exists levels of frustration and distrust between school personnel and Tusla as a result of perceived non-

intervention and unsuccessful intervention for children, and in order for interagency communication and cooperation to achieve any level of success, these issues need to be addressed.

Presently schools have little to no information in relation to how the Tusla system operates in relation to child protection, and information and awareness is needed for DLPs in order to understand the constraints and realities under which they are operating. Given the necessity of information sharing and cooperation required to progress cases, this could potentially be facilitated through relationship building between school and Tusla personnel. Allocating a social worker to a school or group of schools with one key liaison person for each DLP, whom they have an opportunity to meet on a regular basis, could prove very effective in building bridges of communication and enabling greater levels of trust between Tusla and school personnel. Levels of concern were also raised in relation to support services put in place for children and the level of follow through on such support. This study has highlighted that the theoretical underpinnings of interagency work remain weak and considerable development needs to be made in the area of integrated services which can best support children and their families (Duggan and Corrigan 2009).

The School Story

The participants' accounts of the various care practices provided by schools for children outline the contribution of the school community in protecting and safeguarding children and meeting some of their welfare needs. Through the caring ethos of the school and the structures and supports provided to children, the extremely valuable role that teachers and schools play in child protection work was highlighted by participants: "The care they're getting and the support they're getting ...from the teacher and the school are really huge you know" (Participant 6).

The school story theme portrays the caring ethos that pervades primary schools in general and demonstrates once more why interagency communication and cooperation is so essential between schools and Tusla. The care practices and programmes in place in schools, particularly in schools designated as disadvantaged, contribute in very significant ways to a child's overall care and protection and it is essential that this information is shared with personnel who are responsible for implementing supports and care plans for children in need. Given the trusting relationships that schools build with children and their families, combined with reported successes of programme interventions, it seems only logical that Tusla would form closer links with schools and school communities and seek their advice and support in implementing programmes for families.

The school story theme also outlined the varying levels of staff awareness of child protection issues based on age, experience levels and life experience. Different variables impact teachers' ability to recognise child abuse and this research highlighted that teachers and school staff vary in their attitude towards the subject, from being open to it, to being reluctant to get involved for fear of bringing trouble upon themselves. It is necessary that teachers and also school staff are made aware of the consequences of abuse on children's lives and the importance of early detection and intervention. Given the busyness of school life and the numerous priorities that have to be addressed, keeping child protection on the agenda and constantly reminding staff of the issue must become established practice in schools.

Children Telling

The DLPs in the study were unanimous in their agreement that children find it hard to tell in school if they are living through the experience of abuse, particularly if a family member is involved. The study indicated that children's loyalty to their family, and the fact that if they live with constant abuse they may come to know no different:

I'd say there are a lot of secrets out there and there are a lot of secrets in our school.... I think people are holding children to keeping secrets...that is the power adults have over children.

(Participant 13)

Teachers also felt the need to be more explicit with children in relation to the messages that are delivered through the curriculum in relation to telling. The study highlighted that the factors in a school environment that would support children to tell included a trusting and caring school ethos and positive relationships between students and staff members. The subject of children telling is one that has been unexplored with school staff and warrants support, both in terms of teachers being able to identify behaviours that may be indicative of abuse taking place or hints and suggestions that need to be followed up, as this may be a child's telling mechanism. This area needs to be addressed with teachers to assist them in exploring their own feelings and anxieties about dealing with such sensitive information.

Guidelines and Training

Generally, the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2011) and *DES Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures* (2011) were both considered supportive and comprehensive documents for DLPs. While all but one DLP in this study had received training in relation to their role, further training requirements requested for DLPs in this study included: input from the different agencies involved in child protection, particularly Tusla; legal training; and training on dealing with families once a report has been made. Given the uncertainty that the findings highlighted in knowing what level of signs and symptoms need to be present in order to be categorised as abuse, exploration of the effects of child abuse on children, awareness of childhood behaviour, deeper knowledge of the signs and symptoms of abuse, and personal attitude to the role need to be explored with DLPs. Considering that all but one of the participants in this research have had experience of training, it is evident that training on the signs and symptoms of abuse is not sufficient and needs to be expanded.

All participants were unanimous that comprehensive staff training in child protection should be available to staff and that while full day training was made available to DLP, it was not extended to staff: "More essential in many ways that staff receive training because you are completely dependent on your staff" (Participant 2).

Furthermore, the reports by DLPs in this research indicated that they do not always follow the *Children First* guidelines stringently and that they may be addressing situations themselves and indeed prioritising that some categories of abuse are more serious than others. The need for a full staff training day in this area, updated on a regular basis, was highlighted as essential by findings in this study.

CONCLUSION

At a fundamental level this research illuminates our understanding of the experiences of DLPs of child protection in primary schools in Ireland. Little work has been carried out in the Irish context on the role of teachers in child protection work and this study has attempted to address the paucity of research in this area by addressing the role of the person with specific responsibility in the school. The experiences as told by the participants in this research portrayed the role as demanding, time consuming, isolating and fraught with decisions that are in reality not as simple as outlined in the available guidelines. The perspective from this study in relation to child protection work is the voice of one member of the school community - the DLP. It would have been extremely worthwhile to investigate the perspective of Tusla personnel in relation to how schools carry out their child protection duties and what Tusla's experience of interagency communication and cooperation has been. This study seeks to support children, however the voice of the child remains unheard in this debate. Investigating the role of schools in child protection work from the perspective of the child is a critical dimension to this work, and while conscious of the ethical considerations this would involve, this area is recommended for future research.

With the enactment of the *Children First Bill*, teachers will become 'mandated persons' in relation to child protection in this country. This study highlights however that statutory changes alone will not eradicate the challenges that exist in relation to child protection. Providing supports that will enhance real interagency collaboration, combined with a renewed focus on supporting the DLP in a challenging role, along with looking at the potential contribution of schools in this area, will serve to really support vulnerable children in this country.

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Confused About (S)P(H)E? Learning in Physical Education to Support Learning in Social, Personal and Health Education

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INTRODUCTION

The *Primary Curriculum* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 1999a) in Ireland outlines curricula for Physical Education (PE) and for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Each subject is allocated one hour of discrete curriculum time weekly. Integration of subjects is one of the key elements of the primary curriculum and has been highlighted within reports on implementation of the curriculum as an aspect that needs consideration (NCCA 2005, 2008). On examination of the curricula for both PE and SPHE, it could be argued that as similar curriculum objectives are outlined within each subject, the primary teacher may be unclear about the most appropriate content to select for programmes in each subject area. This article presents the argument that learning in PE can support learning in SPHE, where a key principle underpinning learning in each area is the promotion of the well-being of the child.

When the SPHE Network Conference was first announced the PE Unit in St. Patrick's College believed that it would present us with an opportunity to map the 'journey' of how we embed two key elements of PE in our programmes: (1) social and personal learning; and (2) the promotion of physical activity. We identified these two elements as representative of a host of other possible links between the work our pre-service teachers (PSTs) undertake as part of their SPHE and PE modules. This mapping and sharing of 'the journey' was identified as our first aim, and was an important process to set the context for the second aim. The latter aim was to prompt us as teacher educators to reflect afresh on the links between children's learning in SPHE and PE and to identify how provision for children's well-being can be enhanced.

Firstly, we present the background to the 'journey' of PSTs in PE within St. Patrick's College. This is followed by describing their 'journey' within PE, highlighting our examination of each of the curricula (PE and SPHE), illustrating the links between the subjects, and describing how these links are reflected in PE modules that students undertake as part of their PST education programme. Finally, recommendations are presented, targeted at many relevant stakeholders, with the ultimate goal of enhancing children's well-being through programmes of PE that support learning in SPHE.

BACKGROUND TO THE 'JOURNEY' OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Planning the 'Journey': a Rationale

As we plan courses in PE for PSTs, two of our key areas to consider are the experience of activities that promote social and personal development of children and activities that can enhance their physical activity levels. The focus on social and personal learning is an ongoing area of debate as we plan modules that link to sport with its many manifestations of social issues (e.g. team loyalty, fair play) and clear opportunities for personal development (e.g. building self-esteem from mastering a sport skill).

Our concern regarding children's physical activity is mirrored by the wealth of recent research on children's physical activity levels both nationally (Woods *et al.* 2010; Department of Health and Children 2009) and internationally (Chow *et al.* 2015; Sallis *et al.* 1997; McKenzie *et al.* 1997). We believe it is timely to reflect on physical activity provision given that it is ten years since the *National Task Force on Obesity* (Department of Health and Children 2005) recommended that (a) "emphasis in all schools should be on increased physical activity including participation in sports", and (b) that "every child should be enabled, through restructuring the school day if necessary, to achieve a minimum of 30 minutes dedicated physical activity every day (outside of physical education time) in all educational settings" (p.88). A further rationale for prompting reflection and discussion on social and personal learning as well as physical activity at this time is the recent focus on health and well-being of children in our primary schools as a significant theme of the *Aistear Early Childhood Framework* (NCCA 2009).

While much media attention focuses on health and well-being it is difficult to measure the extent to which the general public are exercised by this focus. However, in their public survey on the priorities for primary education (NCCA 2012), the NCCA found that well-being was ranked third in order of importance by the respondents and was ranked higher than literacy and numeracy. It is interesting to note as we reflect on the links between PE and SPHE (discussed in more detail below) that within the top six priorities the following 'main ideas' were identified in the survey:

- Psychological well-being, happiness and confidence, emotional well-being, spiritual well-being, challenges and resilience
- Physical well-being, benefits, time for physical education, curriculum resources.

The need to prioritise children's physical education and fitness, to enrich children's lives physically and their understanding of health and nutrition in primary school was highlighted by one-fifth (n=193) of all respondents.

(NCCA 2012, p.20)

Other aspects common to PE and SPHE that occurred in responses included physical activity, diet and enjoyment, all of which could be considered as recurring themes underpinning particular strands of both curricula. This particular piece of research on the priorities for primary education seems to indicate that many issues and themes related to PE and SPHE are considered significant when priorities are being identified (NCCA 2012). It is important that our PSTs are aware of public attitudes and interests that can influence expectations related to children's learning.

Planning the 'Journey': Theory Underpinning Content

Two particular bodies of work inform our PE module content relating to social and personal learning and physical activity: the work on the curriculum model Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) and the growing body of literature on physical activity. The TPSR model was developed by Hellison (1995, 2003, 2011) to help students learn to be responsible by giving them increasing amounts of responsibility and by carefully shifting a significant portion of decision-making responsibilities to them. The model promotes self and social responsibility by empowering students to take more responsibility for their actions and lives and by teaching them to be concerned about the rights, feelings, and needs of others. The model strives to help students feel empowered, to experience making commitments to themselves and others, to live by a set of principles, and to be concerned about the well-being of others.

The TPSR Model emphasizes effort and self-direction as critical to the achievement of personal well-being. Respecting others' rights, considering others' feelings, and caring about others are essential to the achievement of social well-being. Hellison (1995) places the achievement of these outcomes in an informal progression of levels or goals to help both teachers and students to become aware of their behaviours and to focus their efforts as they move toward desired outcomes. Teachers can use these levels as a framework to plan, teach, and evaluate student learning. The TPSR model's levels can be described as moving from irresponsibility to responsibility, from respect for oneself to respect and concern for

others. These behaviours would be first developed within the PE class and then used in the home and community settings. Hellison and Martinek (2006) argue that "the overarching purpose [of the model] is to help students take responsibility for their own well-being and development and for contributing to well-being of others" (p. 616). Within our core PE work with all PSTs we endeavour to embed some of the principles and practices related to the TPSR model that can be adapted for use with children in primary schools.

Much of the work in outdoor and adventure activities within our modules can provide us with opportunities to embed some of these principles in practice. PSTs engage in outdoor challenges such as the blind trail (negotiating a trail while blindfolded with the support of a partner) or building a hut with hula hoops (an activity that requires group co-operation in construction and play within the hut). As they explore activities in the games strand of the PE curriculum, they engage in many 'beat your own record' activities. These activities prompt children to focus on their personal achievements rather than emphasising their performance with reference to others. Team relays incorporating fun elements such as collecting jigsaw pieces before making a jigsaw or composing dances provide PSTs with many opportunities to identify occasions for children to develop social and personal responsibility. A very visible practice that is often linked with work in SPHE is learning how to teach games using a parachute which requires high levels of co-operation within groups of children. Discussion of other curriculum models and their impact on sections of modules concerned with social and personal learning is not possible within this article. However, readers are directed to one article in particular by Quay and Peters (2008) who make an interesting argument that classroom or generalist teachers are in a particularly strong position to implement programmes of learning where a key emphasis is on social and personal learning.

The second body of work that informs PE modules for PSTs is the literature related to physical activity levels of children. In a US context McKenzie *et al.* (1995) and Sallis *et al.* (1997) have undertaken significant research into physical activity levels of children and the promotion of physical activity amongst children and youth through data-driven physical education programmes. They argue that physical activity should be a central outcome for any school physical education programme, advocating for health-related physical education programmes and identifying the new teaching skills needed to deliver such programmes (McKenzie *et al.* 1995; Sallis *et al.* 1997). McKenzie was also a major contributor to the study design and data collection in several programmes, including *Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids* (SPARK) and *Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health* (CATCH) (McKenzie *et al.* 2009; McKenzie *et al.* 2003). The SPARK and CATCH programmes have impacted physical education for children in the US and beyond. The *Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity* (CSPPA) study (Woods *et al.* 2009) provides us with a clear insight into the physical activity levels of children and adolescents in Ireland and information about their engagement in physical education. This study found that just 19% of primary-aged children reached the minimum daily recommendation for physical activity, while just 35% of children were being taught physical education for the recommended time each week (Woods *et al.* 2010). Our challenge in St. Patrick's College is to embed the promotion of physical activity as one facet of programmes in PE, while retaining other important foci such as the promotion of social and personal learning.

As we endeavour to emphasise physical activity within lessons, we aim to do so in ways that prompt PSTs to think about how we can embed promotion of physical activity without losing sight of other aims of PE lessons. One way that we have explored this is by asking students to wear pedometers during some seminars and to realise that the step count should be contributing towards 10-12,000 steps daily or 60 minutes moderate intensity activity daily (Department of Health and Children 2009). Another way that we have tried to promote this focus with some PSTs is by examining various lesson plans with promotion of physical activity as an area for investigation. The lesson resources published by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) (2015) are a particularly useful resource as part of this exercise and can be used to prompt reflection on personal and social learning.

The 'Journey' of PSTs in St. Patrick's College

As we trace the journey of learning in PE taken by PSTs in St. Patrick's College who are preparing to become primary teachers, it can be assumed that at least some of these PSTs have gained some understanding of the meaning of social and personal learning and of the importance of physical activity for health and well-being as part of their accultural socialisation within the context of their families and communities. They have generally undertaken PE programmes at primary and post-primary school where there have been opportunities for development of this understanding, although the duration and quality of these programmes is unknown. Nevertheless, as both PE and SPHE are traditionally 'non-examinable' subjects at post-primary level in Ireland, many PSTs embark on PE courses as part of their teacher preparation that will be assessed in a formal way for the first time. All of the PSTs in the new four year programme (introduced in 2012) of preparation for primary teaching in St. Patrick's College participate in PE lectures and seminars totalling 40 hours contact time (4 credits in the European Credit system). In this space, we, the teacher educators, endeavour to raise many issues that arise when teaching PE and illustrate and prompt students to reflect on where links might be made with other subjects, with a particular emphasis on SPHE. However, like those working in many other subject units we have been prompted to emphasise numeracy and literacy issues in the last number of years in line with DES policy (Department of Education and Skills 2011).

Within the undergraduate programme a cohort of students has the option to specialise in PE either by pursuing a 'major' or a 'minor' specialism. Our vision for this group is that they will be in a strong position to lead developments in PE at school level and beyond as they become experienced in teaching PE. It is not envisaged that they will be employed as specialist primary PE teachers but in time as they gain experience teaching PE we hope that they will be identified as teachers who will be in a strong position to support other teachers in their teaching of PE. At postgraduate level we have a small but significant cohort that has undertaken study at Certificate, Diploma and then Masters level within the last ten years. The common thread in the journey of each of these students is their willingness to engage at specialist level with PE. This allows a deeper engagement with issues common to PE and SPHE. Examination of the linkages between SPHE and PE provides us with a starting point for our planning to ensure that these links become clear to both undergraduate and postgraduate students of PE.

On the 'Journey': Where SPHE and PE Meet

The SPHE Curriculum (NCCA 1999b) and the PE Curriculum (NCCA 1999c) for primary schools outline curriculum objectives for each subject and provide exemplars to illustrate how the objectives might be achieved. The SPHE Curriculum explicitly prompts teachers to provide learning opportunities "...through an integrated approach across a range of subject areas" (NCCA 1999b, p.2) and the strand unit titles in the SPHE Curriculum (e.g 'taking care of my body', 'safety and protection', 'self-identity') leave plenty of scope for linking with work within PE. Table 1 shows a selection of curriculum objectives and some exemplars (italicised) from both curricula that have been selected to illustrate links that can be made between both subjects.

Table 1: Some examples of curriculum objectives and exemplars (*italicised*) from the SPHE Curriculum (NCCA 1999b) and the PE Curriculum (NCCA 1999c)

SPHE	Physical Education
"Engage in group activities in the class and learn how to share, co-operate, listen to, work and play together" (p.33)	
<i>"Practising fairness when playing or working together, taking turns"</i> (p. 33)	<i>"Running in a straight line or a lane without impeding others"</i> (p. 17)
"Develop and practise leadership roles" (p. 49)	"Develop the ability to officiate at games" (p. 56)
"Give and receive compliments and constructive criticism in different situations" (p. 48)	<i>"Displaying basic teamwork in mini-games"</i> (p. 56)
"Appreciate and respect the environment" (p. 50)	"Develop positive attitudes towards caring for the environment" (p. 59)
"Practise care and consideration, courtesy and good manners when interacting with others" (p. 21)	"Perform dances showing concentration and awareness of others" (p. 53) "Undertake co-operative (trust) activities" (p. 58)
"Be aware of potential travel hazards and the need for responsible behaviour when travelling" (p.44)	<i>"Identifying appropriate safety measures when engaged in activities outside the school site"</i> (p. 59)

Throughout course modules PE and SPHE links are illustrated and explored through practical work in seminars. Some of the links illustrated in Table 1 above will be discussed below in the context of these seminars. Firstly, PSTs are prompted to think about multiple facets of an activity, such as children learning to sprint in a straight line in an athletics lesson (see Table 1). The teacher emphasises the importance of this practice to win a race but the importance of respecting other children by staying within their own lane is often forgotten. Both elements are important in terms of the child's learning, both elements can be explored in the context of the PE lesson, overlapping with work in SPHE. A further example can be explored within games lessons where lines of children can be observed waiting their turn to play games until they can play under teacher control. This scenario is used to prompt PSTs to consider how often we give children real leadership roles in the physical education lesson: to enable them to manage their own games; to provide them with opportunities to officiate (see Table 1 above) including making decisions on fair play; leading towards refereeing their own games under teacher supervision. A third example can be set within the context of team play. PSTs are prompted to reflect on the importance of ensuring that children learn how to win (receiving compliments) and how to accept losing a game (giving compliments), a link that is highlighted in Table 1 above. We question if we allocate enough time with PSTs to unpick some of the teaching methodologies that are so important to facilitate this learning. A final example might be useful to illustrate how PSTs are prompted to reflect on selection of teams. Poor practice is sometimes evident in PE classes, where children have responsibility for picking teams with little regard for how this practice can damage the self-esteem of the less able child. Use of the poem *Tich Millar* by Wendy Cope can often prompt interesting discussion on students' personal experience of this practice. Linking to the learning within SPHE around feelings and emotions, the experience within the PE class can serve to support such learning. The examples cited above provide evidence of the support that PE can provide to learning within SPHE.

Another means of highlighting links with SPHE is by emphasising domains of learning related to child development. These are best illustrated by taking some examples from our work within the six strands of

the PE Curriculum (athletics, aquatics, dance, gymnastics, games and outdoor and adventure activities). For example within work in athletics we prompt students to identify the physical and cognitive aspects of child development that can be achieved through athletics or the social and personal learning that can be achieved through games. This terminology is used in course resources to ensure that students are constantly prompted to look at what this particular strand or set of activities 'looks like' for the child and in what significant ways it is helping the child to develop. It is in answering these questions that we prompt discussion on how the child is developing through engaging in activities within PE classes and how this work might support the child's learning in SPHE.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, through engagement in physical activities and through discussion and questioning of practice, PSTs are encouraged to examine the potential of particular activities to promote social and personal responsibility and increase levels of physical activity. They explore how these activities contribute to the well-being and health of the child: how activities in PE help children feel confident about their ability to run, twist, turn or jump; how games provide opportunities to work together performing simple tasks promoting group co-operation and developing a child's social skills. Creating dances and gymnastic sequences, working on pair balances in gymnastics, participating in a team relay, or playing a conditioned game on a small-sided team can provide meaningful learning opportunities that help learners meet the objectives of both the SPHE and the PE Curriculum. However, the occupational socialisation of the PSTs occurs as they enter schools as part of their programme and engage in periods of school placement. Teachers and principals, as key stakeholders in the process of socialisation, impact on the priority that PSTs afford to PE and SPHE. Perhaps less directly the DES Inspectorate impact too on their practice, particularly related to the extent to which DES policies are implemented. It is important to acknowledge the influence that colleges of education have on the practice of PSTs, although research by Pajares (1992) would suggest that teacher beliefs may have a strong influence on practice. Curtner-Smith (1998), Curtner-Smith *et al.* (2008), and Cosgrave and Murphy (2009) in an Irish context provide further evidence of the influence of school context on teachers' practice. This indicates that PSTs need to enter the workforce with a deep understanding of issues, such as the links between PE and SPHE, to ensure that their teaching will reflect this emphasis. Other important stakeholders when discussing issues related to PE and SPHE are bodies such as the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Irish Sports Council and the Irish Heart Foundation, each of whom has produced materials for use in schools, within PE and SPHE lessons.

While media coverage of issues related to PE and SPHE and policy documents related to health and well-being often lead to a belief that PE and SPHE are important experiences for children in primary school, the reality of primary schools is often quite different. Little research evidence has been collected on the amount and quality of PE or SPHE taught in schools. However, on examination of the most recent study of implementation of PE in schools, the CSPPA report (Woods *et al.* 2010) found that 46 minutes per week was the average time spent on PE lessons with 53% of schools reporting that they taught PE at least twice weekly.

While teacher educators can introduce PSTs to the practice of reflection on the two particular issues raised in this article, a fundamental question arises as these teachers begin their journey within schools: can stakeholders be convinced of the importance of ensuring that children spend more of their school day working within SPHE and PE? Referring back to the title of this article, the confusion that may exist between PE and SPHE can be viewed in a very positive light. Many of the curriculum objectives can be 'shared' as they overlap (some are illustrated in Table 1 above) with different experiences being provided within each subject to meet the objectives.

It could be argued that teachers, principals, parents and the DES are the key stakeholders along with children in primary schools and yet others such as the HSE, the Irish Sports Council and the Irish Heart Foundation have been linked with developments within both subject areas. We contend that advocacy for quality teaching of PE and SPHE, to include allocating more time to each subject, should be undertaken by all stakeholders. Curriculum objectives are clearly outlined for both subjects and while learning in PE can support learning in SPHE, it is clear that the depth and breadth of learning implicit in the curriculum can only be achieved where adequate time is allowed for this learning to take place. A parallel argument can be made with regard to the education of PSTs. They require considerable engagement with both subjects to ensure that they are enabled to plan programmes that ensure that learning in PE can support learning in SPHE.

Linking with the themes raised within this article, our vision as teacher educators is that children would understand the importance of physical activity in their lives and would have developed personal and social responsibility for ensuring that they have adequate physical activity as they engage enthusiastically with respect for others in physical activity contexts and beyond. To realise this vision we contend that it is crucial that meaningful, quality lessons in both subjects are part of daily school life, creating a significant step towards enhanced health and well-being of children in changing times.

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Having Our Say! A Snapshot of Young People's Views of the SPHE Substance Use Module

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INTRODUCTION

In the area of prevention, Ireland's *National Drugs Strategy (interim) 2009-2016* identified the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme "as the foundation for developing awareness of drugs and alcohol issues in schools" (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs [DoCRGA] 2009, p.30), with Action 20 of the *National Drugs Strategy (NDS)* calling for the improvement of "the delivery of SPHE in primary and post-primary schools" (p.99). The school is also seen as an important site for substance use education in the *Programme for Government, Government for National Recovery 2011-2016*, where one of the commitments to support the NDS is to: "Work with Local and Regional Drugs Task Forces to implement effective programmes, aimed at preventing addiction, in schools"; and another to "update the out-dated drugs awareness programmes in schools to reflect current attitudes and reality of recreational drug use amongst teens" (Department of the Taoiseach [DoT] 2011, p.49). The Task Forces have therefore been allocated a role in supporting school-based substance use education.

To date there has been limited research relating to the implementation of the substance use module of SPHE, in particular from the perspective of the young person. Little is also known of the perceived impact of SPHE on health and well-being. The authors consider it important that young people contribute to decision-making regarding the design and implementation of substance use education in schools and other settings, in line with good practice guidelines. Consequently, this study was conducted by the Education & Prevention Subgroup (EPS) of the Mid West Regional Drugs & Alcohol Forum (MWRDAF)³ to seek the views of young people in the Mid-West region on substance use education in the context of SPHE. The purpose of conducting this research was to collect regional data that would supplement the national evidence base, and to support the EPS in their work to meet the needs of young people in the region. This is particularly salient in the context of current Junior Cycle reforms which will impact on the provision of SPHE in schools.

This paper consists of five sections. It firstly sets the context for the study by reviewing developments relating to substance use education in the school setting, and relevant health and drug policy. Secondly, the methods of this study are described. Thirdly, the findings are outlined, followed by a discussion. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

BACKGROUND

Substance use Education in Post-primary Schools

Ireland's first official Governmental report relating to drugs, the *Report of Working Party on Drug Abuse*, published in 1971, did not recommend universal drugs education in schools, instead stating that:

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³ The Mid West Regional Drugs Task Force was renamed as the Mid West Regional Drug and Alcohol Forum in 2014.

School authorities who feel strongly about the need to provide their pupils with information regarding drugs should ensure that information is given by persons with an adequate knowledge of the subject and then only as part of religious education or civics programmes.

(Working Party on Drug Abuse 1971, p.57)

The report further recommended that a group should be formed to examine "...the question of communicating information to young persons on drugs..." (*ibid*, p.36). This official view changed as recommendations relating to school-based drugs education became a feature in subsequent policies. Since the 1970s, pastoral care and life skills programmes were provided in post-primary schools on a voluntary basis. Significant developments took place in the 1990s, commencing with the publication and dissemination of the *On My Own Two Feet* substance abuse prevention programme and resource in 1994.⁴ This was followed by a Department of Education information booklet, entitled *Substance Misuse Prevention, Outlining a Multi-strand Approach for Boards of Management, Teachers, Parents and other Educators*, published in 1997. In 1998, the obligation to provide health education became statutory through Section 9 (d) of the Education Act 1998, which states that schools shall:

Promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regards to the characteristic spirit of the school.

(Government of Ireland 1998, p.13)

In 2000, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published the SPHE curriculum for Junior Cycle, with substance use one of 10 modules. The programme became compulsory in 2003. Even though a curriculum framework for SPHE at Senior Cycle has been developed by the NCCA, the subject is currently not included in the Leaving Certificate syllabus. In 2007, the Drugs Education Workers' Forum published the *Quality Standards in Substance Use Education* (Butler *et al.* 2007), with one section in this document devoted to substance use education in schools. While not designed as a resource for teachers, the manual provides a guiding framework for good practice in the provision of drugs education. This was followed by the circulation of best practice guidelines for post-primary schools relating to SPHE in 2010 by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The next major development for SPHE was the proposed *Framework for Junior Cycle* in 2012, where SPHE was designated an optional short course for schools (NCCA 2012).

Drugs education cannot take place in isolation to other health and well-being topics. Substance use impacts on the well-being of young people, in particular their mental health. The link between alcohol use and negative mental health experiences of Irish young people was clearly found in the national *My World Survey* (Dooley and Fitzgerald 2012). The need to integrate drugs education into a whole school approach to the promotion of health and well-being has been recognised. In 2013, an inter-departmental group published guidelines for post-primary schools in relation to mental health promotion and suicide prevention, with the SPHE curriculum seen as integral to a whole school approach to the promotion of well-being (DES *et al.* 2013). In the new SPHE short course substance use is no longer a stand-alone module, it is integrated into Strands Two (Minding Myself and Others) and Four (My Mental Health) of the syllabus (NCCA 2014).

The *Programme for Government 2011 - 2016* (DoT 2011) committed to review and update the educational materials used in post-primary schools for drugs education. A working group was set up by the DES, which published a report in 2014. It is clear that the working group perceived that educational resources on their own would not progress drugs education in schools:

...updating *On My Own Two Feet* will not, of itself, be an adequate response to the needs identified in the consultation and the research review.

(DES 2014, p.7)

⁴ This programme was developed by the Department of Education, the Department of Health and the Mater Dei Counselling Institute.

The report contained a number of recommendations, several of which referred to enhanced links between settings and agencies that provide substance use education.

Health and Drug Policy Developments

SPHE also features in contemporary policy documents outside the education sector. In the *Health Promotion Strategic Framework* (Health Service Executive [HSE] 2011), the education sector is considered one of three priority settings for implementation of health promotion strategies. SPHE is also recognised in the *Healthy Ireland* document (Department of Health [DOH] 2013), which sets out a framework for improving the population's health and well-being. Under the theme of 'empowering people and communities' which aims "to encourage, support and enable people to make better choices for themselves and their families" (*ibid*, p.24), Action 3.2 states: "Fully implement Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in primary, post-primary and Youthreach settings..." (*ibid*, p.24).

The provision of universal drugs education in schools has been a recommendation in Irish drug policy since 1983. As noted in the introduction, in the current drugs strategy the SPHE curriculum is identified as "the foundation for developing awareness of drugs and alcohol issues in schools" (DoCRGA 2009, p.30). Consequently, Action 20 states:

Improve the delivery of SPHE in primary and post - primary schools through: the implementation of the recommendations of the SPHE evaluation in post - primary schools [and] the development of a whole school approach to substance use education.

(*ibid*, p.99)

Similarly, Action 23 refers to the implementation of SPHE in out of school educational settings.

The Education and Prevention Subgroup [EPS] of the MWRDAF

The MWRDAF is one of 10 regional and 14 local drugs task forces in Ireland. Its remit is to research, develop, implement and monitor a co-ordinated response to illicit drug and alcohol use at regional level, based on evidence of what is effective. The EPS has representation from a wide range of agencies.⁵ Its current roles include: acting as a communicative link between the Forum and its member agencies; supporting and recommending relevant proposals that are specific to the prevention pillar, to be forwarded to the Forum; advocating for drugs education and prevention; and promoting good practice in the field.

The group holds a strong belief in the importance and usefulness of SPHE when implemented as directed. However, it is also aware of the concerns regarding the implementation of SPHE that have emerged from findings from national evaluations and the consultation process for *NDS (2009)*. As the body of research relating to the implementation of the substance use module from the perspective of the young person is limited, the EPS group agreed to conduct a snapshot survey to capture regional views.

The Young Person's Voice

The body of Irish research relating to SPHE that has examined students' views is not extensive. Key studies include the Dáil na nÓg survey, which found that substance use was the most common theme in the SPHE syllabus with 83% of students reporting having experienced this during SPHE classes (Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs [OMCYA] 2010). An evaluation of implementation of SPHE in post-primary schools by Nic Gabhainn *et al.* (2010) included questions specific to substance use. The authors found that 44% of students in their survey sample agreed that SPHE had influenced their decisions around alcohol, while 55% reported this for smoking cigarettes. The qualitative aspect of this study found that students felt that topics relating to substances were important. *Health Behaviour of School Children: What do Children Want to Know?* (Doyle *et al.* 2010) asked about preferences for topics. Substance use topics rated

⁵ Current (February 2015) representation includes: Education and Training Boards, Health Service Executive, Drug Education & Prevention Community Projects, Youth Service, Drug Treatment Agencies, Sports Partnership, Pastoral Response to Substance Misuse, MWRDAF and University of Limerick/Mary Immaculate College.

among five of the top six, with alcohol rated first. A survey of 1st year B.Ed. students that examined their experiences of SPHE found that 90% of respondents reported that the substance use module had been addressed, and approximately 25% felt that substance use should be a top three priority topic for SPHE (O'Sullivan and Devaney 2014). The working group that reviewed educational material for use in substance use education in post-primary schools consulted with young people (DES 2014). They asked for the level of agreement to this statement: "I know what I need to know to make healthy decisions about drugs and alcohol", and found that 91% of Junior Cycle, 63% of Senior Cycle, and 87% of Youthreach students agreed. They also invited responses to: "I have learned what I need to know about alcohol and drugs in this school/centre". Here, 38% Junior Cycle, 63% of Senior Cycle, and 87% of Youthreach students were in agreement. All agreed that substance use education is important for young people. Finally, the Inspectorate report on SPHE (DES 2013) included students' views, and there were high levels of agreement with the following statements in relation to the substance use module:

SPHE has helped me to: Understand reasons for substance use/misuse (84%), Understand effects of substance abuse on individuals (90%), Understand effects of substance abuse on families (86%), Understand effects of substance abuse on society (79%).

(DES 2013, p.26)

There is a gap in this body of research as regards the specific experiences in relation to the substance use module, such as which school year students are more likely to experience it, the perceived usefulness of the module, the use of external facilitators, and experienced and preferred teaching and learning methods, areas that this study aimed to explore.

METHODS

This study used a survey methodology. A questionnaire was developed, modelled on questions asked in the Dáil na nÓg survey (OMCYA 2010). The questionnaire included a brief demographic section, followed by questions about young people's experiences of SPHE generally, and questions about substance use education in the context of SPHE specifically. Convenience sampling was used, accessing four groups of young people in 2014: the three Comhairle na nÓg⁶ across the Mid-West and one Youthreach Centre in the region.

The key limitations of this methodology relate to the sampling strategy which constrains the generalisability of the findings, and the possibility of recall bias associated with using a questionnaire to ask about experiences in the past, which can impact on the validity of the findings.

FINDINGS

Demographics

A total of 45 young people completed the survey. The mean age was 16 years and nine months. More males (58%) than females (42%) were represented in the sample. Figure 1 displays the distribution of survey respondents across school year.⁷

⁶ These are local youth councils with one for each local authority in Ireland. They are designed for young people under the age of 18 and aim to "enable young people to have a voice on the services, policies and issues that affect them in their local area" (Comhairle na nÓg 2015, p.1).

⁷ Two respondents did not provide a response.

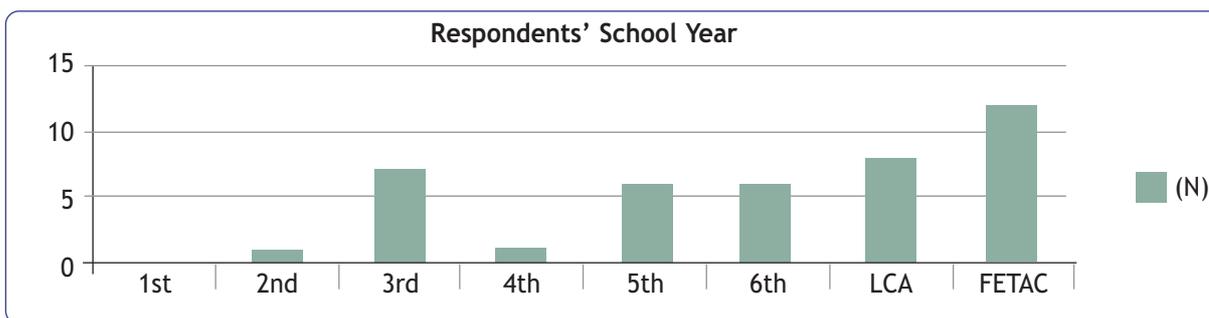


Figure 1: Distribution of survey respondents across school year

Experiences of SPHE

The respondents were asked to indicate which school years SPHE had been time tabled:

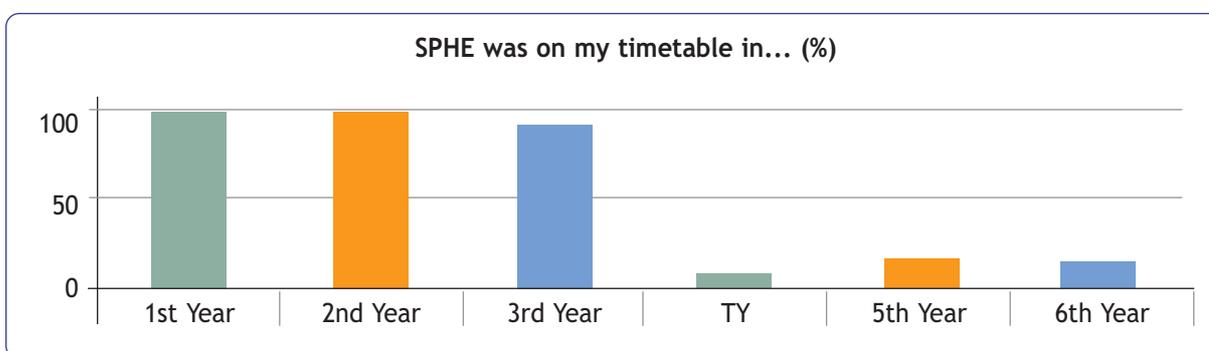


Figure 2: Provision of SPHE by school year

The findings indicated that SPHE was timetabled across the Junior Cycle years, but not in Senior Cycle. A large proportion of students reported having SPHE time tabled in 1st and 2nd years, with a small drop in 3rd year. For a majority of the students in the sample, it was taught when time tabled (Figure 3).

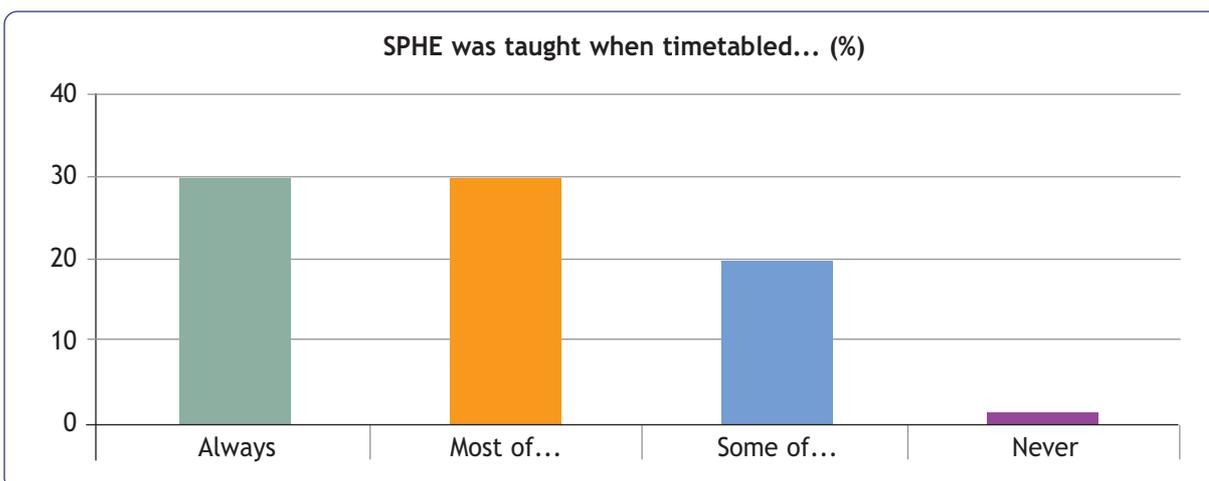


Figure 3: SPHE was taught when time tabled

The students were asked if they felt that SPHE had impacted on their health and well-being:

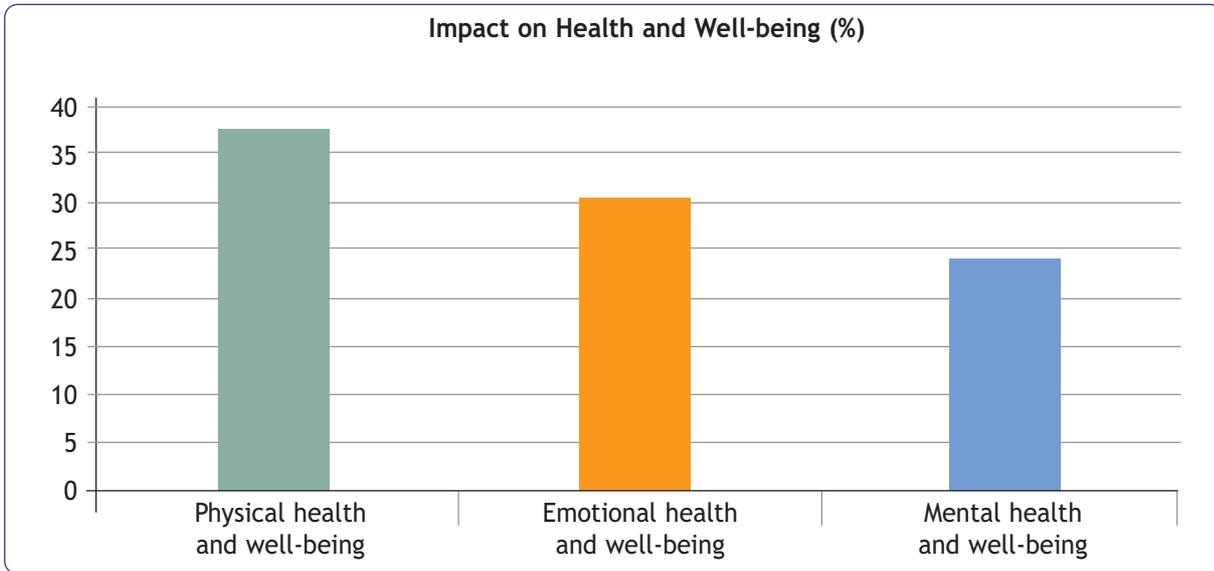


Figure 4: SPHE impacts on health and well-being.

Findings indicate that the perceived impacts on health were moderate with 38% (n=17) of the sample respondents stating that SPHE helped to improve physical health and well-being, 31% (n=14) emotional health and well-being, and 24% (n=11) mental health and well-being.

Substance Use Education in the Context of SPHE

The students were asked if they felt it was important for young people to learn about substances, with 86% agreeing that it was “very important” or “important”.

Students were asked in what years they had experienced SPHE classes that addressed substance use (Figure 5).

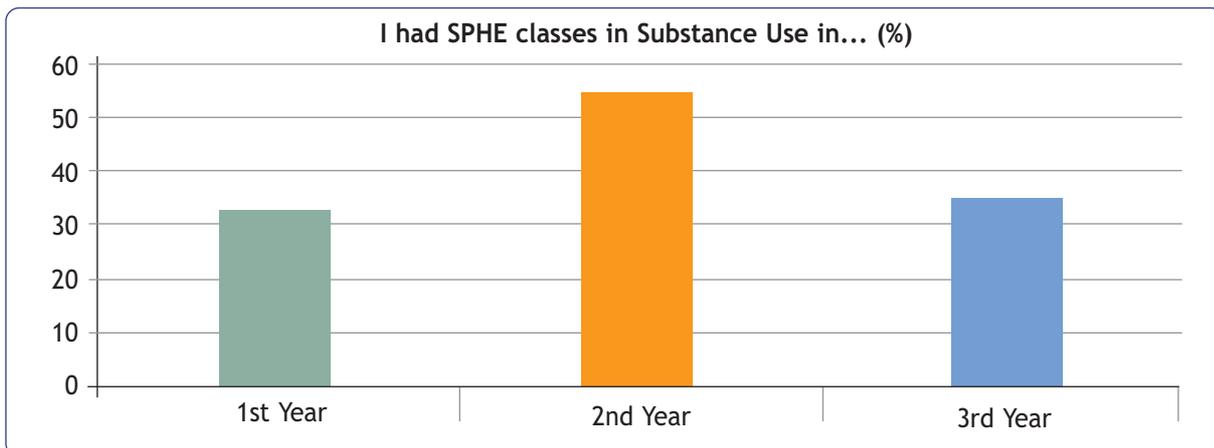


Figure 5: School year that students had experienced SPHE classes that addressed substance use.

Most commonly, students in the sample had experienced substance use education in 2nd year (55%), followed by 3rd year (35 %) and 1st year (33 %).

Students were asked if they felt that the SPHE classes on substance use had been useful for them now and into the future (Figure 6).

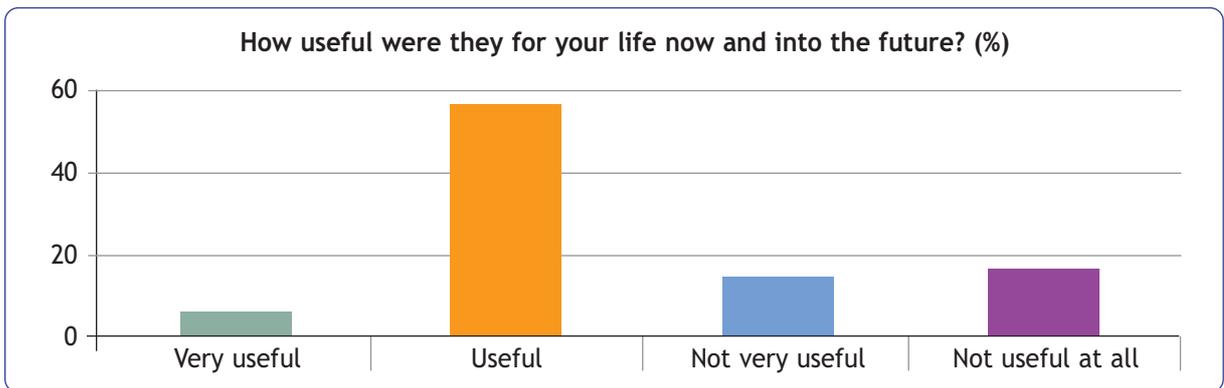


Figure 6: Students responses when asked if they felt the SPHE classes relating to substance use had been useful for their lives now and into the future.

Most students (62 %) agreed that these had been “very useful” or “useful”, while 38 % felt that they had been “not very useful” or “not useful at all”.

Next, students were asked if they had experienced a guest speaker during the SPHE classes that addressed substance use; 40% of respondents indicated that they had. Students were asked who they should teach the substance use module (Figure 7).

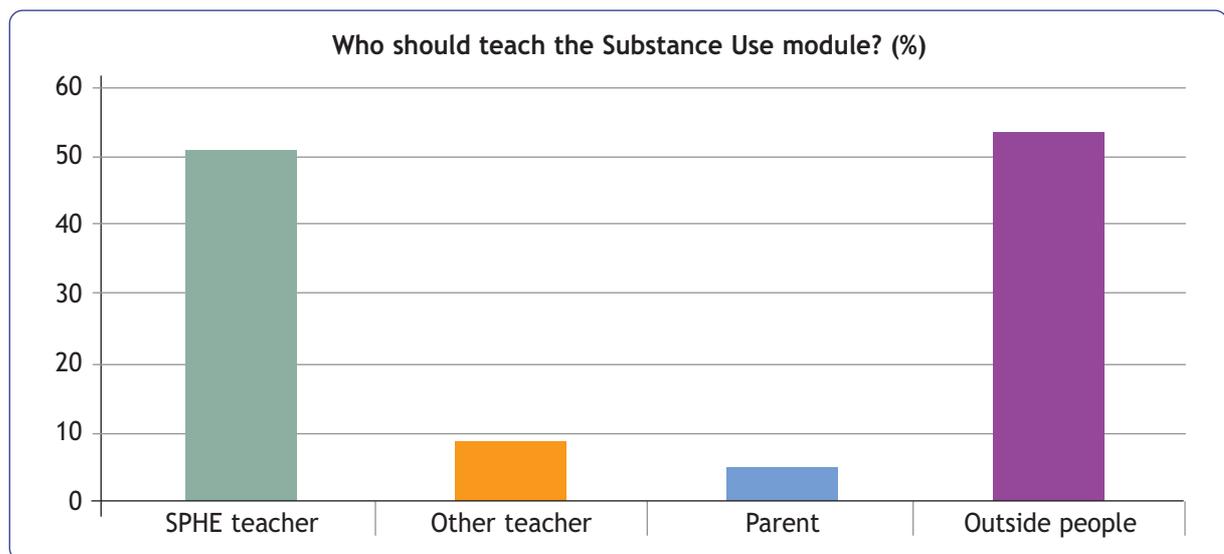


Figure 7: Responses to ‘Who should teach the SPHE Substance Use module?’

Findings indicate a similar proportion of respondents who preferred the SPHE teacher (51%) and people from outside the school (53%).

Next, students were asked about their experiences and preferences regarding teaching and learning methods for the SPHE substance use module (Figures 8 and 9).

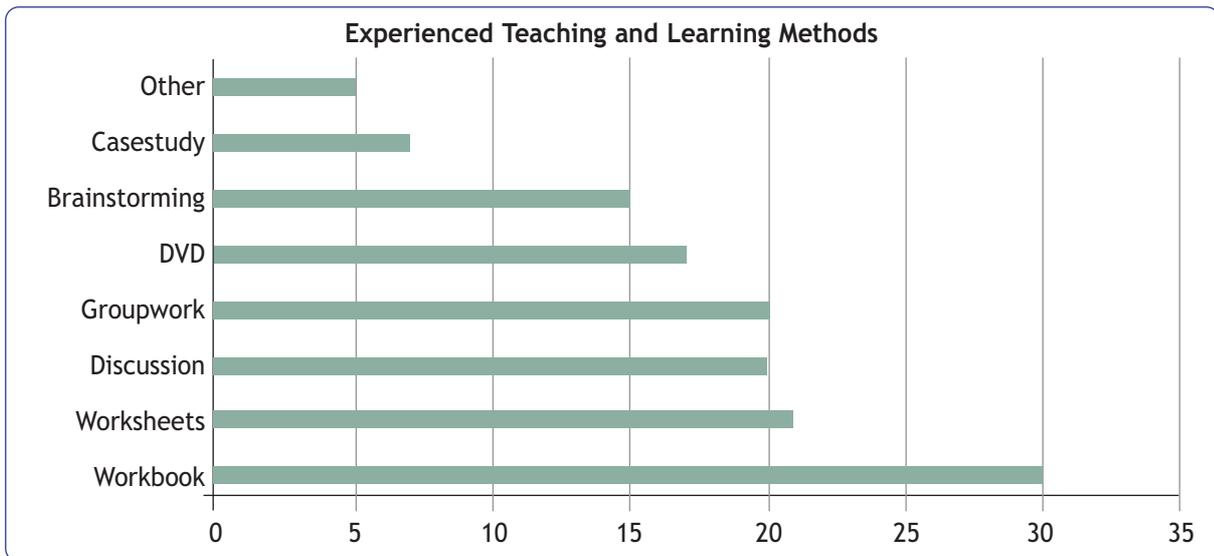


Figure 8: Teaching and learning methods that students reported having experienced

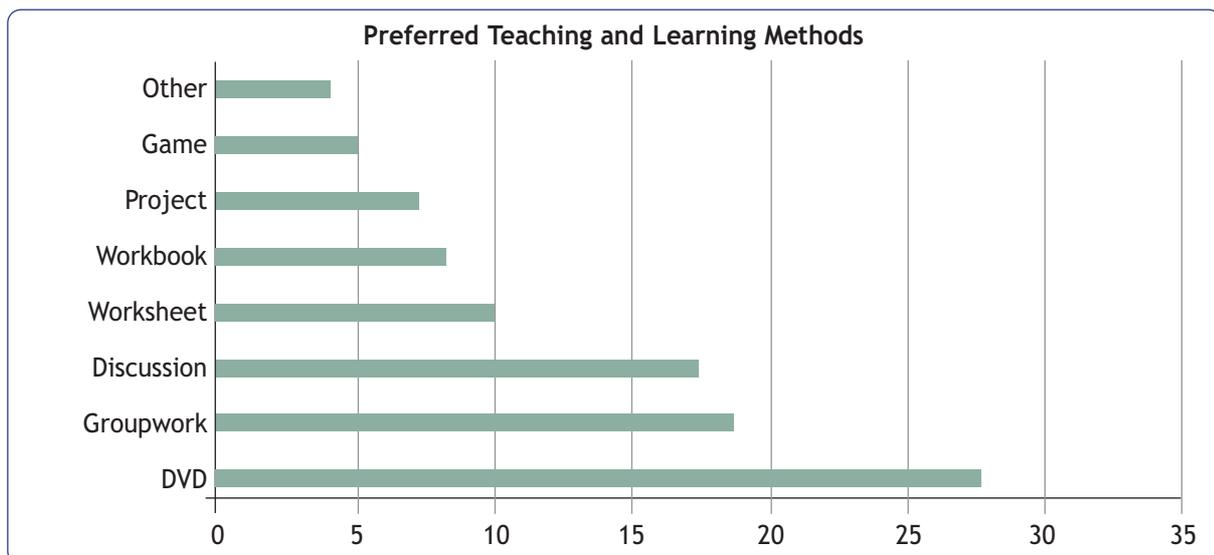


Figure 9: Teaching and learning methods that students preferred

The most frequently experienced methods were didactic - use of workbook and work sheets - followed by discussion. When asked about the preferred methods, the most frequently reported were interactive in nature - DVD, group work and discussion.

The last section of the survey asked the respondents about their views of parental involvement (Figures 10 and 11).

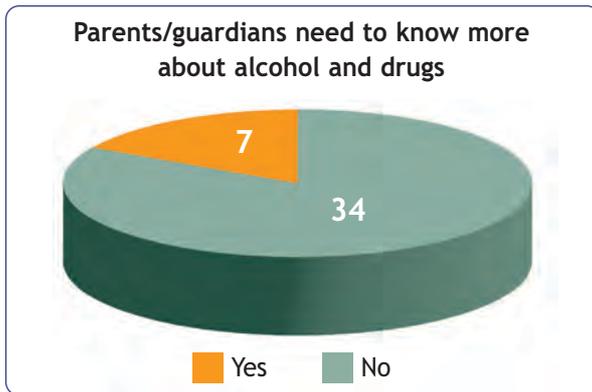


Figure 10: Responses to the statement: Parents/guardians need to know more about alcohol and drugs

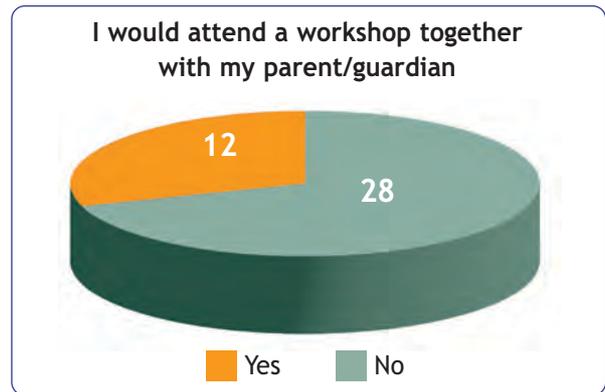


Figure 11: Responses to the statement: I would attend a workshop together with my parent/guardian

The findings indicate that most students in the sample felt that their parents needed to know more about alcohol and drugs; however, only about one in four indicated that they would attend a workshop about substance use with their parent.

DISCUSSION

The findings of our snapshot survey, using a regional convenience sample, agree broadly with previous national research that has examined students' experiences of SPHE. Similar to the Dáil na nÓg survey (OMCYA 2010), we found that a high proportion of respondents had SPHE timetabled throughout Junior Cycle and that it was taught most of the time when timetabled. The proportion of students who reported that SPHE had impacted on their physical health and well-being (38%), emotional health and well-being (31%) and mental health and well-being (24%) were somewhat lower than the findings from the Dáil na nÓg survey - 45%, 41% and 37% respectively. Overall, the perceived impact is modest and reflects the notion that health and well-being are impacted and determined by a multitude of factors ranging from individual factors (potentially influenced by health education), to wider family, community and societal factors.

A high proportion of respondents agreed that it was important to learn about substances, and this finding concurs with previous research (DES 2014; Doyle *et al.* 2010; Nic Gabhainn *et al.* 2010; O'Sullivan and Devaney 2014). Over half of the respondents agreed that the SPHE classes relating to substance use had been useful for their lives now and into the future. This is a somewhat lower proportion than the Dáil na nÓg survey,⁸ which found that 70% had found SPHE classes excellent, very good or good for their lives now and into the future (OMCYA 2010).

Regarding preferences for who should teach the substance use module, a similar proportion of the respondents selected the SPHE teacher and people from outside the school. Similarly, the Dáil na nÓg survey found that 51% preferred the teacher and 49% preferred an outside person. About 40% of respondents in this sample had experienced a guest speaker for substance use education, a similar proportion to the Dáil na nÓg survey- 35% - and the Inspectorate report, which found that 35% of schools had used an external facilitator for the substance use module (DES 2013; OMCYA 2010). It is clear that young people value the input from guest speakers and that this is common practice; however, it is important that this input is integrated into the overall SPHE provision. Guest speakers can add significant value, but need to complement and not substitute the existing curriculum in line with best practice guidelines (DES 2010).

⁸ This survey asked a similar question about the usefulness of SPHE classes.

Our findings regarding experienced and preferred teaching methods were also broadly similar to the findings of the Dáil na nÓg survey and the Inspectorate report (DES 2013; OMCYA 2010), indicating a preference for more interactive methods. This is in line with best practice guidelines for SPHE. The experiential and interactive methods require a different skills set from didactic teaching methods. All SPHE teachers may not have received training in the theory and practice of these methods, either during their initial teacher education or during their professional career.

The findings lead us to consider how we can best support the delivery of SPHE at regional level in line with the NDS (2009) and the *Programme for Government* (DoT 2011) to meet the needs and enhance the well-being of the young people in our region. As a group we see a need to ensure that consistent, factual and realistic messages relating to drugs and alcohol are transmitted to young people as they move between different settings such as the school, the community and the home. We also see a need to ensure that guidelines for good practice in drugs education are used across the different settings. To support this, we recommend that a partnership approach to drugs education in and out of the school setting is adopted, and see a role for the MWRDAF in supporting this.

We see future opportunities for stronger links between sectors and settings, such as third-level, schools, youth, health, community and home. One such regional initiative, the *Let's Learn About Drugs and Alcohol Together* (LLADAT), is one example of such a partnership that aims to support and complement the delivery of SPHE in schools.⁹ To facilitate these types of partnerships, we would value and welcome representation from the DES on our subgroup.

Parents, teachers and other school staff can avail of a number of drugs education programmes in the region. These include community based family skills programmes such as the *Strengthening Families Programme*, and a progression route of accredited educational programmes such as the community-based Social and Health Education Programmes,¹⁰ Facilitation Skills,¹¹ Community Addiction Studies Course,¹² Certificate in Addiction Studies,¹³ and Diploma in Drug and Alcohol Studies.¹⁴ We invite, value, and welcome a stronger presence of parents, teachers and other school staff on these educational programmes.

Finally, with the new SPHE short course being an optional course, we are concerned that some schools may choose not to offer SPHE. We strongly recommend that all schools include the short course on their Junior Cycle programme, in order to provide every young person at least the opportunity to participate in substance use education.

CONCLUSION

Our sample was regional and small, and selected through convenience methods, however the findings in terms of experiences of SPHE are broadly in line with previous national research. We set out to explore young people's snapshot views of the SPHE substance use module. We found that the young people in our sample feel it is important to learn about drugs, that they prefer both their SPHE teacher and guest speakers to deliver this education, and that they prefer interactive methods. They also think that their parents/guardians need to learn more about drugs. The impact of the SPHE substance use module was perceived as moderate in terms of usefulness for their lives and in terms of their health and well-being.

⁹ See a separate article in these proceedings for more information about the LLADAT programme.

¹⁰ Accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

¹¹ Accredited by QQI.

¹² Accredited by QQI.

¹³ Accredited by the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

¹⁴ Accredited by the University of Limerick.

The work of the MWRDAF and the EPS is guided by the current drugs strategy which ends in 2016. The EPS will feed the findings of this study into the consultation process of the next national drugs strategy. We see opportunities for innovative intersectoral multi-component initiatives that ensure that young people and their families experience the best possible drugs education in a seamless manner across the different settings where they learn, live and play.

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Challenging the Norm and Promoting Well-being: Changing Times for Substance Use Education in the Midwest of Ireland

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INTRODUCTION

Developed in the mid west region, the *Let's Learn about Drugs and Alcohol Together*² (LLADAT) Programme is currently in its third year of implementation. Initiated through a unique partnership between the Mid West Regional Drug and Alcohol Forum (MWRDAF) (formerly the Regional Drugs Task Force) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) Drug and Alcohol Service in the mid west, the LLADAT programme aims to challenge the norm by bringing parents and pupils together for a shared learning experience around substance use. The aim of this paper is to introduce the programme to the broader Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) network and education community as an example of how agencies can work together to support education and prevention of substance misuse among young people. The paper will provide background knowledge on the development of the programme, outlining the contribution it makes to Junior Cycle SPHE. It will draw upon the national and international literature regarding substance use education and best practice utilized in the development of the LLADAT programme. The paper also includes a brief exploration of participation rates, findings, and recommendations from the pilot programme evaluation.

BACKGROUND

The LLADAT post-primary programme began in September 2012. The rationale for the programme was to address a need identified by HSE Education Officers working in the mid west in relation to the post-primary sector. Numerous requests from principals, year heads, SPHE teachers, and parents' councils for 'talks' to pupils and parents about substance misuse were made to the HSE education officers each year, and often sometimes by the same school. The education officers however felt that this particular once-off approach was *ad hoc* and not always beneficial to those it served. They proposed "an evidence-based, sustainable workshop for teachers, parents and their children that would allow them to have a shared experience of drugs education" (Mid West Regional Drugs Task Force 2012, p.2).

The aim of LLADAT was to address the local need while supporting and maintaining the work of the SPHE classroom. Funding for the programme was obtained from within the HSE Mid West Social Inclusion Directorate and the Primary, Community and Continuing Care Directorate. Once developed, the programme was to be offered to all post-primary schools across the mid west as part of the HSE's commitment to the interim National Drug Strategy (NDS) 2009-2016. Along with supporting the interim NDS 2009-2016, additional motivating factors for the development of such a programme included enhancing the protective role of the parents and building on previous prevention programmes. The programme took into consideration previous national research on post-primary education and specifically national research into substance use prevention. The LLADAT programme was designed and developed by Dr. Sancha Power, in consultation with a steering group comprising of:

¹ The Mid West Regional Drugs Task Force is one of 12 regional drugs task forces; it was renamed in 2014 to the 'Mid West Regional Drugs and Alcohol Forum'.

² The programme initially began as the 'Lets Learn about Drugs Together' (LLADAT), but was renamed in June 2014 to the 'Lets Learn about Drugs and Alcohol Together' Programme.

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- Co-ordinator of the MWRDAF
- Lecturer in SPHE, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
- Course Leader, Diploma in Drug and Alcohol Studies, University of Limerick
- Health Promotion Officers, HSE Mid West, and Mary Immaculate College
- SPHE Support Service Regional Manager, Professional Development Services for Teachers (PDST).

The resulting inter-sectorial and interagency partnership is highly valued and resulted in a strong, mutually agreed initiative. The ambition of the LLADAT steering group in the development of this programme was not to replicate other programmes, but to develop a programme that was sustainable and evidence-based. School-based education programmes are the most contemporary prevention programme at present for young people. Young adolescents (12-15 yrs.) are targeted by education and prevention initiatives as they are at a key stage for experimentation and developing patterns that can continue into adulthood (Botvin and Griffin 2007). The SPHE programme at Junior Cycle offered a perfect opportunity for the development of a unique partnership between the main protectors of a young person's well-being: the school and the home. The steering group acknowledged that while community-based approaches and interventions could also have been utilized, the school-based approach utilizing SPHE offered more structure and would see LLADAT become part of a bigger programme, not an *ad hoc* piece. It is envisaged that all schools across the mid west will in time take part in the LLADAT programme, and that the LLADAT programme will become a mandatory part of a pupil's second year education within Junior Cycle.

SPHE WITHIN THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

The first three years of lower secondary education provides for pupils aged between twelve and fifteen, and is referred to as Junior Cycle education (Department of Education and Science (DES) 2004; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2006). The principal objective of this was designed around completing a broad, balanced, relevant and coherent study in a variety of curricular areas (DES 2004).

In 1998, the Education Act introduced the first mandate for health education within the Irish classroom, and since 2001, SPHE has been mandatory in all schools at Junior Cycle (Education Act 1998). The implementation of SPHE was a movement from an *ad hoc* approach, often led by a few interested and motivated teachers, to a standardised and systematic partnership between the DES and Department of Health (Nic Gabhainn *et al.* 2010). The aim was to integrate important aspects of contemporary life into school life, and ideally SPHE would provide pupils with an:

Opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives, and social development.

(NCCA 2000, p.3)

The syllabus integrated modern-day features of growing up such as bullying, substance use, teenage pregnancy, self-harm, death by suicide and mental health alongside a moral development framework, which was responsible for holistic well-being and decision-making (Geary and Mannix McNamara 2003). The mandatory provision of SPHE at Junior Cycle was the first formal provision of substance use education within Irish mainstream education. The substance use module within the SPHE programme was designed not necessarily to discourage pupils but rather to allow pupils to develop informed and sensible attitudes. The module invited pupils to explore the question of substance use in society, and explore when use becomes misuse (NCCA 2000). Delivery of the module was and still is however at times delicate and somewhat uncomfortable, as the majority of young people know that drugs have health and social implications, yet young people still engage in such activities. With a background of acceptance in society and more importantly often in the home, it can make discouraging pupils a difficult and complex task.

The LLADAT programme intended to challenge the norm of the traditional pedagogical approach to substance use education and instead support schools by developing a series of workshops joining home, school, and the MWRDAF education workers in a unique partnership to protect the well-being of our youth.

In February 2010, the NCCA launched *Innovation and Identity: Ideas for a new Junior Cycle* (2010). The paper combined a collection of philosophies to help face the 'dilemma' that was Junior Cycle education (NCCA 2010). The aim was to address the "problems of rote learning and curriculum overload while providing for greater creativity and innovation" (NCCA 2011a). Formally sanctioned in November 2011, NCCA (2010) offered a radical and innovative approach to teaching and learning at lower secondary (Power 2012). The new *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2011b) would provide a more flexible approach to teaching and learning. Previously, schools were prescribed curricula from policy-makers in a top-down approach, now schools could build their own programme, according to their individual needs from the 'framework' (NCCA 2011b; Power 2012). The new framework introduced many new initiatives, including limiting the number of subjects a pupil could complete and officially recognising SPHE as a short course. The recognition of SPHE as a short course brought change. On a positive note, teachers were now encouraged and facilitated to become direct curriculum makers, designing and implementing their own modules and strands of SPHE. Furthermore, more hours were now allocated to the delivery of SPHE. A worrying consequence however, was that now optionality existed, there was no guarantee that schools would deliver SPHE and more importantly, there was no guarantee that substance use education would be included in a school's Junior Cycle curriculum.

The changing times of substance use education within the Irish system highlights the relevance and worth of programmes like the LLADAT programme. The programme not only complements and supports both schools and teachers in the delivery of SPHE, but it also encourages and supports the incorporation of substance use education, while aiding in developing the active engagement of the home, along with protecting the well-being of our youth.

EDUCATION FOR SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

In developing a programme that was to complement and support schools while remaining 'evidence-based and sustainable', it was necessary to draw upon the research literature. There were four significant contributions from the research and policy that informed the development of the LLADAT programme:

- The interim NDS 2009-2016
- Previous approaches and interventions
- Risk and protection factors for young people
- Strengthening Families Programme (SFP)

The Interim NDS 2009-2016

The interim NDS 2009-2016, is the second National Drugs Strategy for Ireland. It is a cross-cutting area of public policy and service delivery which brings together government departments, statutory and non-statutory agencies alongside the community and voluntary sectors to provide a collective response to tackling the drugs problem in Ireland (Department of Health 2015). The overarching strategic objective of the interim NDS is:

To continue to tackle the harm caused to individuals and society by the misuse of drugs through a concerted focus on the five pillars of supply reduction, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and research.

(Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs 2009, p.6)

Prevention in the NDS indicates the prevention of problem drug use in a broad sense. Aims and objectives within the policy seek to prevent the use of illicit drugs, the prevention of harm where drug use has begun

and the prevention of relapse where treatment has occurred (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs 2009). Primarily the policies within the NDS seek to create awareness and understanding of the consequences of drug and alcohol use. The NDS specifically outlines that "prevention and awareness programmes in schools are a key element in the prevention pillar", with the SPHE programme "the foundation for developing awareness of drugs and alcohol issues in schools" (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs 2009). When developing and designing the LLADAT programme the aim was to develop a programme that was complementary to SPHE.

Previous Approaches and Interventions

Traditionally school-based prevention programmes were primarily focused on the dissemination of knowledge and information about the dangers of use and misuse (Botvin and Griffin 2007; National Advisory Committee for Drugs (NACD) 2010). The first generation of school-based programmes relied exclusively on information (Clerkin 2008). They focused on presenting the facts about the effects of substance use and misuse in dramatic descriptions, with the emphasis on scaring or frightening young people into abstinence (Morgan 2001; Botvin and Griffin 2007; Midford 2009).

This was replaced in time by a new approach that aimed to prevent drug use by enhancing personal development: developing self-esteem, creating understanding and enhancing personal growth (Clerkin 2008; Midford 2009). The theory behind the approach was that if young people were emotionally stronger they would be better able to make decisions and better able to resist the temptation of drug experimentation (Morgan 2001; Midford 2009).

A third approach that emerged related to social learning theory. The hypothesis was that young people use drugs because of direct and indirect social influences from friends, families and the media (Botvin and Griffin 2007; Clerkin 2008). Normative education was central to this new approach as it sought to undermine the popular belief that everyone was involved in drug use and that drug use was socially acceptable (Morgan 2001). There was a new focus on social resistance skills training - how to identify risky situations and how to communicate 'no'. These new programmes were theoretically and methodologically more rigorous and for the first time demonstrated change in drug use behaviour (Morgan 2001). Findings reported that social resistance skills training reduced the proportion of young people who experimented with alcohol, tobacco and cannabis (Botvin and Griffin 2007; Midford 2009). Within the Irish context, we witnessed the development of programmes like *Walk Tall* and *On My Own Two Feet*. The *On My Own Two Feet* programme was a joint venture between the DES, the Department of Health and the Mater Dei Counselling Centre which targeted post-primary schools (DES 1994). The resource was to support an educational approach to the prevention of substance use that incorporated the development of personal and social skills. Teacher training was provided in the pedagogical methods of the new resource. The *Walk Tall* programme was developed by the SPHE Support Service in the mid-nineties for primary schools and "aimed to give children the confidence, skills and knowledge to make healthy choices" (DES 2015). Both programmes are still delivered in school settings around the country, and our preliminary research with post-primary schools in the mid west indicated "some" usage of the *On My Own Two Feet* resource (Power 2013).

On an international level, the current phase of school-based programmes has seen an extension to the social influences approach and a movement away from isolated school programmes to a more multi-modal approach that involves schools, communities, and home. Extensions include family-focused interventions and parenting programmes - these are regarded as complementary to the school-based programme (Midford 2009). Results and findings from research carried out on multi-modal programmes indicate that this approach is effective in reducing the rate of growth of use within communities (Midford 2009). Here in Ireland, the Health Research Board (HRB) recently published an evidence review: *Efficacy and Effectiveness of Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Programmes delivered outside of School Setting* in which they suggested that "multi-domain programmes targeted at early adolescents appear to achieve

better results compared with other approaches” (Munton *et al.* 2014, p.7). In their report, they acknowledge the importance of approaches that work with families and which help parents to get involved with developing their children’s skills and competencies (Munton *et al.* 2014).

Risk and Protection Factors

Research over the past few decades has endeavoured to determine why people start using drugs and how they start (National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) 2003). Emerging from this research has been the identification of a number of factors that help differentiate those most likely to engage in substance use from those who are less likely to engage. Influences associated with greater vulnerability are referred to as ‘risk’ factors, while influences associated with reduced vulnerability are called ‘protective’ factors (Dever *et al.* 2012). According to NIDA (2003), prevention programmes should enhance protective factors and reverse or reduce risk factors. The presence of many protective factors can lessen the impact of a few risk factors (*ibid*).

Primary socialization theory claims that parents, school and peer clusters are the critical socializing energies and protective forces for adolescent drug use (Pilgrim *et al.* 2006; James 2012). The NACD (2010) in Ireland agreed, identifying the family context, the school environment, peer relations and the neighbourhood context as important risk and protective factors for prevention of substance use among young people. This national and international research was one of the main reasons why the LLADAT programme was designed to engage home and school in a partnership approach to substance use education and prevention. The programme was built around the active engagement of both parent and pupil in shared dialogue and shared experience.

Strengthening Families Programme (SFP)

The process of the SFP was very influential in the development of this active engagement and shared experience. The SFP is a prevention strategy for high-risk children of drug and alcohol stressed families. The programme is a “family skills training program that involves the whole family in three classes run on the same night once a week” (Kumpfer *et al.* 2012). The two-hour weekly SFP programme incorporates three classes that see both parent and child work independently and then re-join to share their thinking and experience. While parents attend a parent-training programme, children are attending a teen skills training program, and when both programmes are complete parents and children re-join to participate in a SFP Family Skills Training Program.

LLADAT PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Background Research

Development of the LLADAT programme began in September 2012, with a pilot programme going ‘live’ into schools at the end of January 2013. From October to December 2012, initial contextual research was conducted with SPHE teachers, parents, and pupils across the mid west region. SPHE co-ordinators across the mid west were invited to participate via postal survey, with one survey going to each of the sixty-six post-primary providers across the mid west region. The purpose of the survey was to develop a ‘snapshot’ of the current teaching practices used in the substance use module of SPHE. Follow-up interviews were held with survey participating teachers who self-nominated for interview. At the same time as the postal questionnaire to schools, parents were approached to participate via invitations sent to randomly selected parents’ councils. Two focus groups were held with Transition Year (TY) pupils who had participated in Junior Cycle SPHE. This cohort was specifically chosen as they were able to comment on their own prior experience.

Twenty-seven schools (18%, n=66) participated in the postal survey, with each area of the region represented equally. School demographics identified that 66% were co-educational and 17% represented

single-sex girl (SSG) and single-sex boy (SSB) schools respectively. The majority of schools identified had four or more SPHE teachers, with three-quarters (75% n=27) of participants female. The majority of the cohort were teaching SPHE over four years. Of those who participated, 37% (n=27) identified they did not use the resource *On My Own Two Feet*, with a further 25% (n=27) not answering the question. With respect to other classroom resources, 94% (n=27) of survey participants identified that they “sometimes” used film/TV/audio as part of their lessons. Interestingly, 56% (n=27) never invited a guest speaker to the classroom.

During the focus groups with TY pupils, they identified that while they were not in favour of an afterschool event, they did feel it was necessary for their parents to know about drugs and alcohol. When asked about design, the pupils identified the following:

Must be free; hands on; no writing; images; leaflets; couches, relaxed, comfy; sensitive; recovering addict; videos.

(Power 2013)

A total of thirty-one parents’ councils from across the region were invited to participate in the background research, however just one parents’ council took up the request and one parent nominated himself for interview. The parent interview identified that a programme encompassed within school-life was more favourable than a community-based approach for a parent; it further identified the preference for a factual but interactive sessions (Power 2013).

Programme Design

The LLADAT programme was developed from the preliminary research carried out with schools, teachers, parents, and pupils, but it was also heavily influenced by the research literature. The result was a multi-modal two-workshop programme, which focused on empowering parents to engage in collective dialogue with their child in a safe and encouraging environment (Figure 1).

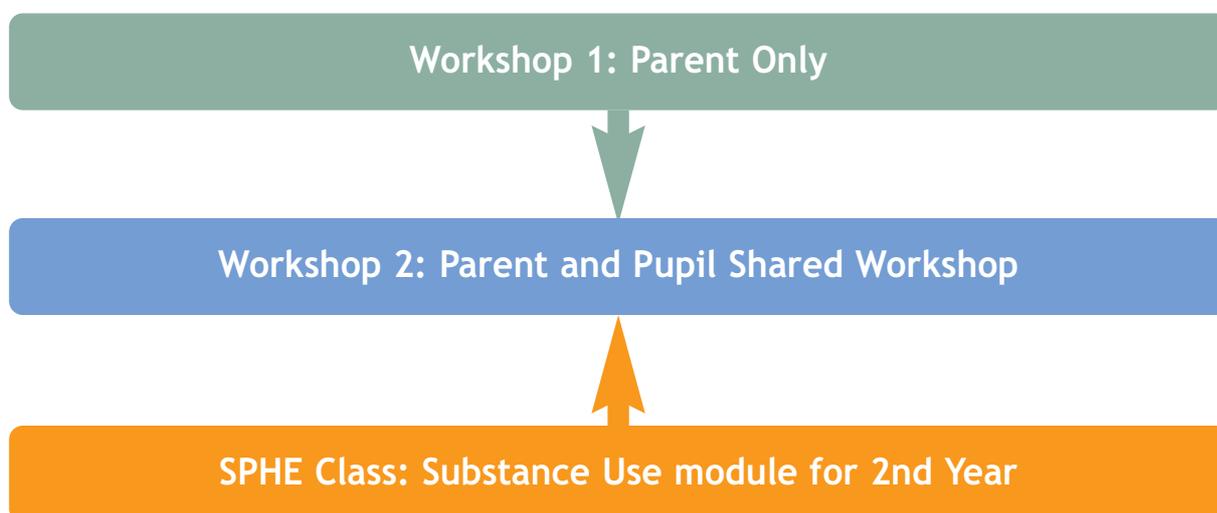


Figure 1: Graphic representation of the LLADAT programme

When designing the programme, consideration was afforded to national research in both substance use prevention and education. The national research had identified that the second year cohort of Junior Cycle were particularly at risk (NACD 2010; Smyth *et al.* 2006, 2009). The NACD (2010) identified in their research that disengagement from school was a risk factor for young people in relation to involvement with substance use, while Smyth *et al.* (2006) found this disengagement much more likely in second year. As a result, the programme was designed around the second year of Junior Cycle education.

Workshop One was developed for parents only and sought to empower parents with knowledge and confidence to talk to their child about substance use. The workshop explored information on alcohol, solvents and cannabis, key prevention messages and main protective factors. The second workshop involved the parent and pupil in an experiential learning environment, where through active learning methodologies both parties shared, engaged, generated and processed key messages about substance use. The programme underwent a continuous evaluation with teachers, parents, and pupils engaging in formal evaluations after each programme delivery.

Programme Participation and Uptake since 2012

Since the pilot programme in the academic year (AY) 12/13, a database has been kept of the potential families that could engage with the LLADAT programme year-on-year. Table 1 identifies that for the past two years 18.8% of those to whom the programme is available have participated, with AY14/15 on track for similar results.

Table 1: Potential Family Participation

Academic Year	Potential Families for Participation	Total No. of Families Engaged	Percentage of Engagement
AY 12/13 (Pilot)	368	69	18.8%
AY 13/14	2049	386	18.8%
AY 14/15	2200	351	15.9%

Over half of the schools in the mid west region now participate in the LLADAT programme (Table 2). Due to financial and time constraints, the programme has only been opened up to two extra schools in the AY14/15, with one school not returning from AY13/14 due to upcoming closure. Table 2 also identifies the number of parents and pupils who have engaged in the LLADAT programme. Parents attend both workshop one and two, while pupils just attend workshop two. The difference in numbers is due to the fact that sometimes both parents attend workshop one, some parents do not return for workshop two, and finally in some cases pupils numbers have increased over parental attendance for workshop two due to the presence of twins within a family. It is acknowledged that parental and family participation does decline from workshop one to workshop two, this is investigated afterwards and it is mostly due to work commitments that parents are unable to return for workshop two.

Table 2: School Participation and Parental Attendance

Year	Number of Schools Participated	Parental Attendance		Pupil Attendance
		#1	#2	#2 (only)
Workshop No.				
AY 12/13 (Pilot)	7	75	57	57
AY 13/14	27 (54%)	383	292	296
AY 14/15	27	358	272	273

Table 3 identifies the uptake of the LLADAT across the region by gender make-up. A higher uptake by co-educational schools would reflect the norm of the region, however what is quite interesting is that when we examine pupil uptake on a gender basis year on year, we find that more boys participate than girls do, yet the LLADAT programme was delivered in more SSG than SSB schools. This suggests that at co-educational schools the parents of young males are interested in participating and perhaps see the worth in the LLADAT programme. This is something we hope to explore more in AY15/16.

Table 3: School Breakdown by Gender Make Up

Academic Year	School Breakdown by Gender make up		
	Co-educational	Single Sex Girl	Single Sex Boy
AY 12/13 (Pilot)	3	2	2
AY 13/14	20	4	3
AY 14/15	20	4	3

CONCLUSION

The LLADAT programme is relatively new in development and specific to the mid west region, however the programme is expanding and has significant potential. The development of the LLADAT programme comes at a very challenging and changing time for both Junior Cycle education and SPHE. While the new framework offers real ownership to the Irish schoolteacher, the responsibility for the provision of health education has in effect, been put in jeopardy. There is currently no guarantee that schools will deliver SPHE, nor is there any guarantee that substance use education will be provided for within any SPHE programme change.

In its development phase the LLADAT programme set out to establish an evidenced-based, sustainable workshop (MWRDTF 2012). The programme has since shown strong potential sustainability, as year-on-year uptake from schools has grown and currently demand is exceeding all expectations. Within two years of being offered at regional level over 50% of the schools across the mid west have availed of the programme. The programme offers support both to schools and teachers delivering the SPHE programme, and is not viewed as ad hoc, hence the LLADAT programme is slowly becoming part of the second year SPHE substance use curriculum across the mid west.

The potential of the LLADAT programme is further enhanced by the recent *Report of the Working Group on Educational Materials for use in SPHE in Post-primary Schools and Centres for Education with Particular Reference to Substance Use Education in the Context of SPHE* (DES 2014). The report suggested that:

Holistic, multi-element programmes incorporating whole-school, parent and community support components, along with a harm reduction approach, appear to offer considerable advantages to substance use education programmes for young people.

(DES 2014, p.40)

This summary finding from the working group's literature review indicates how contemporary and innovative the LLADAT programme is. It also recognises the impact and potential of the LLADAT programme to protect and promote the well-being of our youth. The ultimate goal of the LLADAT programme has been the education of our youth around the risks involved with substance use. While prevention works around substance use cannot be readily evidenced, it is clear that the LLADAT programme, in challenging the previous substance use education models, has developed a unique partnership bringing together home, school, and statutory agencies to promote young people's well-being across the mid west.

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Developing a Case for Support for Breakfast Clubs in Ireland

Sinéad Keenan, Healthy Food for All

INTRODUCTION

Healthy Food for All (HFfA) is an all-island Irish charity addressing food poverty by promoting access, availability and affordability of healthy food for low-income groups. HFfA raises awareness of the barriers people living on a low-income face in accessing a healthy diet, and works to ensure that food poverty is a priority on the political agenda. HFfA supports schools and local communities to establish food initiatives that address local food needs.

Schools are important settings in addressing food poverty. Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) teachers are well placed to support the development of a healthy food environment and to link the provision of food with the education curriculum. SPHE and the greater school environment can play a critical role in developing greater awareness of food and nutrition, while encouraging children to be more confident about food choices. School Food Initiatives (SFIs) such as cooking skills or food growing projects are important elements of SPHE. Such initiatives contribute to the physical health module in SPHE and enable pupils to identify the key elements of a balanced diet. SFIs can also be incorporated into other modules and can support personal and social development. A cooking skills class can teach pupils about group dynamics, planning skills can be gained in a food growing project, and communication skills can be improved by asking children to express opinions about foods.

This paper highlights the impact of food poverty on children before setting out a case for support for breakfast clubs and how they may positively support children to take full advantage of the school day.

WHAT IS FOOD POVERTY?

One in ten people in Ireland are living in food poverty (Carney and Maitre 2012), which is:

the inability to have an adequate and nutritious diet due to issues of affordability and access to food with related impacts on health, culture and social participation.

(Friel and Conlon 2004, p.120)

Families living on low incomes are twice as likely to experience food poverty (Carney and Maitre 2012). One in five children (21%) go to school or to bed hungry as there is not enough food in the home (Kelly *et al.* 2012). One in five primary school principals (20%) report an increase in children coming to school hungry (Murphy 2013).

IMPACT OF FOOD POVERTY ON CHILDREN

Food poverty has a particularly detrimental impact on children. Lack of a nutritionally adequate diet can negatively affect a child's health in later life (Friel *et al.* 2004). The Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI 2014) found that more than one in five Irish children is overweight or obese. The COSI

study showed that rates of overweight and obesity in children are improving for the general population, but such changes are not being observed in children attending DEIS¹ schools (designated disadvantaged), highlighting the continued need to support low-income families. Lack of a nutritionally adequate diet has a negative impact on a child's cognitive development and capacity to learn (Friel *et al.* 2004), which is likely to lead to poor school performance and early school leaving. Education is a critical factor in addressing social exclusion. Every child should be supported to participate in and benefit from education to help reduce existing patterns of health and social inequalities (Lynch and Baker 2005).

National school food programmes are in place in many countries. For example, free school meals are provided for all Swedish children and those in primary education in Wales are entitled to a free school breakfast (Children's Food Trust 2008). Finland spends 8% of its education budget on school food, due to its positive impact on health and well-being (Finnish National Education Board 2008). Improved food in school is linked to better health and educational outcomes, plus there are benefits for the social and personal development of children (School Food Plan 2013).

The national policy framework for children and young people in Ireland, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* acknowledges the "challenge of food poverty" (Department of Children and Youth Affairs [DCYA] 2014, p. 53) and its impact on children's health and educational outcomes. The framework highlights the need for a joined-up Government approach to address this multi-dimensional issue and recognises the important role that schools play in supporting healthier choices.

SCHOOL FOOD INITIATIVES

Food and nutrition are central to the physical, cognitive and social development of children and young people. Schools are important settings to provide children with good food and nutrition and to support them to develop healthy eating habits that will stay with them for life (Department of Health 2005, p.83). Schools provide a social environment where children can access, enjoy and experiment with food, without financial and other constraints. HFfA developed *A Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives* (HFfA 2009) to support the nutrition, education and development of children in Ireland. Working with the Department of Social Protection, the guide was circulated to all DEIS schools. All schools were notified that the guide was available to download free from HFfA's website and that they could request a hard copy if required. The purpose of the guide was to facilitate school staff, including SPHE co-ordinators, set up a SFI.

What is a Breakfast Club?

Following on from our experience of working with schools across the country, HFfA identified a set of benefits of breakfast clubs in particular. A breakfast club is a social environment where children can eat a nutritious breakfast and interact with friends, parents and teachers before class begins. Research into breakfast clubs suggests that they are linked to a range of positive outcomes. A free school breakfast programme in New Zealand found a significantly positive effect on self-reported short-term hunger in children, highlighting the role breakfast clubs may play in addressing food poverty (Ní Mhurchu *et al.* 2013). Evaluation of the *Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative* in Wales by Murphy *et al.* (2007) found some improvements in the eating habits of those children regularly attending breakfast clubs. This study also found that students in "intervention" schools reported significantly higher numbers of healthy food items being consumed at breakfast and more positive attitudes towards breakfast eating a year later. It has been acknowledged that the nutritional quality of the foods available at a breakfast club is important, and the availability of unhealthy food items may negatively affect children's diets and behaviours (Foley 2011).

¹ DEIS refers to the national action plan, *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*, which aims to address educational disadvantage in the Republic of Ireland. Participating schools are supported to implement a number of different measures to address educational disadvantage in their community. Further information is available on www.education.ie.

A potential negative impact of breakfast clubs was reported by Shemilt *et al.* (2004) who carried out an evaluation of breakfast clubs in England. They reported a negative change in behaviour outcomes for those children attending a breakfast club, such as increased restlessness and lower concentration levels. Inadequate supervision was cited as a potential reason. It is possible that the effectiveness of a breakfast club depends on the culture within a school. They appear to be more effective in well-organised schools, that is, schools with better facilities and school management (Grantham-McGregor *et al.* 1998).

With regard to school performance, breakfast clubs have been shown to have a positive impact on school attendance and punctuality (Murphy *et al.* 1998; Shemilt *et al.* 2003). They are cited as the fourth most effective intervention of the *School Completion Programme* (School Completion Programme National Co-ordination Team 2009), which supports young people at risk of early school leaving in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). Improved relationships between staff and pupils and across class groups have also been noted as positive outcomes of the operation of breakfast clubs (Fitzgerald 2006; University of East Anglia 2002).

The benefits of breakfast clubs include a positive impact on nutritional intake and social eating habits, improved attendance rates and punctuality as well as improved cognition, memory and concentration in class. They also provide an opportunity for children to talk with someone in confidence before school, to engage with families on an informal basis and to support parental engagement. Positive effect on short-term hunger in children (Ní Mhurchú *et al.* 2013), eating habits (Murphy *et al.* 2007), educational attainment (Children's Food Trust 2008) and punctuality at school (Foley 2011) are also identified. The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) found that breakfast clubs were the fourth most effective intervention of the *School Completion Programme* (NEWB 2009).

Identifying the Need for a Pilot Programme in Ireland

Given the evidence detailed above, HfFA commissioned a scoping study which identified the current level of breakfast club provision at the time in Ireland and investigated the potential for a national breakfast club scheme (Foley 2011). This report identified the need to build the capacity of school staff in establishing breakfast clubs. Following this report, HfFA published *A Good Practice Guide for Breakfast Clubs* (HfFA 2012) which provides guidance on setting up and running breakfast clubs. This resource is available to download or SPHE co-ordinators can request a hard copy from HfFA.

DEVELOPMENT OF A PILOT PROGRAMME OF BREAKFAST CLUBS

In order to identify the needs and challenges for schools in setting up a breakfast club, HfFA initiated a *Pilot Programme of Breakfast Clubs* in January 2013. A key objective was to promote a positive breakfast culture to address food poverty and social exclusion. HfFA also sought to use this information to support the development of an evidence base for breakfast clubs in Ireland, to inform appropriate change in policy and practice and to call for a national programme to support breakfast clubs.

The Pilot Programme of Breakfast Clubs was set up to support the development of four sustainable breakfast clubs in 2 DEIS and 2 non-DEIS schools in north Dublin. The long-term sustainability of participating breakfast clubs was given attention to ensure that participating clubs were able to sustain operation after conclusion of the pilot programme. Four primary schools in north Dublin participated in the *Pilot Programme of Breakfast Clubs* (HfFA 2014), which was funded through the Kellogg's Corporate Citizenship Fund. Participating schools were:

- St. Catherine's Infant School, Cabra, Dublin 7
- St. Eithne's Girls National School, Edenmore, Dublin 5
- Holy Trinity National School, Donaghmede, Dublin 13
- Holywell Educate Together, Swords, Co. Dublin.

Outlined below is the timeline of each phase of the initiative.

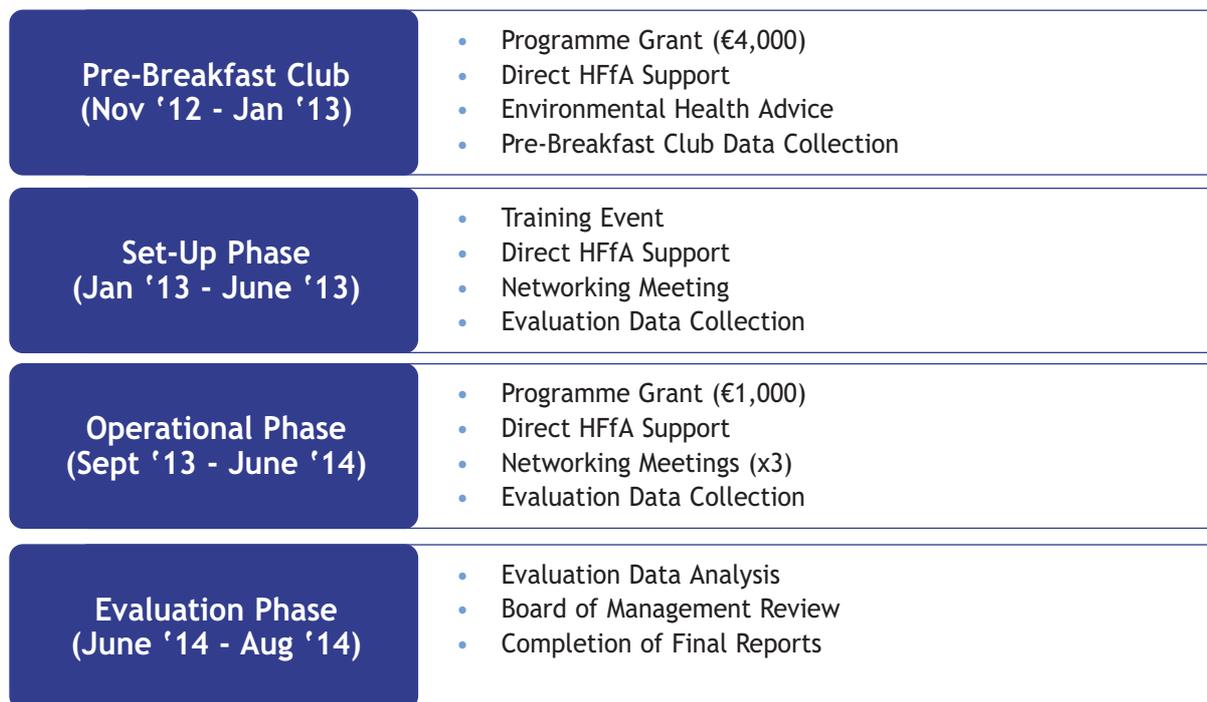


Diagram 1: Programme Timeline

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

HFfA undertook an evaluation of the pilot programme which was the first of its kind in Ireland. The evaluation approach and relevant tools were developed in consultation with members of HFfA's Board of Management, the Advisory Committee for Breakfast Clubs, and relevant academic partners. Ethical approval was granted by HFfA's Board of Management and the Advisory Committee. Feedback was gathered from breakfast club co-ordinators on the appropriateness of the tools used for gathering information from children, parents and teachers. A semi-structured interview was held with each co-ordinator in June 2013 and a group meeting was held once a term and attended by all co-ordinators. Feedback was collected from the pupils by HFfA staff members during breakfast club sessions between March and May 2014. Children were convened into groups of 4-5 members to gather feedback. Questions were simplified to ensure they were accessible to children of all ages. An 'opt-out' approach was used for parental consent. Parents were sent an information sheet regarding the evaluation of the pilot programme and asked to complete a form if they did not want their child to take part. Questionnaires were distributed by breakfast club co-ordinators to parents of children attending each breakfast club between March and May 2014. Teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire towards the end of the programme in May 2014.

Overview of Establishment Process

The evaluation outlines the experience of the four national schools (2 DEIS; 2 non-DEIS) in setting up and running a breakfast club. An initial grant of €4,000 was provided to each school before the breakfast club opened. Breakfast clubs were opened between January and February 2013. Opening times differed depending on the refurbishment required of school facilities and the timing of their inclusion in the pilot programme. The remaining €1,000 of the grant was provided to participating schools in September 2013.

HFfA's support worker visited each breakfast club during the set-up phase to:

- Discuss the progression of the breakfast club
- Provide advice and support regarding the challenges faced
- Share learning and experiences from other breakfast clubs
- Discuss the evaluation process.

A training event on breakfast clubs was run by HFfA in February 2013. Representatives from each of the participating schools attended. The purpose was to provide information on different aspects of setting up and running breakfast clubs, and to facilitate sharing of learning and expertise between breakfast club staff members.

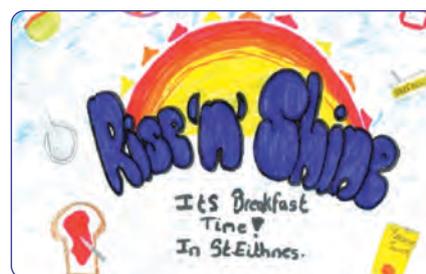
One hundred children, on average, attended participating breakfast clubs each morning throughout the programme. Different approaches were implemented at each club based on available facilities and school needs. Each breakfast club was supported by both parents and staff including the principal, teachers, SPHE co-ordinators and school completion programme co-ordinators. All breakfast clubs provided breakfast cereal, toast, juice and fruit each morning. One club also provided hot food, such as boiled eggs or baked beans each morning.

Four networking meetings were held during the pilot programme. They were attended by representatives from each participating school and facilitated by HFfA's support worker. Each meeting was attended by a club co-ordinator, two principals and a home school community liaison officer. These meetings were an opportunity for breakfast club co-ordinators to share ideas, discuss challenges and learn from the experience of the other participants. A meeting was held once per term in a different participating school. This allowed participants to gain a better understanding of each breakfast club. Meetings were also an opportunity to discuss specific topics to support the development of the breakfast clubs, such as funding opportunities and standards of good practice. The evaluation of the pilot programme was also discussed at each meeting. It was a useful opportunity to clarify the different elements of the evaluation and gain feedback on the tools being used.

A CASE STUDY

'Rise & Shine' Breakfast Club at St. Eithne's Girls' National School

The *Rise 'n' Shine Club* opened in St Eithne's Girls NS in January 2013. It runs from 8:15am to 8:50am every morning and 25-30 children attend each morning. The club is run by two parent volunteers, one teacher and some 6th Class children. Teachers are present in a supervisory role. All teachers take turns to supervise the club for one week at a time according to an agreed rota. Typically, this means that teachers have to supervise for two separate weeks throughout the school year.



What foods are available?

Breakfast cereals, toast, fruit juice and fruit are available every day. Portion sizes have been reduced over time to reduce costs and food waste. Pupils are allowed one bowl of cereal, one glass of juice and one slice of toast. If children are still hungry, they are allowed fruit and another slice of toast. Themed mornings are run at the club, such as serving pancakes on Pancake Tuesday, to encourage children to eat new foods.

How much does it cost to run?

Set-up Costs: Kitchen facilities were available in a spare room so the main set-up costs were furniture, kitchen equipment and tableware. They bought coloured bowls, plates and cups to make it more appealing for children. Overall set-up costs were over €3,000.

Running Costs: €2,000 was spent on running the breakfast club for the 2013/14 school year. The main cost was food, which was typically €250 each month. Food was delivered each Monday by the catering company that supplies school lunches. Some kitchen equipment and food were donated by local businesses which helped to reduce running costs.

Key Learning Point: Get children involved. A competition was held for pupils to design a logo and name for the breakfast club. The winning design was made into a large poster and hangs in the breakfast club room. Pictures of children from themed mornings are also posted throughout the year. These have helped to promote the breakfast club positively with children and parents.



KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROGRAMME

Breakfast club co-ordinators noted the positive impacts for pupils of the breakfast clubs in their school, especially for children identified as vulnerable. Teachers reported an improvement in attendance, punctuality, energy levels and participation in class: “it sets children up for the day and improves their concentration and punctuality” (HFfA 2014b, p.4).

A positive effect on eating habits was reported by breakfast club co-ordinators and parents as children were now regularly eating a nutritious breakfast and eating foods they would not usually eat at home. Parents were positive about the breakfast club as it encouraged children to eat breakfast. One parent stated that her daughter “doesn’t eat breakfast at home so it’s great she eats it at school” (HFfA 2014a, p.30). Another parent remarked that her daughter “is more likely to ask questions about food and understands the importance of a healthy breakfast” (HFfA 2014b, p.4).

The breakfast clubs were important social outlets for children, where they learned to interact with new children and eat together as a group. One co-ordinator noted that it has been “socially beneficial for some children...able to interact better with others”. She added that it was especially beneficial for older pupils who help out as it gives them a sense of independence and increased confidence. Co-ordinators also reported that children were more likely to discuss personal issues in the breakfast club than during class and so clubs were an important opportunity to identify support needs of children (HFfA 2014a).

Challenges of Establishing and Running a Breakfast Club

(i) Lack of funding for breakfast clubs

Lack of funding for breakfast clubs was cited as the main barrier to long-term sustainability. Sufficient funding is not available through core school funds due to recent cutbacks and coordinators cited few alternative options. One club co-ordinator identified funding as the number one resource needed: “if you have funding you can build around the other things. If you don’t have funding, it’s so difficult” (HFfA 2014).

(ii) Inadequate facilities for school food provision

All schools lacked adequate dining facilities at the beginning of the pilot programme. The programme grant was essential to improve school facilities for the set-up of a breakfast club. Significant refurbishment was required in two schools to ensure facilities were sufficient.

(iii) Knowledge levels of good practice for breakfast clubs

Breakfast club co-ordinators reported that it can be difficult to know what is good practice for breakfast clubs, such as how to positively engage parents and serve healthy options. HFfA organised a training

seminar to address these concerns. HFfA facilitated four meetings for participating co-ordinators to share learning and experiences. This process helped schools to adapt effectively and will hopefully support their long-term sustainability.

(iv) Administrative Burden

All schools noted that the logistics of running a breakfast club involves a big time commitment. A number of the breakfast clubs are run daily by a team of volunteers. One co-ordinator reported that it was time-consuming to manage a team of volunteers. Breakfast club coordination requires a flexible role to manage volunteers and budgets, coordinate food purchasing and deal with arising issues. Ideally, coordination of the breakfast club should be built into a specific role from the beginning. SPHE co-ordinators, among others, can have an important role to play in supporting the development of school food provision.

Financial Implications for Schools

The average set-up cost for participating breakfast clubs was €4,700. Differences in set-up costs were closely related to the existing facilities available in each school. Two schools required significant refurbishment of spare rooms which increased their set-up costs. Set-up costs also included kitchen equipment, furniture and staff training.

Average running costs for participating breakfast clubs for the school year (September to June) was €3,000. This was equivalent to €128 per child for the school year or 70c per day. The main running costs related to purchasing food. There were some additional costs related to administration and staff or volunteer expenses and the purchase of new kitchenware.

It is important to note that all schools received donations of food and/or equipment during the pilot programme which was external to the grant and support provided by HFfA. It is difficult to determine the full cost of setting up and running a breakfast club as it is dependent on volunteer input, donations, staff time as well as the costs outlined above, which refer only to the direct costs incurred when setting up and running a breakfast club.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of our evaluation report HFfA made a number of policy recommendations to Government. These included:

1. Expand *School Meals Programme*

HFfA recommends that the *School Meals Programme* (SMP) is reviewed to support the set-up of further breakfast clubs. The *School Completion Programme* will provide €39 million to schools to purchase food as part of this programme. This is a vital resource to many schools. Schools can currently avail of a single food programme under the SMP. As funding is greater for school lunches many choose this option over breakfast clubs, with only 14% of schools availing of the SMP choosing a breakfast club (Department of Social Protection 2014). HFfA recommends that an additional budget is allocated to the SMP that focuses on supporting new breakfast clubs. A phased approach to implementation is recommended with initial priority given to DEIS schools. Given that over 50% of children from a disadvantaged background attend a non-DEIS school (Barnardos 2009), HFfA recommends that a long-term aim of the SMP should be to identify how to aid the set-up of breakfast clubs in non-DEIS schools to best support these children.

2. Improve School Infrastructure

HFfA recommends that a national fund is made available to improve school facilities to ensure they are appropriate for school food provision. Feedback from the programme participants and education partners has highlighted that inadequate school facilities are a significant barrier to the provision of food in

schools. In 2013, the Department of Education and Skills spent €362m on improving school infrastructure, as they recognised its impact on learning capacity. HFfA recommends that a proportion of future school infrastructure budgets are allocated towards upgrading catering and dining facilities to facilitate the provision of food in schools.

3. Provision of Training and Support

HFfA recommends that a training and support package is developed to promote and support the establishment of breakfast clubs across Ireland. A key finding of the pilot programme was the need to support school staff in developing good practice for breakfast clubs through the delivery of training and networking events. Support should be provided at both local and national level. There is a need to engage key partners at a national level to ensure long-term commitment and promote uptake across all networks. At a local level, training should be provided to key school staff to ensure the set-up of effective breakfast clubs.

There is little research available on the impact of breakfast clubs in Ireland. If a national breakfast club programme is developed, HFfA recommends that an evaluation of this programme is commissioned that explores its short and long-term impact in different settings and identifies the support needs of schools in implementing such a programme. A whole-school approach is required to bring about change and improve knowledge and skills of food and nutrition. The SPHE curriculum can support this change. SFIs play a key role in implementing the SPHE curriculum to support the personal development, health and well-being of children.

CONCLUSION

All sectors of society have a role to play in addressing food poverty. Ensuring all children who need a breakfast club can access this necessitates greater policy coherence from Government. It also necessitates partnership working within schools. SPHE co-ordinators can take a lead role in co-ordinating the development of breakfast clubs in a holistic manner, as has been outlined in this chapter.

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The Active Citizen as an Agent of Societal Well-being: Making the Case for Citizenship Education

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INTRODUCTION

The dilemmas faced by schools in relation to reconciling the needs of the individual with the overall aims and ethos of the classroom and school are highlighted by McLaughlin (2003). He acknowledges that these dilemmas are derived from the complexities of current society. These dilemmas are no less evident in the Irish context. In a society of constant change, teachers are confronted with the tensions between meeting the needs of many different individuals and groups while endeavouring to prepare them to become active citizens. Helping the child “to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual” is juxtaposed with preparing him or her “to contribute to the good of society” (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 1999a, p.7), thus enhancing societal well-being. This article seeks to explore the extent to which Irish education and, specifically, the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum (primary), and the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) Curriculum (post-primary) facilitates the development of the child as an active citizen. It is posited that citizenship education occupies a key role in helping our children to negotiate the complexities and challenges of the post-Celtic Tiger era and in facilitating their positive contribution to a society endeavouring to cope with ongoing social, economic, political and demographic change.

A QUESTION OF IMPERATIVES

In its 2012 evaluation of its Youth Citizenship Programme, *Foróige* highlights the tensions between economic and social imperatives in society and contends that the primacy accorded to the former has led to a perceived decline in connectedness in society (UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre 2012). The impact of the mercantile paradigm, which valorises trade/exchange dispositions, on Irish society and Irish education, is debated by O’Sullivan (2005). He contends that the mercantile paradigm has fundamentally reconstructed what education is thought to be about, including constructs which would have been viewed as non-market or anti-market such as public sphere, civil society, common good, altruism and vocation. Similar concerns are articulated by Taylor (1991, p.5) who cautions against the dominance of what he terms “instrumental reason” in modern society. He views instrumental reason as being underpinned by economics, with maximum efficiency the measure of success. The active citizen becomes the casualty here as the interest in, and commitment to, the public sphere becomes eroded. Bauman (2001) observes that in modern society people are left to their own devices, being managed at a distance, and seduced by economic rewards that will contribute to their individual happiness. This is a society in which, according to Taylor (1991), few will want to participate actively in self-government, preferring to voluntarily hand over power to an engaged few. He is uneasy about the loss of “the great chain of Being” that “gave meaning to the world and to the activities of social life” (Taylor 1991, p.3). He views this loss as a casualty of the culture of individualism and concludes that “our dignity as citizens” is thus open to threat (Taylor 1991, p.10).

The need to reinstate the public sphere as a priority in the lives of individuals becomes evident. Otherwise the wellbeing of society is at risk of becoming destabilised and fragmented. Eurydice (2012) identifies the pursuit of equity and social cohesion as a growing political priority over recent years at national and European level. It views active citizenship, particularly among young people, as one of the principal means to address these issues and identifies education as a major protagonist in this regard.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE IRISH CURRICULUM

Irish education can be seen to focus upon citizenship education through SPHE at primary level and CSPE at post-primary level. However, there are many different and often conflicting priorities which impact upon Irish education and which tend to detract from a focus on the child as an active citizen. Research by the NCCA (2008) and the Department of Education and Science (DES 2009) both demonstrate that less time is accorded to the third strand of the SPHE Curriculum (primary), *Myself and the Wider World*, wherein citizenship education is explicitly located. Interestingly, the optics of the SPHE Curriculum would seem to compromise citizenship education and suggest an imbalance in terms of priorities. It can be seen in Figure 1 below that the third strand is presented at the bottom of the page and is accorded approximately 25% of the overall space:

Overview of content for SPHE	
The strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum	
Strand	Strand units
Myself	<p>Self-identity</p> <p>Self-awareness</p> <p>Developing self-confidence</p> <p>Making decisions</p> <p>Taking care of my body</p> <p>Health and well-being*</p> <p>Knowing about my body</p> <p>Food and nutrition</p> <p>Growing and changing</p> <p>As I grow I change</p> <p>New life</p> <p>Feelings and emotions</p> <p>Safety and protection</p> <p>Personal safety</p> <p>Safety issues</p> <p>Making decisions*</p>
Myself and others	<p>Myself and my family</p> <p>My friends and other people</p> <p>Relating to others</p>
Myself and the wider world	<p>Developing citizenship</p> <p>My school community</p> <p>Living in the local community</p> <p>National, European and wider communities†</p> <p>Environmental care</p> <p><i>The sub-unit Environmental care is developed in detail in SESE.</i></p> <p>Media education.</p>

This overview illustrates how the SPHE curriculum is developed throughout the primary school. The strands and strand units are similar at all levels.

*These units or sub-units are integrated in other strands and strand units in the curriculum for infants and first and second classes.

†This sub-unit is applicable only from third to sixth classes.

Overview of content

Figure 1: The structure of the SPHE Curriculum (primary) (NCCA 1999b, p.9).

TENSIONS AND IMBALANCES

It should be borne in mind that the current primary school curriculum was introduced over fifteen years ago and was heavily influenced by what Seery (2008) views as the dominant informing discipline in education of the 20th century, namely the discourse of developmental psychology. According to Seery (2008), the aims of education are 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 became the buzzwords of a generation, and in particular, a generation that was incubated by the excesses of the Celtic Tiger. Lodge *et al.* (2004) also express concern about the overshadowing of key societal issues, such as equality and diversity, in the debate about primary education and attribute this to the predominance of a child-centred discourse. While self-realisation and emancipation, embodied in the 'rational man' of the Enlightenment, are acknowledged as indicators of progress, such developments become problematic if not located within the parameters of the common good (Taylor 1991; Bauman 2001). These concerns are echoed by Enslin and White (2002, p.113). They contend that in its most extreme form, this modern view sees the citizenship role as "little more than a nominal adjunct to a person's private roles". Bauman (2001) references Norbert Elias's notion of reciprocal conception: society shaping the individuality of its members and individuals forming society out of their life actions while pursuing strategies plausible and feasible within the socially woven web of their dependencies. This is not necessarily a new or radical construct. Indeed, almost a half a century ago, R.S. Peters problematized the notion of self-realisation and proposed that the 'potentialities' of the individual "can only be developed within the framework of some socially structured pursuit into which he has to be initiated" (Peters 1956, p.56). While this balance is evident in the aims of the Primary School Curriculum (NCCA 1999a), it is postulated by this author that the balance is not sufficiently demonstrated in either the discourse of the SPHE Curriculum or in its implementation.

This inversion in balance continues into the post-primary school, despite the introduction in 1999 of CSPE as an examination subject in the Junior Certificate (the first formal State examination for most students). While this was seen as a "landmark event" in curricular developments in Ireland and evidence that the State was adopting a more committed approach to citizenship education (Jeffers 2008, p.11), there is evidence of continual marginalisation of this curriculum (Jeffers 2008). Citing the findings of other research, Jeffers provides a comprehensive overview of the situation and the status of CSPE in schools. He presents six major areas of challenge to CSPE as outlined by Redmond and Butler (2003). These are: teacher allocation; time allocation; level of assessment; support for teachers; resourcing; and management. This author is not going to revisit these challenges in any great detail in this article as they have been comprehensively addressed by other authors, often in the context of SPHE (see for example, Moynihan and Mannix McNamara 2014; NicGabhainn *et al.* 2010). Instead, the concept of citizenship education itself will be explored in order to determine its contribution to societal well-being and also its untapped potential.

DECONSTRUCTING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The term 'citizenship education' is open to many interpretations and can be located on a continuum ranging from very passive engagement with knowledge to very active engagement with the community and beyond. Westheimer and Kahne (2004, cited by Kinlen *et al.* 2013) observe that citizenship education can promote three types of citizen, namely the personally responsible citizen (based on obedience); the participatory citizen (who becomes involved in his/her community); and the justice oriented citizen (who questions and analyses root causes). This continuum thus moves from transmission to transformation. The latter lends a significantly political dimension to the subject and could ultimately be seen as constituting a threat to the status quo and to the consensualism that tends to dominate Irish society (Jeffers 2008, citing Lynch 2000). Consensualism is viewed by O'Sullivan (2005, p. xiv) as one of the most striking

features to emerge from the analysis of Irish educational thinking from the 1950s. He comments on its “exclusion from competing/contesting viewpoints, and the associated mechanisms such as those of editing, filtering or excluding discordant meanings, through which the orthodoxy of understandings was maintained”. The predominance of the technical rational paradigm in Irish education is commented upon by Gleeson (2004) which he views as resulting in the silencing of critical reflection or discussion. He contends that debate about the meaning of the good life and the good of education are rare events. A compelling argument for the inclusion of CSPE in the Senior Cycle Curriculum is provided by O’Sullivan (2005, citing Clifford 2002) but he adds the caveat that significant debate about what constitutes citizenship education is needed. In this context, citing Ward 2002, he lauds the curriculum proposal from the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC, now the City of Dublin Education and Training Board, CDETB) that citizenship education is removed from the political and/or ideological demands of the day and that it provides the space for critical engagement with emerging issues. He views such a curriculum as representing “a crucial transitional stage in preparing citizens for the challenges of an expanding public sphere” (O’Sullivan 2005, p. 555).

This author wishes to locate the current approaches to citizenship education within the transmission/transformation continuum. In the post-primary context, while there is considerable emphasis on activity-based methodologies, research demonstrates that there is increased focus accorded to more passive activities rather than active engagement with the difficult and complex issues inherent in citizenship education. The International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) shows that, despite Irish students demonstrating a high level of knowledge in relation to CSPE, their level of engagement with their communities was low. Regarding the type of civic action underpinning CSPE projects, more ‘passive’ forms (e.g. guest speaker and/or fundraising 62% and 12% respectively) were preferred over ‘active’ forms of civic engagement (e.g. campaign or protest just over 2%). While the research contended that this would appear to be at odds with the inherent emphasis on active participatory citizenship, it was acknowledged that it could be related to the limited amount of instructional time allocated to the subject area and may be interpreted within the wider context of the examination-focused structures of the Junior Cycle of post-primary education (Cosgrove *et al.* 2011). Nevertheless the extent of focus on, or engagement with, the concept of the common good comes into question and the statistics cited above challenge the transformative potential of CSPE. Jeffers (2008) identifies the syllabus itself as posing a challenge in terms of extent of engagement. He observes that while on the one hand the flexibility of the programme is a strength in that it allows for responsiveness, growth and development, its breadth may be read as vague and general thus leading to practitioners taking a minimalist view of its demands. Jeffers also highlights the tendency towards passive tasks and concurs with the contention of the ICCS that this type of implementation is representative of the system in which the curriculum is located. However, he also acknowledges evidence presented by the DES of more imaginative and participatory projects. He concludes that teachers need to develop the potential not only of action projects but of the entire syllabus. He highlights that teachers need courage, confidence, imagination and support in order to fully realise this potential. Research on citizenship education in the primary context is scarce but it could be anticipated that similar patterns are likely in terms of engagement.

ENGAGING WITH CONTROVERSY

Citizenship education often requires those involved to move out of their comfort zones and to engage with controversial issues. Dewhurst (1992, cited by CDVEC 2012) views such engagement as part of the role of schools. He observes that schools should help their students to handle questions of value, to learn to make judgements which are truly their own, as well as learning to take responsibility for their own lives. Such debate is not easy and may require the teacher and students to take a stance and engage in sometimes difficult and potentially antagonistic conversations. Indeed, a frequent criticism of citizenship education in schools has been its limited ability to focus on deeper and structural understandings of social issues

such as inequality or poverty (Bryan and Bracken 2011; Andreotti 2006, cited by Kinlen *et al.* 2013). Thus it is not surprising to learn that methodologies such as circle time, which has great potential for facilitating discussion, is generally used for personal and social skills development but does not move beyond this to embrace more global issues (Collins 2014, citing Holden, 2003). Kavanagh (2014) observes that citizenship education needs to move beyond “smaller school initiatives” and occupy a more central role in children’s lives. Her research indicates that, similar to other European countries, student voices tended to be given consideration in relation to “safe comfort issues” but remained divorced from more significant aspects of the children’s education. The movement beyond these safe issues cannot be assumed and thus, it is somewhat unrealistic to expect that all teachers are ready, willing and able to lead their students into engagement with the complex and challenging issues associated with citizenship education. CDVEC (2012) identifies controversial issues as issues that have potential to:

- Divide society
- Challenge personally held beliefs and values
- Generate conflicting explanations
- Evoke emotional responses
- Cause students to feel threatened and confused.

The rationale for providing teachers with additional support in facilitating engagement with such issues becomes clear. Introducing controversial issues involves risk on the part of the teacher and the ability to open up debate. For example, the SPHE Curriculum for 3rd and 4th classes in the primary school includes a focus on the examination of justice, fairness and equality through “exploring discrimination against particular groups, racism, recognising stereotyping of any kind and exploring how it can be counteracted” (NCCA 1999c). This is not an easy task, and capacity on the part of the teacher to undertake such debate with children should not be assumed. However, the debate should not be avoided. Bhabha (1994) promotes the act of ‘negotiation’ rather than ‘negation’. He cautions us that “there is no given community or body of the people whose inherent, radical historicity emits the right signs”. Hence there is need for constructive debate wherein there is potential for conflict and antagonism so that the role of all groups in society is recognised in the maintenance of the common good.

CHALLENGING INDIVIDUALISM

Allied to, but yet separate from the fear of upsetting the status quo, is the fear of challenging another person’s values and actions because of the threat of censure for posing a threat to the individual, the self, and specifically, to self-esteem. This author contends that the current preoccupation with the individual and in particular with the concept of self-esteem, needs to be problematized. Otherwise the process of transformation is impeded. Ecclestone and Hayes (2009, p.161) contend that the transformative power of education is being undermined by the focus on the self:

Calling education ‘transformative’ is shorthand for the transformative power of human beings to try to change the world, and in doing so, to change themselves.

However, they believe that:

in the present climate, the focus has shifted completely away from changing the world towards changing yourself in order to accept your vulnerability and human frailty...

(Ecclestone *et al.* 2009 p.161)

If this is to be believed, citizenship education may well remain subordinate to the demands of an individualistic culture.

The above contentions may be challenged through reference to An Taisce's *Green Schools initiative*. Currently 93% of all schools are involved in the project and the Irish *Green Schools Programme* is one of the most successful in the international network known as Eco-Schools (www.greenschoolsireland.org). Undoubtedly this is a clear example of promoting citizenship among children. However, Kavanagh (2014) contends that Green Schools can often be teacher-centred and their processes tokenistic. Also, this issue is relatively uncontroversial when compared with other themes within citizenship education. It is unlikely that school involvement with Green Schools will encounter challenge from parents, the media or the wider community.

CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Having outlined the challenges of implementing citizenship education, it becomes apposite to present some possible solutions to the current impasse at which citizenship education finds itself. The author contends that there are two perspectives which can be adopted here: one is at curriculum level wherein a review of the content of the SPHE Curriculum at primary level and the CSPE Curriculum at post-primary level could be considered. The author contends that the current focus of the SPHE Curriculum (primary) needs to be inverted with citizenship becoming foregrounded, not to the exclusion of the self but with a greater balance between the two than is in the curriculum at present. The optics of the curriculum need to present the importance of citizenship education. In addition to review, more time and status need to be accorded to SPHE/CSPE Curricula. The current allocation of 30 minutes of discrete time per week to SPHE (primary) and 40 minutes of discrete time to CSPE is wholly inadequate, given the complexities in both curricula. It is the author's contention that this allocation should increase by at least 100%. Appropriate assessment of these curricula also needs consideration. These are not new issues or recommendations. However, for citizenship education to resonate authentically in society, a deeper and more critical reflection in relation to its constituent parts and to the skills and competences required of both teacher and student is required. Andreotti (2006, p.41) presents a powerful case for what she terms "critical global citizenship education" and contrasts this with "soft" citizenship education, the type of citizenship education, which arguably, is predominant in Irish schools at present. She points to the need to address the economic and cultural roots of the inequalities in power and wealth/labour distribution in a global complex and uncertain system.

Crucially, for citizenship education to become an embedded part of Irish education, there needs to be a movement beyond a review of content to that of pedagogy. Critical pedagogy emerges to unsettle the dominance of the societal paradigm of individualism which this author views as having impacted on education over the past number of decades, and in particular, during the era of the Celtic Tiger. McLaren (2007) referencing John Dewey, informs us that critical pedagogy presents teachers with a moral choice, namely, whether education is a function of society or society a function of education. McLaren challenges us to reflect on whether we want our schools to create a passive, risk-free citizenry or a politicized citizenry capable of fighting for various forms of public life and informed by a concern for equality and social justice. He presents the classroom as a space of freedom in which students become agents of transformation and hope. This is the outcome of critical pedagogy. Giroux (2013) contends that for teachers to understand the meaning of critical pedagogy, they must move beyond a perception of technique towards one of a political and moral project. Critical pedagogy, according to Giroux, is concerned with teaching students to gain a sense of individual and social responsibility, and what it means to be an engaged citizen who can expand and deepen the possibilities of democratic public life. Recognition of context is a key element in engagement with critical pedagogy. Giroux observes that "it is always related to the specificity of particular contexts, students, communities, available resources, the histories that students bring with them to the classroom, and the diverse experiences and identities they inhabit" (Giroux 2013, p.3). As such it is very much learned through the process of reflective practice and an understanding of the lives and perspectives of the students being taught at a given point in time.

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The need to support and empower teachers to take on the challenging and complex tasks intrinsic to authentic citizenship education has been referred to at a number of junctures in this article. And so, the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the promotion and implementation of citizenship education becomes evident. In fact, this could be viewed as the core business of HEIs. Harkavy (2006), drawing upon the theses of Karl Marx, contends that the role of all HEIs is to create, maintain, and continually develop the Good Society that would enable human beings to lead long, healthy, active, peaceful, virtuous, happy lives. Harkavy provides a detailed insight into the work of William Rainey Harper, first President of the University of Chicago, who presents the university as the agency of democracy and the overall determinant of the school system:

through the school system every family in this entire broad land of ours is brought into touch with the university; for from it proceeds the teachers, or the teacher's teachers.

(Harper, 1905, p.25 cited by Harkavy, 2006)

However, universities rarely teach citizenship education directly (Watson 2014). Chen (2006) argues that in the UK context, the focus on providing students with professional knowledge in order to secure a career has replaced the knowledge, skills and understandings in the civic ideal in public life. The fact is that citizenship education is a 'meta-discipline' requiring an interdisciplinary focus, and thus, introducing or reintroducing it into the curricular framework of HEIs is another challenge (Chen 2006).

Nevertheless, in the context of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) colleges in Ireland, subject areas such as SPHE and Development Education, along with the foundation subjects, in particular Philosophy and Sociology of Education, serve to promote the cause of citizenship education. These areas, by their very nature, espouse the principles of citizenship and also lend themselves to an interdisciplinary focus. In addition, there are many other academic areas which teach students how to engage with critical reflection and critical analysis. This could be deemed a good omen for citizenship education. The increased focus on community service education, also serves the cause of citizenship education. Chen (2006) lauds its capacity to increase reflective, active and critical engagement in the everyday activities of public life. This model is beginning to gain recognition in Ireland.

CONCLUSION

While it is stated in the primary curriculum (NCCA 1999a) that we are educating our children to be active citizens, the concept of citizenship education needs a more reflexive approach with consideration being given to the extent of implementation at primary, post-primary and third levels. More consideration needs to be given to teachers' own understanding of what it means to be an active citizen and the skills and competencies which they require to educate the children in their charge to be active citizens. The extent to which citizenship education moves beyond the Green Schools initiative is worthy of further research. HEIs have a key role in developing capacity in the area of citizenship education. In particular, ITE colleges need to reflect upon the extent to which future teachers are empowered to teach citizenship education in all its complexity in schools. It is time to challenge the economic imperative, and to revisit the public sphere, and thus imbue society with a sense of renewed vigour and well-being. The SPHE and CSPE curricula are good starting points.

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Development Education and Eudaimonic Well-being

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INTRODUCTION

Education, it has been argued, involves the initiation of others into worthwhile activities (Peters 1966; Barrow 1975). It should follow therefore, that education is naturally concerned with the promotion of a more fair and equal world. While efforts to articulate and enact a more just society have been made for millennia, locating these efforts within a pedagogical approach of development education (DE) is much more recent. In an increasingly globalised world, issues that once seemed removed to educators are now necessarily central to teaching and learning. Teachers must infuse a global dimension into all areas of the curriculum in order to cultivate among their students the competencies needed to become global citizens. A traditional emphasis on practice and pedagogy however, has meant that the philosophical underpinnings of DE are often neglected, leading to what Hicks (2008) argues is a relatively limited theoretical literature base for development education.

Meanwhile, the notion of well-being enjoys a more prominent status in children's rights discourse of late. A global commitment to improve child well-being was included in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the National Children's Strategy in Ireland (Government of Ireland 2000) advocates for the development of appropriate indicators for child well-being. In formal education, it is interesting to note that well-being is highly visible in the framework for the new Junior Cycle at post primary level, as one of the eight curriculum principles underpinning the programme and its statements of learning.

Until now, theories of well-being and the practice of DE have barely referenced each other. This paper seeks to investigate how pre-modern conceptions of eudaimonic well-being may intersect with current development education praxis.

DEFINITION OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

In the 1970s, progressive educators argued that a number of crucial global issues (such as the environment, world development, peace and conflict) were missing from formal education (Hicks 2008). DE, as well as many other issue-based educations, emerged from this lacuna.

In the formal and informal education sectors in Ireland, development education is almost exclusively funded by Irish Aid, and defined as an active learning process:

...aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live. It seeks to engage people in analysis, reflection and action for local and global citizenship.

(Irish Aid 2007, p.9)

DE practitioners in Europe operate from a similar starting point:

Development education is an active learning process, founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and cooperation. It enables people to move from basic awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues to personal involvement and informed actions.

(Concord 2004, p.1)

What is common throughout the above definitions is that development education is a vibrant and participatory process which aims to deepen people's understanding of global inequality and the interconnectedness of people and events around the world. For teaching and learning to have a DE focus, it should include multiple perspectives, a link between the local and the global, critical thinking and encourage action toward a more just and equal world.

It is important to note that in recent years there has been a move away from the term "development education" towards a preference for the word "global". Scheunpflug (2013) argues that in a more global society there may well be power centres in the world, but their location is increasingly less clearly defined. She argues the world is much more complex than a Global North or a Global South, and a more appropriate pedagogical response to globalisation would be "global learning". In fact, most European countries use the term "global education" in their work in this area. The definition of Global Education is taken from the Maastricht Declaration on Global Education in Europe (2003):

Global Education is education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all.

(Global Education Congress 2003, p.1)

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

DE, while a significant component of the primary school curriculum, is distinct from other school subjects. Learners and educators enter the area of DE from many different starting points and Bourn (2014) encourages us to conceptualise DE as a process of learning, rather than a fixed educational end-goal. Similarly, it is important to bear in mind the transversal nature of DE in the primary school, for example, concepts and issues derived from DE have relevance for a wide range of subjects.

Within Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) for example, the "Myself and the Wider World" strand provides space for the exploration of many DE issues such as fair trade, inequality, human rights and care for the environment. The SPHE curriculum aims to facilitate children in taking pride in "national, European and global identities and to come to an understanding of what it means to be a citizen in the widest sense" (NCCA 1999, p.3). Children are encouraged to develop a sense of the "interdependent nature of the world in which they live" and "promote the values of a just and caring society" (NCCA 1999, p.10).

In addition, the wide range of active and participative learning methodologies often associated with SPHE (*ibid*, p.6) have a huge role to play in supporting DE learners to explore global issues. Some examples include circle time, open discussions, theatre of the oppressed, guided visioning, hot seating, mental maps, mind maps, open spaces for dialogue and enquiry (OSDE), peer education, philosophy with children, ranking activities and thinking skills activities. These methodologies take learners through a cyclical process of awareness raising, critical thinking and informed action.

EUDAIMONIC WELL-BEING

Well-being plays a central role in any moral theory and is most commonly used in philosophy to describe what is ultimately good for a person:

There is a fair measure of consensus among philosophers of education that the promotion of children's personal well-being is a basic, overarching aim of education: educators should strive to do their best to ensure that our children develop into individuals who enjoy lives that are good in themselves, for themselves.
(Haji and Cuypers 2008, p.85)

The focus of educational well-being in Ireland has been hitherto confined to the sphere of health; that is to say educators argue in favour of Physical Education as good for your physical health and the need to explore mental and emotional health through SPHE etc. (NCCA 1999). In this paper, I would like to argue for a broader and more philosophical use of the term, relating it back to the notion of how well a person's life is going for them and taking inspiration from some of the pre-modern ethics of Aristotle.

Aristotle and Eudaimonia

The good composed of all goods; an ability which suffices for living well; perfection in respect of virtue; resources sufficient for a living creature.¹

Aristotle's discussion on eudaimonia is found in *The Nicomachean Ethics* and his main thesis revolves around the intersection of virtue and reason. He argues that virtue (arête) is achieved by following our reason and that reason will lead to our happiness or well-being. He calls this well-being "eudaimonia", usually translated as "human flourishing" (Russell 1961). Eudaimonia in some respects can be considered one of the main aims of philosophy, namely, the highest human good. So how does one achieve eudaimonia? While minor states of happiness can be achieved through a variety of different endeavours, such as wealth for example, Aristotle argues eudaimonia can only be reached through the practice of virtue. The eudaimonic life therefore, is one of "virtuous activity in accordance with reason" (Aristotle 1976, p.24).

Aristotle's core idea is that our chief good is determined by our function and that function is determined by our nature. The function of humans, as the only rational animal, is to be reasoned. We have an innate sense of what is right and humans are flourishing if they live up to this innate sense of reason.

Aristotle understood that not all desires are worth pursuing, and even though some might produce pleasure, it does not follow that they will produce well-being. He believed that true happiness was found by leading a life of virtue and that realising human potential was the ultimate goal. "Human good is activity of soul in accordance with virtue in a complete life" (Aristotle 1976, p.28). Aristotle believed that actions have to be good for you to contribute to your human thriving: "In purely abstract terms - x is a value for A, if and only if, x is a contribution to A's eudaimonia" (Bond 1996, p.127).

Objective List Theory of Well-being

Aristotle believed that a list of virtues, once achieved, could lead to eudaimonia. In some ways, this approach also has resonance in more modern theories of well-being. Griffin (1986) speaks about well-being in terms of what it is for a single life to go well and outlines the objective list theory of well-being. The objective list theory of well-being considers well-being to relate to fulfilling certain criteria on a list, whether that be friendship, contentment or empathy for example. Individuals should find good or value in the items on the list and therefore flourish, when they attain them.

¹ This quote is taken from 'Definitions'; a Platonic dictionary of philosophical terms, *author unknown*.

Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics* has been heavily criticised over the centuries, most notably by Bertrand Russell (1961) who believes many of the ideas to be "unduly smug" in a modern context (p.247). Aristotle maintains that eudaimonia depends on virtue, but that while virtue is necessary for eudaimonia it is not always sufficient. Russell's main criticism revolves around the acceptance of inequality in the application of the Aristotelian view, which is that the highest virtue is reserved for an elite few in society and the rest should settle for second best (Russell 1961). Objective list theory of well-being has been similarly criticised for its elitist applications, since it claims that certain things on a particular list are good for people, even if they may not want them. Russell also criticises what he views as the "emotional poverty" (1961, p.234) of Aristotle's ethics, in that he appears to be either unaware or not bothered by the suffering of mankind (*ibid*).

However, for the purposes of this paper, I would like to move away from the context in which Aristotle was writing in order to strategically essentialise some of the philosophical underpinnings within a social justice framework. Well-being, at a theoretical level, was very much linked to the exercise of reason in pre-modernity and Aristotle takes the view that virtues are essentially the means to the end that is happiness. In the next section, I will argue that the (objective list theory of) competencies which are cultivated through teaching and learning in DE can be similarly theorised as virtues which can contribute to well-being in a new global reality.

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION PRAXIS

As we have seen, virtue is closely bound up with well-being and eudaimonia can be understood as the self-fulfilment of each individual's own unique nature. A significant concern of DE is theorising what a global citizen would look like. This section will look at how competencies needed to become a global citizen can be regarded as virtues which can contribute to a person's eudaimonia. This will be done by looking at the following affinities between DE praxis and eudaimonic well-being.

Table 1: DE competencies and components of eudaimonic well-being

Development education competency	Component of eudaimonic well-being
Critical thinking and reflection	Reason and rigorous self-examination
Incorporation of multiple perspectives	Dialogic praxis
Awareness of interdependence	Theories of friendship
Values-based education	Centrality of virtue
Call to action	Senselessness of a squandered life

Critical Thinking and Reflection

Critical thinking is both a goal and strategy of DE. Critical thinking skills lead to the ability to make judgements that can critically assess global issues and situations. Critical reflection assists students in challenging ethnocentric assumptions and enables them to realise that DE issues are inevitably complex and multi-faceted and there are no simple "right" or "wrong" answers.

Further competencies such as self-reflection, questioning, perspective consciousness and analysis are also essential components of DE. Reflexivity is what Bowden (2013) calls "exploring ourselves", and what Tucker (1999) terms "looking at ourselves looking". It is a process of exploring our own values and understanding more about how they are shaped and directed. Teachers must be able to facilitate this exploration in a confident, creative and skilful manner.

Aristotle similarly believed that rigorous self-examination is necessary for eudaimonia and that arguably, reflection is the most important aspect of eudaimonia. According to Aristotle, happiness and well-being require intellectual skills, driven by man's innate reason, which in turn comes from self-discovery and introspection: "Happiness lies in virtuous activity and perfect happiness lies in the best activity, which is contemplative" (Russell 1961, p.225).

Despite its radical agenda and roots in critical pedagogy, there is some evidence to suggest that the kinds of DE being promoted in Irish schools is consistent with "soft" rather than "critical" approaches (Andreotti 2006; Bryan and Bracken 2011). Reflective thinking can help students and teachers look at their own role in development issues, in particular their own complicity in global injustice. Critical approaches offer scope to students and teachers to interrogate how they themselves are implicated in the global economic processes and relations of domination that have generated, and reproduce, global inequality in the first place (*ibid*). Aristotle argues similarly for the "contemplative life", the ultimate in the realisation of one's rational self. Reflexivity therefore acts as self-realisation in Aristotle's ethics.

Multiple Perspectives

Much of DE is concerned with the inclusion of multiple perspectives, in particular, southern voices in debates and discussions on development issues. Bourn (2014) warns against the influences of personal and cultural experiences which can be sometimes neo-colonialist in outlook. Many students arrive at their engagement with DE from an ethnocentric place, taking European "superiority" for granted and believing that their viewpoint is the best. Bourn advises us to deconstruct issues and events and consider them from a range of perspectives in order to develop a "sense of global outlook" or "global mind-set" which understands the viewpoints of others (Bourn 2014 p.23). Teachers need to develop competencies which support students to view the world through diverse lenses, and as such, challenging ethnocentrism and incorporating multiple perspectives into teaching is an intrinsic element of DE pedagogy.

This focus on debate and discussion in DE has resonance with Aristotelian notions of dialogic praxis. Democratic critical thinking through dialogue has its roots in Socratic thought and can be regarded as the beginning of the critical pedagogy of DE.

Development educators need to be mindful of how multiple perspectives are incorporated in praxis. A critique of DE is how rarely southern perspectives that question the western dominant development model are incorporated into formal education efforts. For example, a common introduction to DE in Irish classrooms comes through learning about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in curriculum areas such as SPHE and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE). However:

The MDGs are generally regarded with scepticism, it is also seen by some as a continuation of Northern dominance. There is a clear lack of enthusiasm in the South about MDGs.

(Jones and Nygaard 2012, p.163)

Similarly, the competencies that I have identified for this paper have all effectively been theorised by practitioners in the Global North. It is hoped therefore, that through dialogic praxis, involving southern perspectives or understanding the "other" will move beyond a tokenistic application and into an arena where post-colonial legacies can be challenged meaningfully. Andreotti argues that we need to imagine DE:

.... beyond ethnocentric, ahistorical, depoliticized, and paternalistic practices towards ethical solidarities based on principles of mutuality and reciprocity in the ongoing construction of the world in solidarity with others.

(2013, p.173)

INTERDEPENDENCE

The world is getting smaller all the time, with the effects of what happens around the world becoming increasingly felt here at home. Students are continually making sense of their wider world and the undeniable interconnectedness of modern life. DE encourages learners to understand how people, spaces, events and economies are inextricably interrelated and that many choices and events have repercussions on a global scale. DE explores links of solidarity between people in different parts of the world and examines how actions taken in one place can have consequences locally, nationally or internationally.

Aristotle affords significant space to theorising friendship in Book 8 of *The Nicomachean Ethics* and asks: "What is a friend?" While it may be natural to think of friendship in an individual sense, Aristotle advises us to think of it in a broader context. Aristotle puts together an idealised list of what it means to be a friend, his own objective list theory of friendship if you will. The first criteria for friendship is good will. You must wish well for your friend. You would like them to do well, be well and you want good things *for* them:

Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in excellence; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good in themselves.

(Aristotle 1976, p.87)

He regards friendship as essentially a partnership. This good will is reciprocal in the sense that your friend must also wish well for you. Friends must be involved with each other, and share something with each other.

Aristotle's theory of friendship challenges the idea of well-being as an individualised concept. Aristotle believes that if you are my friend, then my well-being is closely bound up with yours. Aristotle describes friendship as "a single soul dwelling in two bodies" and a friend as "another self" (*ibid*, p.92). These metaphors nicely encapsulate the essence of interdependence and elucidate linkages of empathy and solidarity on a global scale.

VALUES-BASED EDUCATION

Kashdan and Ciarrochi (2013), in a positive psychology context, argue that values, i.e, identifying your personal strivings and the motives behind them, are at the heart of the foundations of human flourishing. Values are central to a person's sense of self - they operate as benchmarks that guide thought and deeds. We have already seen how Aristotle believed that happiness requires virtue and that people should live in accordance with their values in order to thrive and arrive at self-fulfilment. Similarly, DE is a process of learning that is characterised by its focus on values. Development educators are inspired and motivated by their commitment to the values of social justice, equity, human rights, open mindedness, care for the environment, respect for diversity and global solidarity (Hoffmann 2000). Scheunpflug (2012) and Andreotti (2013) argue that the underlying value or framework of DE enables learners to develop a critical evaluation of representations of global issues arising from people's personal values of empathy and passion.

Bowden (2013) writes about how global education in the UK is concerned with "Bigger than Self Issues" (p.3). By this he means many issues, such as global poverty, hunger and sustainability may feel too "big" to deal with, without a values framework:

To a large extent, the term does not matter, but the skills, dispositions and ability to consider these issues, to form an opinion, and to take relevant action does. Values are at the heart of this.

(Bowden 2013, p.4)

CALL TO ACTION

While there is often debate about the definition of DE, most accepted definitions tend to include an action component. As far back as 1975, the United Nations defined DE as being concerned with “issues of human rights, dignity, self-reliance, and social justice... and encourages the linking of ideas with action for change” (United Nations 1975). DE understands that the values people hold shape their actions and act as “praxis” - the notion of theory and practice joining together.

At the heart of DE is the idea that after exposure to the ideology and sustained critical reflection, one will not only be empowered but also compelled to act for a more just and equal world. In this sense, learning is linked to informed and responsible enactment. DE activism can range from individualised forms of action, such as donating to a charity or making ethical consumer choices, to more collective forms of direct civic action such as participating in marches or sit-ins, engaging in civil disobedience and other forms of protest (Bryan and Bracken 2011, p.203).

Aristotle similarly took a very practical approach to his ethics and believed that a eudaimonic life has to be an active life. He did not regard a life to be good if it was “squandered” (1976, p.102). In Aristotle’s thesis therefore, eudaimonia necessitates not only virtue, but also action. He argues that certain competencies are needed in order to act virtuously and therefore live well. Eudaimonia in this sense is an ongoing practice, we never finish learning and we are always striving for virtue, or in this context, striving to participate in society as active and responsible global citizens. Aristotle believed that moral excellence comes as a result of habit: “We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts” (*ibid*, p.110).

However, that is not to say that the notion of action does not need to be problematized in the context of both eudaimonia and DE. Bryan and Bracken (2011) argue that development activism can be all too easily reduced to individualised forms of action. They call this “The Three ‘F’s of development education: fundraising, fasting and fun” (p.203). They caution how ill-thought out or charity-based approaches to action can have the ironic effect of undermining the long-term objectives of DE initiatives, which emphasise the importance of ensuring that action is not carried out in isolation from critical reflection. However, the fact remains that action is an essential part of DE for other reasons as well. Mintz (2013) argues that suffering has a complex role in social justice education in that the alleviation of (global) suffering is a goal of social justice education, while simultaneously students suffer in the process of learning about the suffering of others. Similarly Hicks often writes about how students engage with DE with both their heart and their head (1995; 2008) and its call to action may be an important mitigation against some of the helplessness they may feel as a result of this “paradox of suffering” (Mintz 2013).

CONCLUSION

Socrates famously proclaimed² over two thousand years ago “I am not an Athenian or a Greek, but a citizen of the world”. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle suggests that we should educate for both well-being and for good citizenship:

We ought to educate our children so that they become good world citizens, and we should educate in such a way that in so doing, we attempt to ensure that the world is better.

(Aristotle 1976, p.123)

² Socrates: from Plutarch, *Of Banishment* (469 BC - 399 BC)

The concept of educating for global citizenship is therefore nothing new. However, as we have seen, the DE movement, as both a curriculum discipline and a process of learning, is in its infancy. In a globalised world, individuals need exposure to learning which enables them to understand and critique new worldwide processes and realities:

Global education is an ethical and educational imperative in global societies characterised by complexity, uncertainty, inequality and diversity. Global education should equip learners to make informed and responsible choices about their impact and contribution as global citizens in their local and global contexts.
(Andreotti 2011, p.17)

DE aims to cultivate competencies among learners to better understand global interconnectedness at micro and macro levels. It also scaffolds proficiencies in the promotion of human rights and social justice. An Aristotelian reading of well-being argues that a happy or full life is a life of activity, whereby reason is exercised through just such a list of virtues or competencies:

He is happy who lives in accordance with complete virtue and is sufficiently equipped with external goods, not for some chance period but throughout a complete life.
(Aristotle 1976, p.135)

So while DE is central to children's understanding of the globalised world they are living in, it is also important that its contribution to the holistic well-being of the child be acknowledged. In this paper, I have argued that scaffolding the competencies of students needed to build a more equitable world could play a significant role in their self-realisation and well-being as global citizens.

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Challenging the Construction of LGBT Children and Youth as “Always-already Victims”

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last three decades, sexuality-related suicide - and sexuality-related youth suicide in particular - have become major foci of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activism and academic scholarship. Although suicidality research in general is fraught with methodological, political and practical challenges (Savin-Williams 2001a, 2001b; Russell 2003), the belief that LGBT-identified youth are at elevated risk of self-harm and suicidality is widely accepted and is also heavily influential as a discourse which structures and informs policy-making, academic research, activism, and educational interventions (Marshall 2010; Rasmussen 2006; Rasmussen *et al.* 2004; Talburt 2010).¹

This article draws on key findings from the *Supporting LGBT Lives* study, a large-scale, mixed methods project which explored the mental health and well-being of LGBT youth and adults which was carried out in 2007-2008 (see Mayock *et al.* (2009) for a detailed description of the study’s aims, objectives, methods and participants).² While the research revealed a complex and multi-faceted portrayal of LGBT lived experience, it was the research’s more alarming findings—including participants’ experiences of bullying, depression, alcohol and drug misuse, homophobic or transphobic violence, and their “at-riskness” for mental health difficulties, including self-harm and suicidality - which were highlighted in press releases, research briefings produced by the commissioners, educational resources and policy documents.

While an increasing number of scholars are critical of the proliferation of what Marshall (2010) refers to as the “always-already victim” trope in LGBT activism and scholarship, to date, there have been few empirical studies which engage critically with the question of how LGBT-identified research subjects themselves actually take up, resist or re-work the vulnerability script which is offered to them specifically in the context of suicidality-focused research. We seek to give additional empirical weight to recent theoretical critiques of the “suffering suicide” script (Savin-Williams 2005) by illuminating the complexity and multi-facetedness of suicidality discourses among those who identify as LGBT. We present research evidence which complicates and challenges the vulnerability narrative which has come to dominate so much of LGBT-focused research, through an illumination of the diverse experiences and lived realities of those who identify as LGBT and by privileging the voices of research participants who themselves “talk back” to the prevailing vulnerability script which formed the wider contextual backdrop for the study. Focusing primarily on the ways in which participants narrated their subjective experiences of being LGBT in society, and how those participants who had ever been suicidal or who *had ever* engaged in self-injurious behaviour understood their reasons for wanting to self-harm and/or end their lives, we seek to emphasise the importance of recognising sexuality as but one facet of identity which must be considered in relation to a range of other contexts and experiences which shape and influence individuals’ lives (Cover 2012a, 2012b, 2013).

¹ The term “discourse” is used here to refer to a set of meanings which structure how we think about a given topic which in turn shapes how we should respond or act in relation to it.

² A mixed methods approach—which involved the administration of a primarily quantitative, anonymous on-line survey which yielded over 1,100 completed surveys and the conduct of in-depth interviews with 14 service providers and 40 LGBT people—was utilised in order to produce a more nuanced understanding of self-harm and suicidality among LGBT people than would have been possible through the use of either qualitative or quantitative methods alone.

KEY FINDINGS

One of the primary goals of the online survey dimension of the research - which garnered over 1,100 responses - was to determine the prevalence of depression, self-harm and suicidality among those individuals living in Ireland who identified as LGBT. Analysis of multiple self-report indicators, including suicidal thoughts, intent, plans and attempts, revealed that a majority of survey respondents had never (42%) or only rarely (32%) given serious consideration to the possibility of taking their own lives, which suggests that sexual orientation or transgender identity are not risk factors for suicidality *per se*, and that it is therefore inappropriate to characterise LGBT people *in general* as being at risk for suicidality (Savin-Williams and Ream 2003). Among younger participants (those 25 years of age or younger) two thirds had never thought seriously about ending their lives in the previous year, and a further 17% had only rarely thought seriously about suicide, which again suggests that even among younger LGBT people, the vast majority could not be characterised as being "at risk" for suicide.

The findings did reveal that the actual lifetime prevalence rate of suicide attempts was relatively high, with almost 18% of the online sample, and a third of participants in the qualitative sample reporting having attempted suicide on at least one occasion. Moreover, 14% of the overall survey sample had sometimes or often given serious consideration to the idea of ending their own life within the previous 12 months, and a similar proportion had made a suicide plan during the previous 12 months; of these, a fifth had gone on to attempt suicide during this period. However, deeper analysis of data revealed a complicated picture in terms of the meanings participants ascribed to their suicidal feelings and actions.

Interpreting Suicidality Statistics

The survey data revealed that less than half (46.7%) of those who had attempted suicide on at least one occasion felt that their first suicide attempt was related directly or primarily ("very related" or "very much related") to their LGBT identification (n = 92), suggesting that a complex constellation of factors were involved, which often included, but was not limited to, one's LGBT identification. In other words, while some of these experiences were associated with the stress of identifying as LGBT in a range of homophobic and transphobic settings and environments, others were wholly unrelated to LGBT identification. The narrative data similarly suggest that suicidal distress is not always, or necessarily directly or primarily related to one's LGBT identification. That a majority of survey participants had never given serious consideration to the idea of ending their lives lends further support to the view that it would be inappropriate to characterise all LGBT people as being at elevated risk for suicidality (Savin-Williams and Ream 2003). These findings raise questions about the legitimacy of universalising discourses which portray LGBT youth in particular, as always, or necessarily "at risk". None of this, of course, negates the reality that suicidality and self-harm are very real features of a significant minority of LGBT people's lives. Nonetheless, the weight of the combined quantitative and qualitative data does call into question the appropriateness of assuming that there is an automatic relationship between LGBT identification and suicidal or psychological distress.

"My sexual orientation has never been an issue for me"

Participants' narrative accounts of their self-injurious behaviour or suicidal feelings or actions further illuminate the extent to which these experiences are often attributable to a range of overlapping factors that cannot be reduced to monocausal explanation. Whereas some participants recognised their sexuality or gender identity as having played a direct role in contributing to their suicidal distress, others alluded to a range of additional, or in some instances, an entirely *unrelated* set of circumstances or events in their lives that had caused them to contemplate or attempt suicide. The following narratives highlight the range of "issues" and "triggers", apart from and often unrelated to minority sexuality or gender status, that may be associated with suicidal thoughts and self-harming behaviour.

I attempted suicide once when I was 16. It was totally unrelated to being gay. No one knew I did it as it was unsuccessful and I never wanted to try it again after that.

(Female, lesbian, age 29, survey participant)³

My self-harm was not related to my sexual orientation, as this has never been an issue for me. There were other issues which triggered my self-harming behaviour.

(Female, bisexual, age 30, survey participant)

“There were stresses at school that were getting to me”

Narrative accounts by those who *did* report that their sexuality or gender identity had a role to play in causing them to attempt suicide suggest that vulnerability to suicidal ideation or acts was often not related singularly to sexuality or gender identity. In other words, people often linked their suicidal thoughts or actions to multiple experiences or issues, rather than understanding them as a response to one particular event, or individualised distress over their identity status (Johnson *et al.* 2007).

A considerable number of participants who had felt suicidal or self-harmed articulated these thoughts or actions as a response, in part at least, to a more universal set of experiences that “all people go through”, in other words, which could not be classified as “LGBT-specific”. As the following vignettes suggest, younger participants in particular often attributed their self-injurious or suicidal feelings and acts to a combination of challenging or negative life experiences—such as home-based difficulties, parental conflict, school and exam-based pressures—that affect young people *in general* as opposed to exclusively affecting LGBT youth.

At the time I started cutting myself, around when I was 17, I was still in secondary school. The whole seclusion thing, I didn’t feel accepted, I felt isolated. My mum and dad constantly fighting. My sister didn’t have [pause], the [mental health problem] wasn’t recognised at the time but she was very wild, she was very unstable. So my mum had a lot of problems with her at that age. So I think it was all that and I was a young 17, I wasn’t able to handle all that.

(Female, bisexual, age 20)

So I don’t know how it started but I started cutting in maybe November of 4th Year. Just kind of gave myself minimum grazing type thing. It got worse then. At the time I was still depressed about the fact that I was gay, I just didn’t want to think about it. There were stresses at school that were getting to me ... The cutting kept getting worse and I couldn’t stop cutting. So the Leaving Cert [terminal exam] was coming up and pressure and all that. It was just getting worse and bad and shitty and all that and I didn’t really know what was going on in my head. I felt crappy and depressed the whole time ... I’d go to class and go home and I’d cut and I’d do my homework and that was kind of my routine for three or four months in the middle of Leaving Cert.

(Male, gay, age 20)

“I’m not sure it’s possible to separate them out as neatly as that”

One participant cautioned against “separating out” factors - including family issues and her sexual orientation - “neatly”, apparently anxious to make it “known” that her mental health difficulties were not straightforward or monocausal:

I consider my past mental health issues as not connected entirely to my sexual orientation - I consider them to be more connected with family of origin issues, although I’m not sure it’s possible to separate them out as neatly as that - nevertheless I would like it to be known that there were other factors in behaviours I used to self-harm in the past.

(Female, lesbian, age 36, survey participant)

³ Quotations marked “survey participant” are based on survey participants’ responses to the open-ended question “Is there anything else you’d like to add?” which was placed at the end of the survey instrument. All other quotations are based on in-depth, face-to-face interviews with 40 participants.

Notably, a small number of participants openly expressed concern about the "narrowness" of the study's focus, which they equated with "mental health problems", and/or urged caution about aligning mental health difficulties with sexual orientation.

We all get depressed as a result of a range of things in our lives. Sometimes, although it may not necessarily be the cause, it is easier to channel that negativity toward and blame it on our sexual orientation ... but it can be caused by a range of things. Sometimes people need to look beyond their sexual orientation. This can happen quite a bit when people "come out" (although I think that's a stupid term) and they realise that all their problems don't just vanish ... so sometimes it is important not to simply align depression with anxieties over sexual orientation. That too can be dangerous.

(Male, gay, age 28, survey participant)

I had my difficulties growing up Gay but there were many positives as well... a lot of the trials and tribulations that one is asked to comment on here relate to life as a whole and I feel that I have been asked about things in the narrowness of a Gay context that really relate to all of my life, things that all people go through with varying focuses. I fear that the findings may emphasise problems as "Gay" that are more a factor of making one's way through life anyway ...

(Male, gay, age 47, survey participant)

While many participants attributed their psychological distress in part to their sexual orientation, their accounts also illuminate a more generic set of demands, pressures and stressors that are by no means queer-specific.⁴ Cover (2012a) suggests that one way to counter the positioning of LGBT youth as automatically vulnerable is to focus on the *youth* element of suicidality, rather than sexuality *per se*. None of this, of course, negates the added complexity that negotiating a non-normative sexual or gender identity can pose for some LGBT-identified youth, but it does highlight the importance of recognising sexuality as but one facet of identity—albeit a significant one—which must be considered in relation to a range of other contexts and experiences which affect their well-being (Cover 2012a). The privileging or singling out of sexual identity as the *primary* explanation for psychological distress minimizes opportunities to understand LGBT youths' experiences as influenced by different facets of their identity (such as biography, gender, race, ethnicity etc.) which intersect and interact in complex ways, or to think about the different contexts and settings within which these identities are performed, some of which will be more affirming and validating of non-normative identities than others (Cover 2012a).

Collectively, these findings complicate dominant discursive constructions which depict LGBT youth *in general* as always or necessarily vulnerable and "at-risk" and highlight the importance of attending to complexifying and disconfirming empirical evidence which disrupts the stereotypical "figure of the abject gay youth" which has come to dominate so much of LGBT-focused research (Talburtt and Rasmussen 2010, p. 3). In the concluding section, we consider the implications of influential discourses which are based in a presumption of queer unhappiness, struggle and victimisation. We synthesise some of the problematic *effects* of those representations which define LGBT-identified youth predominantly or exclusively in terms of their relationship to victimisation and suffering and stress the need for a more nuanced, expansive representation of the lives of queer youth which recognizes them as agentic subjects rather than victims in need of help, tolerance, empathy and inclusion (Marshall 2010; Monk 2011; Rasmussen 2006).

⁴The term "queer", as Ahmed (2004) explains, was originally used as a term of abuse and injury (where to be queer was to be abnormal and not straight), and while often still used as a term of abuse, "queer" has acquired a new set of meanings in the context of a queer politics. As Ahmed (2004) explains: "... In queer politics, the force of insult is retained; 'the not' is not negated ("we are positive"), but embraced, and is taken on as a name." (p. 166). However, people will experience or 'hear' this term differently, depending on their biographical as well as institutional histories. We use the terms LGBT and queer interchangeably here, and use the word "queer" as a political term.

DISCUSSION

The foregoing analysis suggests that the dominant explanations for psychological distress among those who identify as LGBT - such as those which emphasize the role that homophobic and transphobic bullying play in causing or contributing to psychological distress - do not have sufficient explanatory power to account for the myriad of factors that can cause someone to feel depressed or suicidal. In other words, these dominant discourses leave little room for a consideration of a range of additional or indeed alternative, unrelated factors that contribute to psychological distress; nor do they provide space for consideration of the factors which make some LGBT youth far *less* vulnerable to psychological or suicidal distress than others (e.g. a supportive family) (Cover 2012a, 2013). As empirically demonstrated here, far greater attention needs to be paid to more universal stressors and experiences, which may or may not intersect with sexuality and/or gender identity in complex and unpredictable ways.

The findings presented here have numerous implications for the teaching of SPHE. For example, a recently produced SPHE resource *Growing up Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender* (DES/HSE n.d) draws directly on the more alarming findings of the *Supporting LGBT Lives Study*, thereby relying on, and reproducing the “always-already victim” image of LGBT youth. The constant focus on victimisation gives the impression that one’s sexuality is a problem that needs to be managed, thereby limiting the extent to which young people can feel positive about their own bodies and their sexual and gender identities (Lamb 2014). Moreover, within educational contexts - which are often already characterised by a reluctance or outright avoidance of issues pertaining to sexuality - there is a very real possibility that if SPHE and other educators perceive LGBT youth as universally wounded and vulnerable, that they will be too fearful to engage young people in dialogue about sexuality and gender, thereby shutting down, rather than opening up, possibilities for engagement with issues of gender and sexual difference, and increasing the likelihood that LGBT youth will be positioned as marginalised outsiders in schools. This has particular relevance for those charged with delivering the SPHE curriculum, part of which focuses on enabling students to be comfortable with their own sexual orientation and to understand the effects of homophobic bullying (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2011). The cultural representation of LGBT youth as inevitably and universally “at risk” could ironically contribute to their denial of access to sexual knowledge and to open honest discussions around sexuality which are critical to their health and well-being throughout their lives (Monk 2011; Robinson 2012). In other words, the focus on risk-based narratives, which frames, acknowledges and supports LGBT youth primarily as victims, or potential victims in need of protection and care, leaves little room for approaches to sexuality education which reflect the complex realities of young people’s lives, including their lives as sexual beings and their right to relevant and meaningful sexuality education. Anti-homophobic bullying programmes often seek to promote empathy for those who are verbally, psychologically or physically victimised on the basis of their perceived or actual sexual orientation and/or gender identity by highlighting the effects of homophobic or transphobic bullying and the suffering experienced by LGBT youth. Despite their noble intentions, interventions of this nature ironically work to bolster heteronormativity (i.e., the perception that heterosexuality is the only or indeed the “right” sexual orientation) by presenting queer youth as fundamentally different from their heterosexual and gender-conforming peers and by failing to present a more nuanced and multidimensional portrayal of their lives. As Saltmarsh (2012, p. 23) reminds us:

... discourses of youth ‘at risk’ play an important role in naturalising notions of essential dispositions and qualities, and of centres and margins, that powerfully shape the lived experience of those least powerful.

Moreover, as Ward (2011, n.p) notes:

The discourse of suffering bolsters heteronormativity by implying that heterosexual lives are free from gendered violence and suffering and by obscuring the profound forms of queer joy that accompany and sometimes compensate for, queer suffering.

In other words, the focus on the "at riskness" of LGBT youth has an abnormalizing effect which positions queer youth as "at risk" and therefore Other in relation to their heterosexual and gender conforming peers, thereby failing to destabilize the normalcy of heterosexuality or the structures and associated ideologies which promote heterosexuality as the normal and only legitimate sexual orientation (Rasmussen *et al.* 2004; Rasmussen 2006; Quinlivan 2012, 2013). Research demonstrates that gender and sexuality-based linguistic, emotional and physical violence can happen not just to those who identify as LGBT but to anyone who fails to measure up to idealised notions or perceptions of appropriate masculinity and femininity (Robinson 2012). This implies a need to tackle head on a larger "gender order" through which hierarchies of power are perpetuated, gendered identities are regulated and policed, and heterosexuality is normalized at the same time as gendered and sexualised Others are produced (Connell 1994). Within the context of the "suffering suicidal" script (Savin-Williams 2005), queer experience gets reduced to the problem of addressing homophobia and transphobia, but the normalcy of heterosexuality and cisgenderism (gender conformity), or the processes through which heterosexual and dominant gender identities become normalised and non-heterosexual and gender-variant identities become abnormalized are not addressed (Britzman 1995; Coleman *et al.* 2004; Luhmann 1998). This implies a need to shift the focus away from LGBT identity as a risk factor for psychological distress to enable a more nuanced consideration of the role that schools and other institutions themselves play in producing different experiences and outcomes for different people who interact with, or encounter them. Within the dominant risk-based framework however, interventions are much more likely to be individualized and to prioritize enabling queer youth to become more "resilient" in the face of homophobic and transphobic bullying. This failure to interrogate the institutional practices, norms and standards that legitimate heteronormativity or to focus on the factors that make *some* queer youth *more* resilient than others, lets schools and other social institutions "off the moral hook" (Cover 2012a, 2013; Monk 2011; Payne and Smith 2013).

At both the individual and institutional levels, the prevailing discourse which presumes and presupposes queer unhappiness (Ahmed 2010) could also negatively impact how young LGBT people's current and future lives are perceived and how others choose to interact with them (Robinson and Diaz 2006). The "suffering suicidal" script, and its concomitant denial of a more expansive and positive portrayal of LGBT experience, arguably sends a potentially dangerous message to LGBT youth about what they can expect from their lives and for themselves, and may actually dispose them to self-destructive behaviours (Cover 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Russell *et al.* 2000; Russell and Bohan 2001; Savin-Williams, 2001a; 2005). As Cover (2012a, p.72) puts it:

...the identification of queer youth with vulnerability is problematic in that it establishes stereotypes which themselves can produce ways of being, thereby actively making vulnerable or producing queer youth as vulnerable in ways which - of course, unwittingly enact a violence against queer youth themselves.

Relatedly, the repetition of alarming and shocking statistics could have a numbing effect in the longer term (Rasmussen 2006), or could serve to promote the idea that little can be done to alter this endemic and inevitable aspect of LGBT people's identities and life trajectories. This could result in apathy or a lack of engagement with LGBT-related injustices and oppression.

In conclusion, we have attempted in this article to contribute to an emerging body of work which seeks to de-naturalise the now hegemonic and universalising cultural representation of the wounded, abject gay youth which conflates LGBT identity with suicidality, self-harm and associated mental health difficulties. In so doing, our goal has been to contribute to a more expansive understanding of LGBT lived experience by demonstrating the diverse ways in which people engage with their sexuality and gender identity and by trying to illuminate the complex meanings that those LGBT people who have experienced psychological and suicidal distress ascribe to their feelings, thoughts and actions. As the primary researchers in the *Supporting LGBT Lives* study, we are implicated in the circulation of an ostensibly progressive discourse which, on the one hand has succeeded in enhancing visibility of LGBT issues, and getting LGBT mental health and well-being onto the political agenda in an Irish context, but which has a range of problematic effects in terms of challenging oppressive sexual and gender-based structures and relations. As

researchers concerned with social justice, we feel it is our professional responsibility to consider the politics of progress associated with our work, by reflecting critically on the discursive and material effects of our labour, and by talking back to how our research findings are represented in different contexts. Methodologically, the study highlights the importance of paying close attention to disconfirming empirical evidence which disrupts or complicates research agendas and dominant discourses. Finally, we have stressed the need for a vastly more complex, expansive and multifaceted appreciation of LGBT lived experience through a consideration of the complex and multi-faceted nature of our research findings. In the absence of these counter-narratives, abnormalizing discourses about the “at riskness” of LGBT youth which portray them as fundamentally different from their gender-conforming and heterosexual peers will ensure that the heteronormative structures and ideologies through which LGBT oppression is sustained will remain intact, and the capacity for queer youth agency will be overlooked.

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Well-being Through Human Rights Education: A Cross-curricular Approach

Fiona Joyce

Reflections on a whole school approach to integrating Human Rights Education (HRE) and the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) strand 'Myself and the Wider World' across the wider curriculum.

RATIONALE

The well-being of children and young people is closely linked to their ability to access their human rights. This is a point underlined by the United Nations (UNESCO) in their 2011 report: *A Rights Based Approach Monitoring Children and Young People's Well-being*. This report states that, "irrespective of an explicit right to well-being, the realisation of children's rights in the Convention (Amnesty 2003, p. 103) can be said to further well-being" (Keenaghan *et al.* 2011, p.10). Much of the responsibility for ensuring awareness among children of their rights and how to access them falls upon teachers in both primary and second-level education. The primary school SPHE Curriculum (NCCA 1999) allows considerable scope to focus on gaining the skills and information necessary for active citizenship and "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). When students learn about the rights of the child and the ways in which they can access these rights in their daily lives, this leads to a greater sense of well-being. This point echoes that of Bradshaw *et al.* (2007) in their definition of well-being as:

... the realisation of children's rights and the fulfillment of the opportunity for every child to be all she or he can be. The degree to which this is achieved can be measured in terms of positive child outcomes, whereas, negative outcomes and deprivation point to the denial of children's rights.

(Bradshaw *et al.* 2007, p.6)

This paper outlines a whole school approach to human rights education as a means of promoting well-being among students. The approach aims to maximize time spent on human rights education by creating logical cross-curricular links, while using the SPHE strand 'Myself and the Wider World' as a starting point.

According to curriculum guidelines, the allocated time for SPHE is thirty minutes per week (NCCA 1999, p.70). Although in the past this time may have been extended with 'discretionary' time, with the introduction of the *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People* (2011), discrete SPHE time is being squeezed even further:

Teachers and principals say that they have insufficient time to address all of the objectives that are contained in the *Primary School Curriculum* and that the inclusion of new areas of learning may have compromised their ability to teach core skills such as literacy and numeracy.

(Department of Education and Skills 2011, p.49)

In light of this pressure on teachers to fit meaningful SPHE time into their weekly schedule, and the importance of HRE in ensuring the well-being of children, the whole school, cross-curricular approach to HRE outlined here was developed.

As stated by the *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy Among Children and Young People* (2011):

We have to ensure that the curriculum, at primary and post-primary levels, provides comprehensive guidance for the development of literacy and numeracy across curricular areas.

(Department of Education and Skills 2011, p. 46)

This led me to focus much of my cross-curricular approach on the development of literacy and oral language. These areas naturally lend themselves to cross-curricular work, as they are a feature of several curricular areas, for example History, Geography, SPHE, Science and Gaeilge. This point is also made by the Department of Education and Skills:

Literacy and numeracy activity can become contextualized, meaningful and purposeful to the learner through many subjects and areas of learning. We know that the development of literacy and numeracy skills also complements learning in other areas of the curriculum.

(Department of Education and Skills 2011, p. 46)

The SPHE Curriculum itself also acknowledges the benefits of using SPHE as a vehicle for improving oral language and literacy:

In asking appropriate questions, giving opinions, exploring ideas, or making responses, children can become increasingly fluent in their use of language and can improve many of the skills they may have learned in other areas of the curriculum.

(NCCA 1999, p.7)

HRE is a broad area, covering many topics. It was important, when developing a whole school approach to HRE, that the programme had a logical structure which led to a consistent and coherent learning experience for students and teachers. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was chosen as an underpinning framework in the planning of the work, as:

All European countries have signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and have thereby undertaken an obligation to observe it, and to report regularly on progress being made towards fulfilling the rights completely

(Council of Europe 2007, p.34)

The *Summary of the UNCRC* (Amnesty 2003, p. 103) is divided into 21 key rights. This structure became the building blocks of a whole school approach to HRE. The programme divides the UNCRC into eight different levels, with each class level exploring two to three rights of the child in great detail and in an age-appropriate way during each academic year. It is suggested that the programme may link in with a particular time during the school year, perhaps a 'Friendship Fortnight' or 'Human Rights Month', ensuring that each class is covering the topic at least once a year and that every child in the school will have an in-depth knowledge of their human rights by the end of their primary school career.

There are already many resources available for the teaching of HRE in primary schools, so many that teachers often feel overwhelmed by the volume of information and resources available, and are unable to choose an area of focus. To address this, it was decided that this programme would include a pack for each class level with clear guidelines on their use as well as copies of all necessary resources. The main teaching resources for every pack are picture books. According to Kirkland and Patterson (2005, p.3), "Teachers must also remember the value of wordless picture books in stimulating oral language development". The picture books are used to stimulate oral language discussions, to pitch the HRE lesson at an age-appropriate level and to promote the links between literacy, oral language and HRE.

Every pack includes:

- 1-3 picture books
- A copy of the UNCRC
- A glance card showing cross-curricular links and activities, including relevant strands and strand units
- A number of lesson plans for English literacy, oral language/SPHE
- A number of discrete lesson plans for SPHE (with a key focus on 'Myself and the Wider World' strand)
- Photocopiable activities and resources linked with each lesson
- List of further useful resources.

PRACTICAL RESOURCES

The following is a detailed look at two key texts from the programme. To illustrate the changes as the child develops during their time in primary school, there is a text taken from a pack designed for Senior Infants and Sixth Class levels. Each section includes a lesson plan, as well as cross-curricular links.

The following Table shows the strands and strand units covered in each lesson, however, this is not an exhaustive list of the curricular areas connected to these lessons.

Table 1: Strands and Strand Units

English Curriculum	
Strand: Strand Unit:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence and confidence in using language • Oral: developing competence and confidence in oral language
Strand: Strand Unit:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing cognitive abilities through language • Reading: developing interests, attitudes and the ability to think
Strand: Strand Unit:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional and imaginative development through language • Oral: developing emotional and imaginative life through oral language
SPHE Curriculum	
Strand: Strand Unit:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myself and the wider world • Developing citizenship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My school community - Living in the local community - National, European and wider communities - Environmental care

Example: Senior Infants

Key Text 1: *The Colour of Home* by Mary Hoffman and Karin Littlewood

Summary of Text *The Colour of Home* is the story of a young boy called Hassan:

Hassan feels out of place in a new, cold and grey country. At school, he paints a picture showing his colourful Somali home, then covers it with the harsh colours of the war from which his family has fled. But gradually things change, through the kindness of teachers and classmates, Hassan begins to notice the bright, new colours of home.

(Hoffman and Littlewood 1993, blurb)

This text is ideal for stimulating whole class discussion, due to the vibrant colours, simple language and familiar classroom setting contained within.

The following lesson plan is adapted from a lesson plan developed by Betty Farmer (n.d.) :

Sample English Lesson, integrated with SPHE	
Class Level	Senior Infants
Rights of the Child	The right to speak our own language The right to learn about our culture
Key Text	<i>The Colour of Home</i> by Mary Hoffman and Karin Littlewood
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child will listen to the story of <i>The Colour of Home</i>. • The child will discuss some of the characters, setting and plot. • The child will connect ideas from the story to their lives, with a focus on how important it is that we can speak our own language and celebrate our culture.
Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive white board, key text.
Warm Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start by singing 'What I Am', by Will.i.am and Sesame Street, focusing on how we are all different but all special: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyVzjoj96vs • Ask the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you ever been to a new place and didn't know anybody? - Have you been to a new school and didn't have any friends and didn't know who spoke your language? • Introduce the title of the book and the cover. Share a story with the children about a time when you didn't know anyone, and were scared. • Ask children to pay attention to what is happening in the story so that they can re-tell what we have read. Remind them that stories have a beginning, middle, and an end. • In the beginning, we learn about the setting and the characters. In the middle, one of the characters usually has a problem. At the end of the story, the problem is solved. Ask children to keep this in mind as they listen.
Main Body of Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show children the cover of the book and ask what we think is happening here. Predict what we think the story might be about. • Take a walk through the pictures and make another prediction. • While reading, ask prompt questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Let's see what we know about the beginning of the story? - Who can tell me about the characters in the story? - Where was the setting? - What was the problem? - How did it end? • Review with children: At the beginning of the story, Hassan was a little boy who lived in Somalia. He had moved to a new place and didn't know anyone. He couldn't speak any English, and he didn't have any friends. In art class, he drew a picture and started feeling sad. He started speaking about what had happened to his house and to his uncle in Somalia. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did the painting make him feel? - What do you think the little boy did? - What did he leave behind? - How did the story end? - How did the boy feel about his new home? - How did he get to his new home?

	<p>After reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who can retell the story? • If you went to a new place for the first time would you have felt like Hassan? • Is it important to be able to speak your own language with someone? Why? • Is it important to be able to celebrate your own culture and traditions, no matter where you live? Why? • Complete art work, drawing or painting images connected to the child's individual culture - I wear..., I celebrate..., I eat...
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display culture art work
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the children able to retell the story? • Did the children understand the message? • Were the children able to complete their culture art work? • Were the children able to connect the story to the real world and their own lives?
Extension Activity	<p>Vocabulary lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and discuss new words from the text. Ensure children understand and can use new words. Place words on word wall.

Example: Sixth Class

Key Text 2: *The Red Tree* by Shaun Tan

Summary of Text

The Red Tree is a story without any particular narrative; a series of distinct imaginary worlds as self-contained images which invite readers to draw their own meaning in the absence of any written explanation. As a concept, the book is inspired by the impulse of children and adults alike to describe feelings using metaphor - monsters, storms, sunshine, rainbows and so on. Moving beyond cliché, I sought painted images that might further explore the expressive possibilities of this kind of shared imagination, which could be at once strange and familiar. A nameless young girl appears in every picture, a stand-in for ourselves; she passes helplessly through many dark moments, yet ultimately finds something hopeful at the end of her journey.

(Tan 2003)

These lessons should be completed *after* the children have explored the other picture books in this pack: *Anne Frank* by Josephine Poole; *The Mozart Question* by Michael Morpurgo; and *The Rabbits* by Shaun Tan. These books complement each other and give the child a deeper understanding of the links that can be made between the denial of our rights and the harm and upset we feel when our rights are denied to us in any way. Ideally, students will have completed the seven other packs on their journey through primary school, so will have an in-depth knowledge of all of the rights of the child. This can foster more meaningful participation and discussion.

Sample English Lesson, integrated with SPHE

Class Level	Sixth Class
Rights of the Child	The right to practice my religion The right to privacy and the preservation of my good name The right not to be used as a cheap worker The right not be used as a soldier in wars
Key Text	<i>The Red Tree</i> by Shaun Tan
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child will listen to the story of The Red Tree http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrmMFFpKxgw The child will discuss the character, sequence, imagery and message of the book The child will connect ideas from the story to their lives, with a focus on the importance of having a right to privacy, a right to practice their religion, a right not to be used as a cheap worker, a right not to be used as a soldier in war. The child will make connections between the denial of children's rights and the negative effect this can have on their mental health, well-being and self-esteem. Children will identify ways in which they can support children who may feel that they are not accessing their rights.
Materials	Interactive white board, key text, copy-books/blank paper, pens, markers, crayons or paint
Warm Up:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sing the song <i>Lean on Me</i> by the cast of 'Glee', with a focus on how we need to support one another, particularly those who feel they cannot access their rights: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUjeUekg9Ag Introduce the book - look at the cover and make predictions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is going on in the picture? - What is this person feeling? - Why do they feel that way? - What do we notice about the colours on the page? - Does this look like a person who has access to all of their rights?
Main Body of Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show children the first page of the book: 'Sometimes the day begins with nothing to look forward to'; and the last page of the story: 'just as you imagined it would be'. Invite children in pairs to come up with the sequence of events that occur between the first and last image, this can be done verbally, visually or physically. Remind them that we are focusing on the story of the rights of the child and remind them of the four rights we have learned about. What do we think has happened to the child in the story? Pick a few pairs to feedback their ideas. Invite the children to discuss their opinions of these. Read the story to the children/watch the youtube video for clearer images: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrmMFFpKxgw Working through the illustrations, allow the children to closely examine the pictures, pay attention to details, interpreting images: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colour, space, line, presentation, page layout, frames, development of story, inference.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the story is finished ask children to answer the following questions (written or oral): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why does she feel there's nothing to look forward to? - What does it say about her? - What is the author implying - examine the connection between the first and last page? - How do the illustrations convey the text? • Children write a 'mini story' using the same text style as the author - showing how they might feel if they woke up one day in a world where they no longer had any rights/or in a world where one of their rights had been taken away.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback and discuss the mini-stories.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the children demonstrate an understanding of the message of the book? • Were the children able to make connections between their own lives and the story, and the importance of the rights discussed? • Were the children able to make connections between the denial of human rights and the effect this may have on one's mental health and well-being? • Have the children identified ways to solve some of the issues raised? Did the children understand the message?
Extension Activities	<p><i>Creative writing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children write stories or poems demonstrating a time when they felt the world was a grey place but found a 'red leaf' of hope. • Children re-draft these stories on a red leaf shaped page. Display all of the stories on a large 'Red Tree of Hope' <p><i>Visual art activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children create origami boats, similar to those featured on the cover of the book. • On the boats children write black words describing negative feelings connected with not having our rights met. • Intersperse these with red words describing things that give them hope. Boats can be displayed below the leaves of the tree in the creative writing display. <p><i>Music/Drama/Art:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children choose a song which makes them feel hopeful. • Children cut large leaves out of card and paint one side red and one side black. On the black side, children place a cut-out of a word associated with the denial of human rights. On the red side, children place a cut-out of a word associated with accessing our human rights. • As a class children perform their chosen song while holding up their leaves, simultaneously showing all black leaves and finishing with all the red leaves of 'hope'.

Evidently there is much scope for cross-curricular links using this picture book. When linked with the other three books in the Sixth Class pack there are possibilities for links across all subject areas - see Appendix A.

CONCLUSION

Through my practice and research I believe that educators have an obligation to deliver quality HRE to our students. We have a responsibility to make certain that students have the skills and knowledge necessary to become full members of a global society while ensuring their individual well-being is supported.

According to the UN:

...HRE contributes to improving the effectiveness of the education system as a whole, which in turn contributes to a country's economic, social and political development by providing:

- Improved quality of learning achievements by promoting child-centered and participatory teaching and learning practices and processes, as well as a new role for the teaching profession;
- Increased access to and participation in schooling by creating a human rights-based learning environment that is inclusive and welcoming and fosters universal values, equal opportunities, respect for diversity and non-discrimination;
- A contribution to social cohesion and conflict prevention by supporting the social and emotional development of the child and by introducing democratic citizenship and values

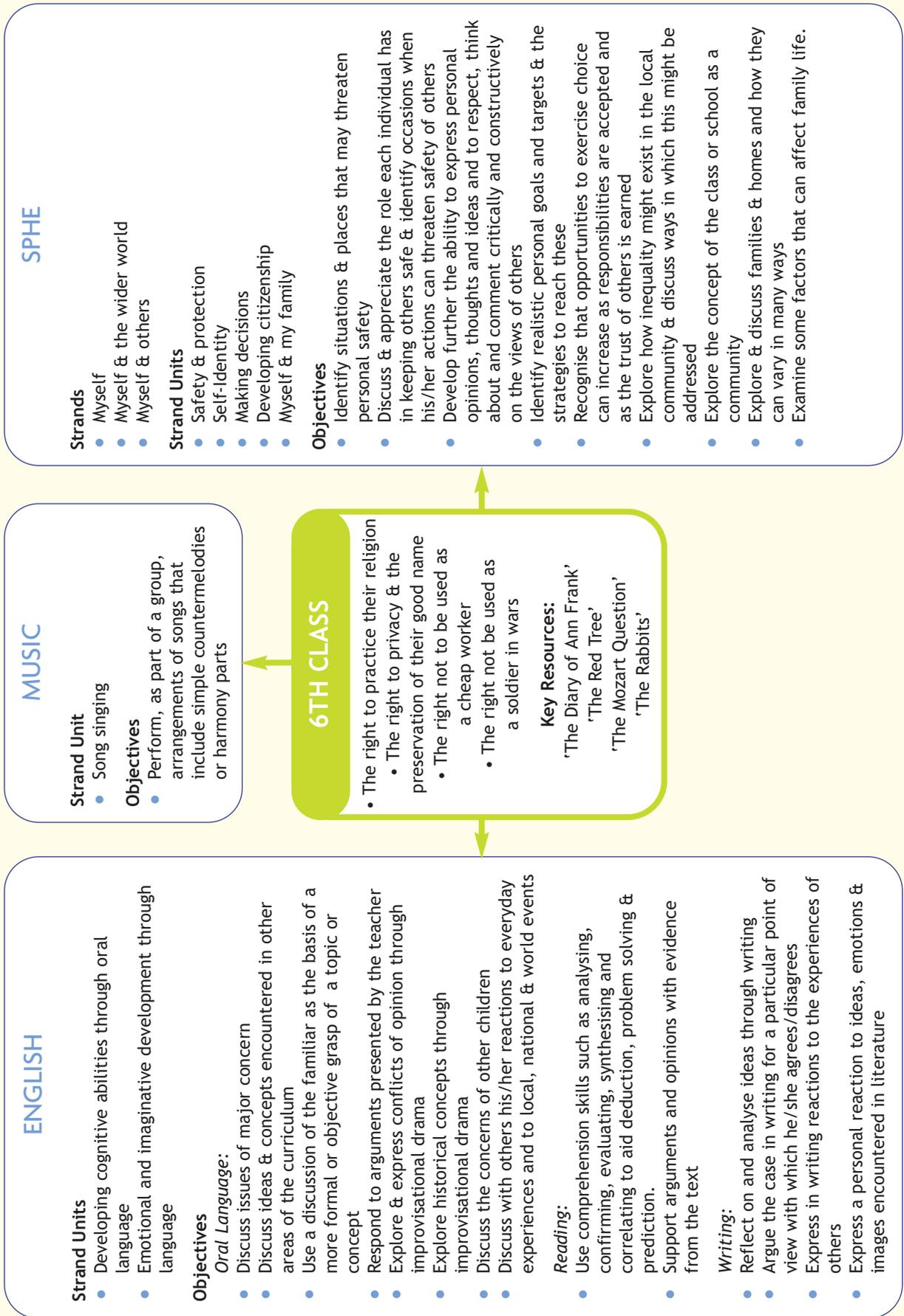
(United Nations 2012, pp.1-2)

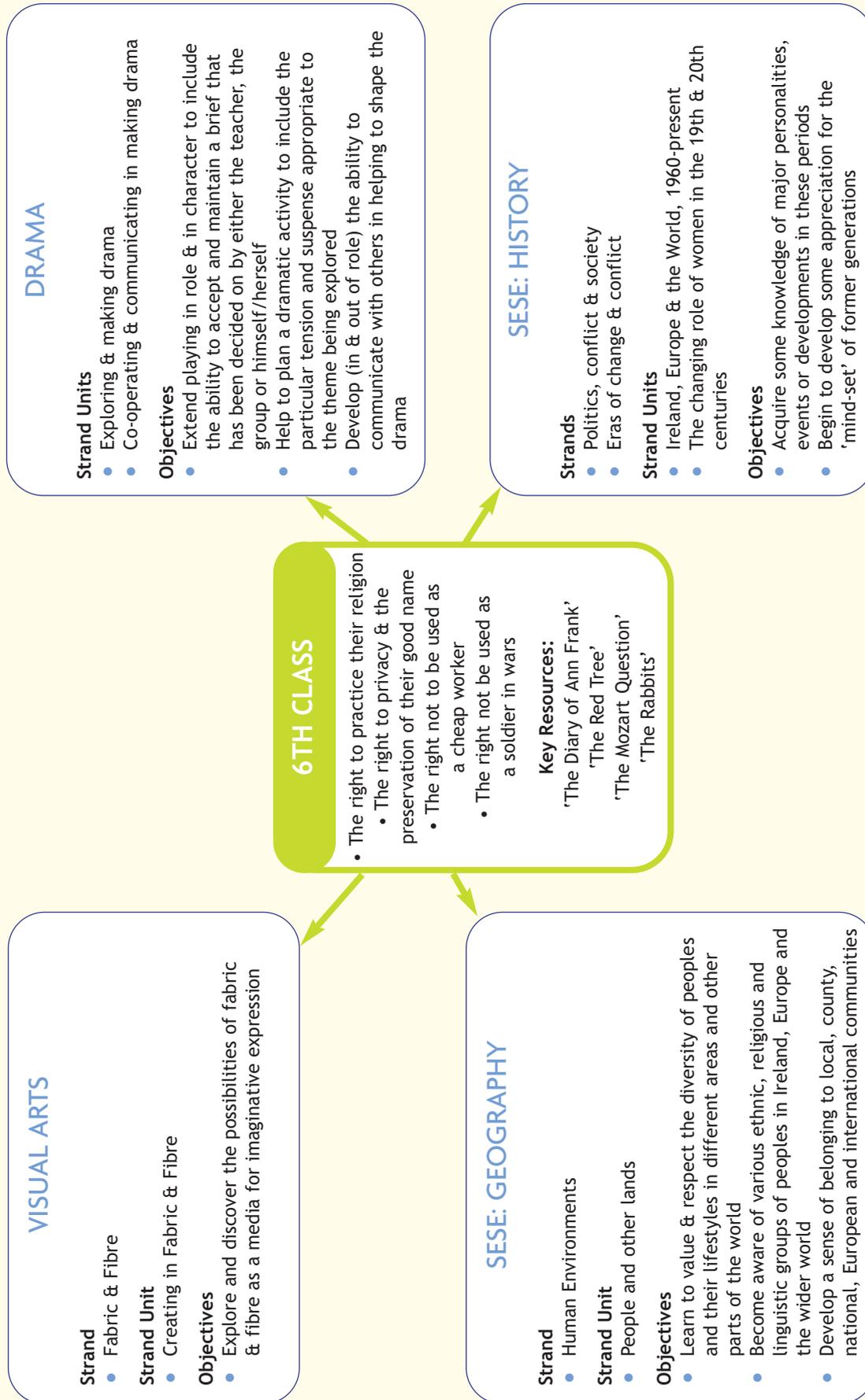
This report shows that it is not only possible, but also highly effective to integrate HRE across the curriculum and across the school community, in order to maximize the experience and positive learning outcomes of students.

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APPENDIX A







Performance-based Conflict Resolution Training for Children

Fiona McAuslan

Fiona McAuslan is the author of SALT (Stop, Ask, Listen, Talk), an innovative programme specially developed for the Irish and UK School Curriculum which is aligned to the three strands of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Primary Curriculum: Myself, Myself and Others, and Myself and the Wider World.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is part of life. We spend considerable time dealing with it in our families, our places of work and in our relationships. Its effects can be devastating, yet for all its prevalence and chaos, we rarely have any training in how to handle it. We rely on an assortment of cultural and familial influences to teach us what to do. How to resolve conflict has not traditionally been part of the teaching syllabus and so we have been left to grow up with what we learn from our environment about its resolution, or otherwise. However, over the last four decades the field of conflict resolution education has been developing, opening up the possibility for us to learn new ways of managing conflict. Practitioners in this field maintain that by understanding what conflict is and how it escalates, we can then choose different ways of resolving it. By learning new skills, we can improve our ability to turn disputes and rows into possibilities for resolution and growth (Lang and Taylor 2000).

Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) was first developed as part of the peace education and community mediation programmes in the United States, and for over 20 years schools have been implementing programmes (Tyrrell 2002). Taking the view that schools are a microcosm of society and that the problems facing them required a new approach, educators in different parts of the world started looking towards the emerging process of Alternative Conflict Resolution for some fresh answers (Johnson and Johnson 2000). According to Whitehead (2003, p.2), CRE can help to make children more human. It has the potential to give every child the concepts and skills to deal with others more positively and it would be a lost opportunity if this type of education stayed on the edge of school life.

Conflict resolution processes are designed to be useful. They potentially help us to reach mutual understandings, which, in turn, help us negotiate new ways forward. They link social and emotional skills with negotiation techniques and build paths to agreement. The paths in themselves can deliver real, incremental change in how we handle our conflicts and present a natural framework for socio-emotional learning. Over the last decade, Drumcondra Education Centre, one of Ireland's State-run centres providing continuing professional development for teachers, has been developing CRE for teachers and parents. This work has been based on the SALT process, a conflict resolution process for everyday disputes, which also provides the main strands for the educational programme *The SALT Programme: Creative Solutions to Conflict*.

This article explores the development of *The SALT Programme*, a primary school programme linked to the SPHE Curriculum. The first pilot took place in 2005 in Donabate Portrane Educate Together School. The research from this pilot formed the basis of a Master's thesis, which looked at whether this type of education was effective in changing the views and behaviours of children in resolving conflict. The

outcomes were seen as positive and so the programme was published. The underpinning process and learning methodology have been developed into a variety of other programmes, including HETAC Level 7 mediation training for adults and the four *Resolving Books* published by Veritas.

RESEARCH STUDY OF SALT PROGRAMME

The Master's research study, carried out in 2005, was designed to examine how successful the implementation of CRE programmes could be in Irish primary schools. The pilot project in the study took a number of features that were recommended from the literature review: the ethos and structure of the school should support a co-operative, child-centred school community; the CRE programme itself should be based on a collaborative development between practitioner mediator and educator; and the focus should be on the practical application of skills and concepts (McAuslan 2005). The skills being taught were repeated each week over a six-week period in First, Second and Third Classes. Sometimes the repetition was in different learning formats and emphasis was placed on the ability of the children to transfer the skills into their everyday lives. The programme was created following discussion with the teachers, and was built on the skills and concepts used by mediators. The stated aims of the course were: to introduce the children to Circle Time; to teach a number of conflict resolution skills; to encourage the development of a number of key concepts such as co-operation, the importance of listening to others, accepting other perspectives; and win-win agreements. The hypothesis tested was that CRE will succeed if it is supported by the whole school community and finds its own place in the primary school curriculum.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings (McAuslan 2005) showed that the programme had a positive effect on the children and schools involved. The students who took part reported that, previously, they had no experience of co-operative problem solving and felt that conflict was either a win or lose situation. They would try to win arguments by force or withdraw from them altogether. Following the training they employed their new skills and understanding in all areas of their lives. They retained the negotiating techniques and chose to use them, giving them a more positive attitude towards conflict in general.

Detailed in the findings was a marked difference in the transfer of the concepts and skills between First and Second Class. The feedback from both the parents and the children showed that the younger class had limited success in transferring the skills into their behaviour or understanding particular concepts, such as co-operation. What they did learn was broad and general: it is good to be friends and not to fight.

Circle Time, on the other hand, was established well with all children. This form of learning was described as one of the underpinning features of the course. The fact that the children understood and were comfortable with the workings of this method was important to the future development of the programme.

The Anger Ladder, an exercise in the programme that helps children talk about how they get angry and how it feels, was a technique that all classes reported using. This had been taught through poetry, language and art as well as role-play. Parents reported that this had been very successful in the home environment, and, in some cases, the families were using it themselves. It can be argued that this is a good example of success through repetitive learning.

Second and Third Classes showed a better understanding of the concepts taught and a bigger transfer of skills across the board. The children were enthusiastic about what they were learning and could recount instances of when they used the skills. The parents of this group were equally enthusiastic about the skills their children had learnt and reported an increased use of the skills outlined in the programme.

On the basis of the findings in this limited study, the course did seem to increase conflict resolution skills. Repetition seemed to help their learning and the skills that were included in the everyday life of the classroom had the best reported results. The teachers felt that the course had been a success. They had seen positive changes amongst some of the children in their class, particularly in relation to how the children listened and sorted out arguments. They expressed the view that this type of education would cut down on the time teachers spent on the everyday disputes between students. The teachers themselves also expressed interest in teacher education in this area. The principal and teachers all felt that the course material fitted both the ethos of the school and programmes such as *Walk Tall* and the *Educate Together Core Curriculum*.

Throughout this pilot study there was considerable enthusiasm expressed from parents, teachers and children. The results from the parent questionnaires were very positive, with all of the parents who returned the forms saying that their child had found the course useful and wanted to see more of this type of education. The children themselves were enthusiastic about more workshops and were asking for specific help with certain types of difficult relationships. One nine year old child said:

Before you guys came I ran away when people were angry at me. Now I can figure out whether I can stay and deal with it or ask them to leave me alone. I like that. I can't wait to find out what you are going to teach us next time!

(McAuslan 2005, p.48)

Upon conclusion of the original research study, *The SALT Programme* was published. Drumcondra Education Centre took an interest in educating teachers in the skills and ideas within the programme and developed an array of courses stemming from the CRE principles outlined in the programme.

LINK BETWEEN SPHE CURRICULUM AND THE SALT PROGRAMME

Schools are interested in practical solutions to the conflicts that happen within them, however, class timetables are very tightly organised under the primary school curriculum, and, hard choices have to be made concerning which programmes should be added or dropped. Educational resources such as teacher education, books and class time are focused on the aims of the primary school curriculum, therefore, programmes will work better if they fit into these aims. Any specialist programmes such as *The SALT Programme* must be supported by good comprehensive teacher education.

There is a natural link between conflict resolution and SPHE. Both place considerable importance on self-awareness, communication and collaborative problem solving and when one looks at the aims of the SPHE Curriculum, one sees the natural place for CRE to sit. Links between *The SALT Programme* and SPHE are outlined below:

Table 1: Links between *The SALT Programme* and SPHE

SPHE Curriculum	Social Emotional Concept	Conflict Resolution Skills	Process
1. Myself	Self-awareness/Esteem	Being Self-aware	Stop
2. Myself and Others	Collaboration	Negotiating in Conflict	Ask
3. Relating to Others	Communications	Communication Skills	Listen
4. Myself and the Wider World	Consensus Building	Mutual Problem Solving	Talk

1. MYSELF: SELF-ESTEEM, ANGER MANAGEMENT

Individuals need a sense of their own goodness and power when they face difficult situations. Self-esteem can help people think clearly and gain confidence. It enables us to make better decisions and then act on them. Low self-esteem can make us defensive and fearful. Conversely, high self-esteem helps us see the good in others (Duncan 1992).

2. MYSELF AND OTHERS: COLLABORATION AND NEGOTIATION IN CONFLICT

Collaboration can bring all strengths together in a creative and positive way. If we learn what we are good at as team players it will help us gain confidence in co-operating when faced with more serious issues. Affirming and being affirmed in our strengths gives us a stronger foundation for tackling conflict more effectively. The more we recognise teamwork in our daily lives the more success we will have with conflict. Collaboration is at the heart of good conflict resolution. If conflict is resolved in a way that includes everyone as part of the answer, then the solution will be better for all. Seeing conflict as a co-operative problem to be resolved can create more choices.

3. RELATING TO OTHERS: COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT

The heartbeat of good communication is the genuine intention to understand. Listening carefully with real attention can connect people. Good communication needs to be interactive. Listeners have to help the speaker say what he/she wants to say so that they can understand them. Speakers have to help others listen so they feel heard. Sharing information and experiences with each other helps break down the sense of isolation that can create difficulty when dealing with people. Through communication, people in conflict start to open their minds to other possibilities and this, in turn, develops into understanding and empathy. These are essential for any resolution.

4. MYSELF AND THE WIDER WORLD: CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND THE SALT PROGRAMME

Conflict is part of everyday life. The experience of conflict can diminish our ability to think and act effectively. However, through better self-awareness, collaboration and communication we can turn conflict into an opportunity for positive resolution. Through enhancing the socio-emotional skills we already use in our daily lives we can learn to deal with conflict in a more positive way.

The easy to remember four step process: *Stop, Ask, Listen, Talk* gives a framework to resolve all types of rows and disputes. Each step is linked to the skills taught in *The SALT Programme*, bringing them together in a ready to use conflict resolution process.

Children love sprinkling *SALT* on their disputes. It encourages them to add something to their arguments to change the flavour. They find it an easy way to try the skills they have learnt. Teachers report children running up to them in the yard saying: "We've sprinkled *SALT* and we can nearly sort things out" or as one child said: "We *SALT* things out in our class" (McAuslan 2005, p.26).

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The SALT Programme has six basic lesson plans, each with a conflict story typical of the playground. These act as a framework for the lesson, which can be as long or as short as the teacher wishes. The minimum time for a lesson would be around 20 minutes and maximum around 1 hour.

Within the programme, there is a portfolio of children's interactive exercises which include listening games, anger ladders, mimes and poetry. There are several different exercises on each skill, which break down into small component parts. For example a game, where each child mimes another child's body language, acts as a precursor to a reflective listening exercise. Each piece of the puzzle is practiced and put together, allowing the student to learn good habits in easily digested steps.

The classroom teacher can teach the full lesson plan, as outlined in the programme, and also use the exercises outside the lessons to create short five minute class exercises that can help the class increase their capacity to negotiate their own conflicts. The focus of CRE is to improve everyone's ability to resolve conflict better.

TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The teacher education programme that has been developed through Drumcondra Education Centre is aimed at enhancing teachers' negotiation and conflict resolution skills for the classroom and daily work lives. It has focused on how they work and not what they know. Like all aspects of the SPHE Curriculum, this area of education is more about being and doing, rather than knowing and imparting knowledge.

This teacher education programme has proved popular because of its emphasis on supporting every individual teacher in how they build their own capacity to resolve the rows they have to deal with. There is now an online and blended learning programme and two hour modules that can be delivered as evening classes or during school hours. The *SALT* process is also taught as part of the Master's programme in the Edward M. Kennedy Institute of Mediation and Conflict Intervention (National University of Ireland Maynooth) and forms the basis of a new HETAC Level 7 Mediation Course due to be launched in The Institute of Technology Tallaght.

CONCLUSION

Looking at conflict as an opportunity to teach, and thereby lessen its fallout, changes the dynamic of the classroom and saves time. The SPHE Curriculum gives a natural framework to teach children how to be every day peacemakers. As can be seen from this article, good self-awareness, communication skills and the ability to problem solve are the bedrock of conflict resolution. Imagine the difference a little sprinkle of salt makes to a casserole or soup. Sprinkling the skills and ideas of peacemaking into the school can do the same.

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What do we Mean by Well-being? Some Further Questions

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The papers in these proceedings emerged from the second conference of the SPHE Network, which took place at St Patrick's College on October 4th 2014. The diversity in the papers represents the scope of SPHE and the expertise in Ireland across the different strands of SPHE at both primary and second level.

"Connections" is a word that springs to mind as I recall this conference. Research (NCCA 2008; DES 2009) and our own anecdotal evidence tell us that there are varying levels of engagement with SPHE among teachers and within schools. Many teachers who are champions of SPHE in their own schools came to the conference. They forged connections through lively conversations and heard the keynote speakers tell them that their work was important. They went home, I hope, somewhat energised, empowered and convinced of the value of their commitment.

These proceedings allows us to reconnect with many of the ideas which were shared at the conference and reflect on them in our own time. In this chapter I want to revisit some of those ideas and the questions they raised for me and to look at where we might link ideas and practice across different strands of SPHE.

Before I begin my reflection there are a number of people I want to acknowledge. Our thanks go to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charlie Flanagan, T.D. who launched the proceedings of our first conference, *The Future of SPHE: Problems and Possibilities*, on the evening prior to the conference. In his speech the Minister acknowledged the importance of SPHE and the "Myself and the Wider World" strand in particular in supporting active citizenship.

Our thanks go also to Bianca Ní Ghrógáin, our conference administrator, and Mags Almond for organising our first SPHE Teach Meet and steering us through the process. Ideas, websites and videos were shared in a lively, practical and non-hierarchical format, which sent everyone away with a great new idea. We have been saddened and shocked by Bianca's sudden death in June of this year but we will honour her by carrying on what we learned that night.

The conference itself began on Saturday with coffee and a resource fair. Before the conference had opened the networking had begun. We learned about Rainbows Ireland and their work in supporting bereaved children. Trócaire shared many of the primary school resources they have developed in recent years. We heard about the *Roots of Empathy* programme, organised by Barnardos in schools throughout the country. The Road Safety Authority (RSA) shared information about training programmes for schools. safefood were with us to explain their national policy, resources and links with other agencies. The Youth Drug and Alcohol Service (YODA) distributed information about the effects of those substances most often used by young people. Amnesty were there to explain the *Rights Sparks* programme and the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) shared some of their initiatives in education to date. An innovative pilot programme on Media Education from County Sligo was also shared. We are indebted to all the agencies who contributed to a very engaging start to the day, which in its own way demonstrated the diversity of SPHE.

As I begin my reflection I am conscious that my own values, biases and experiences shape my reading and am aware that others may have their own insights and developed their own questions. As I listened to the

presentations on the day of the conference and as I read the chapters in this publication a number of questions arose:

What do we mean by “well-being”? Do we agree?

What are the competing discourses about childhood that shape the identities of children?

Are we having the right conversations?

How could we engage children more in active citizenship?

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY WELL-BEING? DO WE AGREE?

Relationships with Family and School

Mark Morgan (Keynote address) shares findings from the *Growing up in Ireland* study with the same cohort researched at nine and thirteen years of age. This study examines the well-being of children by asking about relationships with parents, liking for and engagement in school, weight, fitness and self-concept. The study points to gender differences in the types of bullying experienced, reported levels of low mood and intellectual self-concept. The study also looks at a range of adverse effects which impact on children and points to an increased risk of behaviour problems when two or more adverse events occur. The study highlights the challenge for children when family structure changes. As I think about the contexts where children develop well-being, the family and the school being major sites, I become aware of how much change is outside the control of children and how their response to change is always mediated by relationships. Well-being becomes for me a very fluid idea, which needs to be understood in a relational context.

Relationships, Engagement, Meaning

Bernie Collins and Anne Marie Kavanagh (Chapter 1) explain that while well-being has become part of contemporary educational discourse, its meaning is not always agreed. Literature explores how the relationship between young people’s cognitive, emotional and social experience can impact on health. However this is difficult to measure. One of the authors whose work they draw on is Seligman (2011), who describes five aspects to well-being: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Meaning, Accomplishment and Positive Relationships.

They use this framework to research the circle time experiences of student teachers during their own primary and secondary school days. The picture that emerges is challenging. Circle Time can contribute to positive relationships, engagement and meaning making when the teacher has a relationship of empathy and understanding and the skills to create a safe space, but can lead to a great deal of uncomfortable emotion when this climate is not created. When the pupils have a strong involvement in the agenda, engagement increases. Students want opportunities to participate but no coercion. My reading of this chapter leads me to question the idea that well-being can be taught. Rather I take the view that a skilled teacher can create supportive relationships and inclusive conversations on topics which concern children, and that those conversations, over time, may contribute to well-being. But the chapter asks us to critically reflect on the meaning of our questions to pupils and on the impact of our decisions on equality and safety in the classroom.

Physical and Social Well-being

Frances Murphy, Maura Coulter and Susan Marron (Chapter 3) reminds us that in a recent national survey on priorities for primary education (NCCA 2012) well-being was mentioned more often than literacy and numeracy. They draw on the work of Hellison (1995) to support students in initial teacher education to

develop more personal responsibility and accountability for both personal goals and to the rights and freedoms of peers. This responsibility, they explain, can be developed within PE and transferred beyond it. They are also informed by literature which alerts us to the need for physical activity for children. They highlight the importance of physical activity for health while demonstrating clearly that social, communication and teamwork skills can be developed simultaneously, collapsing some of the artificial boundaries between PE and SPHE.

Sinead Keenan (Chapter 6) raises the value of a healthy diet and the early development of healthy eating habits not only for their own sake but also for the impact that good nutrition has on learning. She looks at practice in other countries where the provision of healthy meals is seen as central to education. She shares research on a pilot project in Ireland. She tells us that ten percent of our population is experiencing food poverty. Availability of good food, finance, access to shops and skills in food preparation are all components in ensuring healthy eating. All can be compromised by poverty. The School Completion Programme has cited breakfast clubs as their fourth most effective intervention with children at risk of early school leaving (School Completion Programme National Coordination Team 2009). Keenan's chapter calls for adequate finance, catering facilities in schools and training for teachers in order to develop the breakfast club model.

Eudaimonia

Aoife Titley (Chapter 8) argues for the articulation of a philosophical basis for the idea of well-being. She draws on Aristotle's *Eudaimonia* (1976) and explores how this concept intersects with the aims and practices of development education. Aristotle argued for a life of virtue with continual self-reflection. Life was not to be squandered. Friends engaged in dialogue and sought the good for each other. Titley asks us to move beyond the elitist context in which Aristotle wrote but to hold these central ideas. She suggests we can support children to develop global citizenship based on values, critical reflection and friendship. She urges us to examine our Eurocentric ideas of friendship and to ask ourselves how we understand our relationship with people around the world and how our actions here can create barriers to the well-being of others.

Human Rights

Fiona Joyce (Chapter 10) suggests that we adopt a rights based approach to understanding well-being. The rights of the child as articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) include articles on health (Article 24), education (Articles 28, 29), living standards (Article 27), protection (Article 19) and voice (Article 12). Article 42 requires of States to make the principles and practices of the Convention known to children. This is the challenge Joyce takes up. Drawing on the invitation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (DES 2011), she works to make literacy "contextual, meaningful and purposeful" (DES 2011, p.48), devising a whole school programme over the eight years in primary schools in which picture books provide a stimulus for discussion about each of the articles in the Convention. She argues that well-being is enhanced by a critical discussion with children about how their rights are accessed.

Holding Multiple Meanings for Well-being

The articles in these proceedings demonstrate how well-being has multiple meanings for us: safety, understanding, engagement, exercise, nutrition, friendship, voice, reflection, responsibility for each other and human rights.

Perhaps our challenge is to hold all of these meanings and continually question how they intersect. Perhaps we might notice that these aspects of well-being are all embedded in relationships. Even food, which we might initially consider an individual choice, is clearly bound up in the politics of finance and accessibility.

WHAT ARE THE COMPETING DISCOURSES THAT SHAPE THE IDENTITY OF CHILDREN?

The Individual and the Citizen

Carol O’Sullivan (Chapter 7) raises the tension between helping a child reach his/her potential and preparing him/her to be an active citizen. I wonder how our understanding of children has come to construct these two aspirations as competing? O’Sullivan suggests that the discourses of developmental psychology and child-centeredness have contributed to a paradigm where the child as an individual is foregrounded and their membership of society is given less attention. She calls for more visibility and priority to be afforded to citizenship education at both primary and second level. She suggests that we move beyond the “soft” citizenship education, evident in some Irish classrooms, to what Andreotti (2006) calls “critical global citizenship education” which interrogates the roots of economic and cultural injustices and acts to create change. She questions the role of initial teacher education in supporting emerging teachers to be agents for change through a deeper engagement with the foundation subjects, development and intercultural education and non traditional placements. She warns against a reflective practice that is limited to individual experience and falls short of real social transformation.

She argues that our economically driven society is creating a kind of individuality which erodes appreciation for community. She reminds us that pedagogy is political and urges us not to shy away from controversial issues but as teachers to provide a safe place where children can develop a social responsibility and be active in public life.

I am reminded that research (NCCA 2008; DES 2009) has revealed that the third strand in SPHE, “Myself and the Wider World”, is neglected in classrooms in favour of the strands, “Myself” and “Myself and Others”.

I wonder if it is time to eliminate the ‘Myself’ strand from our curriculum, to recognize every “Myself” as shaped by language and discourse and context. If we examine the strand units, “identity”, “feelings and emotions”, “decisions”, “safety and protection” (NCCA 1999) and the learning outcomes for these strand units, can we really understand the learning for the child as an individual project? When are feelings, decisions and safety unrelated to relationships, power and our place in the world? Can we rethink our curriculum so that the personal and the political are always part of the conversation?

Risk-based Narratives

Audrey Bryan and Paula Maycock (Chapter 9) raise the very real consequences of recent research with LGBT youth, which may have contributed to a construction of the “always-already victim” identity (Marshall 2010). The research has been valuable in highlighting vulnerability but can contribute to an interpretation of that vulnerability as directly related to sexuality. Their paper here reveals a much more complex picture. The majority of the participants in their study, all members of the LGBT community, had never or rarely contemplated suicide. Those who had, attributed their distress to a range of factors in their lives, and not to sexual identity in isolation. In reading this chapter I understand a danger in a discourse which constructs LGBT youth as vulnerable, in that it can lead to a focus on the individual rather than on the effects of heteronormativity. The focus on risk-based narratives has rendered much of the joy and agency of LGBT youth, alongside their resistance to heteronormativity, less visible. This chapter raises very significant challenges for us as SPHE teachers in teaching RSE to students in a way that includes all.

I also wonder if this discourse of the “always-already victim” also applies to other young people who identify with minority groups, if they too are invited to adopt a victim identity. If we perceive children as vulnerable will we be afraid to talk with them? Will we inflict too much surveillance? Will we decline to trust them?

Mark Morgan (Keynote address) tells us that children's well-being is impacted when negative effects are cumulative. He also tells us that resilience is supported when a negative event in a child's life is understood as one story among several stories, where others are positive. I wonder what it would mean if we could understand all young people as simultaneously vulnerable and powerful, recognising the risk in agency and the agency in protest. Could this help us keep the personal and political in dialogue and prevent us from falling into tragic narratives? Could we see discrimination as the problem rather than seeing children as having problems?

ARE WE HAVING THE RIGHT CONVERSATIONS?

Drugs and Alcohol

Eva Devaney (Chapter 4) traces the history of the National Drugs Strategy and the role of education. Her research reveals that students clearly want adults to talk with them about drugs and alcohol. It is a priority for them. They believe the SPHE teacher is a key contributor to these conversations. I find an echo here in the findings of Collins and Kavanagh (Chapter 1). Students also welcome guest speakers. They suggest teaching can be improved and they want active methodologies. They tell us that SPHE is disappearing after third year in secondary school. They believe that parents need education too, though many are reluctant to engage in joint learning. Devaney explains how current changes in second level curricula can impact on provision of SPHE and warns us that restructuring could reduce provision of SPHE in some schools. She highlights how education about drugs and alcohol are essential to young people as they manage their well-being and mental health in particular.

Sancha Power (Chapter 5) has pushed past the resistance of young people to engage in joint learning with their parents. In her chapter she explains the current National Drugs Strategy. She also explains three approaches to drugs education which have been used in the past: the information approach, the personal development approach and the social resistance skills training approach; the latter proving more effective. In the "Let's Learn about Drugs and Alcohol Together" (LLADAT) model two workshops are held, one for parents and one for parents with young people. This is followed up by work in school in SPHE. I found myself wondering about the useful conversations that might occur in cars on the way home after the second workshop. I cannot help believing that conversations, which both parents and young people find difficult, will indeed start through this programme. I wonder about the conversations in SPHE class afterwards and the likelihood of those conversations also occurring at home.

Informing these two chapters is the National Drugs Strategy (2009) which now includes a focus on alcohol. At this policy level health and education sectors collaborate. I find myself wondering if at initial teacher education and at school level we can collaborate more so that health professionals and addiction workers are not merely guests in schools but ongoing partners.

Child Protection

Margaret Nohilly's research (Chapter 2) has revealed a story of the designated liaison person (DLP) for child protection in primary schools as a story of frustration, of struggle with dilemmas and of isolation. A decision to report abuse or neglect is often a judgment call. Training, while appreciated, has been limited. Staff discussions around the management of abuse and neglect are limited. I am concerned that the very necessary confidentiality requirements increase the isolation of DLPs.

Behind all our efforts in child protection is a wish for children to tell us when they are unsafe. We know why it is difficult to do so. But if we are to invite the telling must we not also make it safe for teachers who listen, as listening to tragedy in children's lives can be daunting? Teachers need support. They need to be acknowledged for the care they give to children and the insight they develop through their care. The well-being of our school leaders is essential. I wonder what conversations need to be developed so that social workers and teachers can develop true partnerships?

HOW COULD WE ENGAGE CHILDREN MORE IN ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP?

Children's Voices

Children are telling us that they want adults to create trusting relationships with them so they can talk with us about what concerns them (Collins and Kavanagh, Devaney). They want us to support their participation but attend to their right to privacy. In the *Growing Up in Ireland Study* one of the findings was that 14% of our children at age thirteen don't have someone to turn to for advice when they find themselves with worries and concerns (Morgan). This demands of parents, teachers and communities that we examine the kinds of relationships we create with young people so that they can find guidance when they need it.

What about politics? Are we talking often enough with children about issues of social importance? Several chapters (Titley, O'Sullivan, Joyce) suggest this is a priority. Children want to talk about their concerns and often need reflective adults to mediate their understanding of local and global news. Do we underestimate them? Can we interpret the response to the recent referendum on same sex marriage as meaning that young people are engaged with politics when equality is at stake? Could we listen to them argue for other sites of equality?

Conflict Resolution

Fiona McAuslan (Chapter 11) argues strongly for conflict resolution training for children. Children can, she claims, learn the skills to resolve conflict and overcome the anxiety that accompanies it. Children learn to stop, to ask, to listen to multiple perspectives and to talk, the overall intention being the wish to understand. Scenarios from the yard, the site of many conflicts, are used as a starting point. Her pilot study generated encouraging feedback. I very much doubt whether all children in Ireland receive comprehensive conflict resolution training in their SPHE class. I would like to suggest here however, that it is an area that needs greater attention if we are to develop active citizenship.

When we involve children in global education we encounter conflict. We learn about conflict on the global stage, through exploring both current struggles and the legacy of colonisation in the past. We find ourselves arguing among ourselves, coming as we do from different perspectives and values, as we explore controversial issues. As we become aware of our privilege we can feel conflicted within ourselves. The classroom can then be a powerful site for stopping, asking more, listening to other perspectives, and finally talking about our own values.

Care of the Environment

I would also like to raise the link between citizenship and the environment. While it is not strongly represented in the papers in these proceedings, there were some very thoughtful presentations and conversations at the conference about our responsibility for the planet. With the publication of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (DES 2014) there is a call to all involved in education to commit not only to learning about sustainability but to take action for sustainability. This will be central to our education for citizenship in the coming years.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shared some of the reflections which emerged for me reading the chapters in this volume. I have suggested that we hold a broad understanding of well-being. I invite critical awareness about how changing discourses construct childhood. I see possibilities for more collaboration between health and education.

To continue and develop the ways SPHE can support well-being among children I suggest we have to take a relational approach. Perhaps the strands of SPHE need to be less separate. Perhaps all of our programmes could make space to understand individual experience, recognise how relationships mediate those experiences and explore how we can practice responsibility for each other, not only locally but also globally.

I find myself arguing in the direction of what McNamee and Gergen (1999) call “Relational Responsibility” which challenges the popular idea that one person can be held solely responsible for an action. Relational responsibility does not locate responsibility outside of persons. Rather it is an invitation to bring into dialogue many voices from different perspectives. a process in which everyone can be challenged and changed (Mc Namee and Gergen 1999).

Perhaps our next conference could explore our interdependence and our responsibilities for each other a little further. In that spirit I end on some words which we heard during our conference on October 4th:

“Citizenship is about creating what ought to be rather than adapting to what is...
The essential task of citizenship is not to predict the future, it is to create it”.

(Foróige, cited by Jeffers, 2008)

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