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≡ Editorial ≡

This year of the centenary of 1916 provides us with an opportunity to consider the state of education one hundred years on. Times were tough for both teachers and pupils in 1916. Conditions were poor in many schools and the child-centred programme of instruction of 1900 was struggling to be implemented as designed. Teachers were not well paid and the Inspectorate regime was harsh. The year 2016 presents different challenges. Policy in education gives more attention to teachers today. The statement in McKinsey's report that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers (McKinsey, 2007) is often cited as a reason for investing in teachers. Globally, we are seeing more emphasis on teachers and teaching quality. However, there are divergent views on what high-quality teaching looks like and what is the best way to get it and to keep it (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012, p. xii).

In a global context, Ireland is fortunate in continuing to attract high calibre candidates to teaching. Among young Irish people, to be a teacher is a popular choice that carries strong social prestige, unlike in most other countries in Europe (Sahlberg, 2011, p.5). Initial teacher education in Ireland, both North and South, is generally well-regarded, and progress is being made on developing the induction and early-career phase. Continuing professional development or teacher learning is also the focus of current policy development. The Teaching Council is in the process of developing a framework for teacher professional learning, however, investment to support the realisation of a framework must accompany development.

The role of teachers continues to expand. The teacher's voice is now included in such representative organisations as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Our colleagues in 1916 did not concern themselves unduly with pastoral issues, behavioural and social problems or with special education – all features of today's classrooms. Parents today require more information regarding their children's progress in education. Children's rights are also acknowledged. Teaching is becoming more intensified, with increasing demands for accountability and documentation. Nevertheless, teaching is still a rewarding career. Teachers have a substantial measure of professional autonomy and continue to develop and grow their knowledge and expertise throughout their careers. And teachers are trusted. A public attitudes survey conducted for the Teaching Council in late 2009 found a very high level of satisfaction with how teachers do their jobs and almost 70% of respondents trusted teachers, ranking the profession as third of eleven occupations (after nurses and doctors) in terms of public trust.

Our challenge is to ensure that teachers, the most valuable resource in our education system, are well prepared, motivated, nurtured and supported throughout their careers. One aspect of the INTO's support for teachers' continuing professional development throughout their careers is the opportunity to contribute to the *Irish Teachers' Journal*, where teachers

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can share the findings of their research or pose educational questions which warrant further debate and discussion. Articles in this journal refer to 1916, focus on aspects of the teacher education continuum, and consider supports for teachers.

Supporting pupils to develop pro-social behaviours and self-regulation is one of the newer challenges facing teachers in 21st century primary schools. Our guest article describes the PAX Good Behaviour Game (GBG), which is an American classroom-based intervention programme based on social learning principles. The programme was implemented in 21 classes across a number of Irish primary schools designated as socially disadvantaged and was independently evaluated – the first evaluation of the use of the programme in Ireland. The authors, Margaret O'Donnell, Mark Morgan, Dennis D. Embry, Noel Kelly and **Conor Owens**, were involved with the programme. The findings are very positive in relation to improving pupils' self-regulation skills and understandings. Teachers engaged in three days' professional development prior to implementing the programme. As with many programmes that have been designed to support pupils in developing self-regulatory skills, there are principles and strategies underpinning PAX. Given the positive findings resulting from the implementation of the PAX Good Behaviour Game, perhaps it is time to consider investing in developing teachers' capacity to foster pupils' self-regulation, self-control and self-management skills regardless of what programme teachers may wish to use. A longitudinal evaluation of the use of PAX GBG would also be very useful in determining the long-term impact of developing pupils' self-regulation skills during the early years of primary school.

Discussion of the contribution to education of the leaders of 1916 usually features the work of Patrick Pearse, however, the contribution of James Connolly to Irish social and political thought cannot be ignored. James Connolly's writings in the area of education and child welfare are the focus of Oilibhéar Ó Braonáin's article, in which he outlines Connolly's thoughts and views on the state of education and child welfare in Irish society at the time. Ó Braonáin draws on *Erin's Hope*, one of Connolly's earliest socialist writings, in which he recognised the importance of education in Ireland's social and political history; *Socialism Made Easy*, in which he addressed childhood hunger and malnourishment; *Labour in Irish History*, in which he showed a keen awareness of discrimination, exclusion and disadvantage in Irish education; and *The Re-Conquest of Ireland*, where Connolly devoted a chapter to the Irish education system of the time. Connolly was a Marxist and his writings reflect that context, his commentary on education and child welfare, as outlined for us by Ó Braonáin, make fascinating reading for us today.

There are also connections with 1916 in Máire Thornton's article. Thornton sets out to examine the divergence between globalisation and nationalist theory in an educational context, focusing in particular on the content of the music curriculum in Ireland. She argues that there is an inherent bias in our contemporary music curriculum towards presenting an intercultural/global music education with less emphasis on Irish traditional music. In her view, the primary school curriculum for music is written in the language of globalisation and standardisation, reflecting an inter-cultural ideology. Drawing on the work of Freire, who posits that teachers are cultural workers, she notes the focus of Irish teachers on teaching native songs and music as part of their commemoration of the events of 1916 but

highlights that it is possible that children could have little or no exposure to Irish song and music as part of their primary school curriculum experience.

Ábhar an-tráthúil atá ag Cathal de Paor san alt a scríobh sé ar bhreathnadóireacht ranga, comhrá gairmiúil agus ionduchtú. Staidéar comparáideach atá déanta ag de Paor idir an cleachtas in Éirinn agus an cleachtas sa bhFrainc faoi mar a bhaineann sé le meantóireacht do mhúinteoirí nua-cháilithe. Ina alt déanann de Paor cur síos ar an gcrúinniú iar-cheachta a tharlaíonn tar éis breathnadóireacht ranga, a bhfuil difríochtaí agus cosúlachtaí le sonrú idir an cleachtas in Éirinn agus an cleachtas sa bhFrainc. Míníonn sé dúinn nach ionann an cúram a bhíonn ar an meantóir in Éirinn agus an conseiller pédagogique sa bhFrainc, ach sa dá chás go mbíonn go leor le foghlaim ón gcomhrá a tharlaíonn ag an gcrúinniú iar-cheachta.

Cathal de Paor's article on classroom observation, professional conversation and induction is very timely. He offers a comparative study between the practice in Ireland and the practice in France regarding mentoring of newly qualified teachers. He describes the meetings that take place post-classroom observation, highlighting differences and similarities between the practice in Ireland and in France. He explains that there are differences between the functions of the mentor in Ireland and the conseiller pédagogique in France but, in both cases, there is a lot to learn from the conversations that take place in the post-observation meetings.

Teacher learning is also the theme of Beth Cooney's article. She reflects on two decades of involvement in teacher enquiry which she regards as a valid, relevant and powerful tool to support teacher professionalism at every stage of the continuum. Her article explains the concept of teacher enquiry and its history and outlines various types of teacher enquiry. She considers its role in school improvement, the barriers, the benefits and the conditions necessary to foster teacher enquiry. Beth Cooney is a post-primary teacher and the INTO is delighted to include her article, which aims to encourage teachers to engage in teacher enquiry as part of their professional development.

The daily practices of early career primary teachers in DEIS schools is the focus of Gareth Burns' article. In the context of the demands for increased accountability from teachers regarding standardised test scores in literacy and numeracy, Burns looks at the practices of teachers in their daily work in the classrooms in schools located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. He refers to research which indicates that teachers feel unprepared to teach in schools that are designated disadvantaged and the need for greater provision of professional development for teachers. In outlining the findings of his research, he focuses on experiential and holistic learning and developing children's critical thinking skills. He also explores teachers' ethic of care and how they work with and value diversity, raising questions about the conflicting ideologies and responsibilities early career teachers must navigate.

The final article is a contribution from Ann Caulfield on the very topical issue of teacher and pupil wellbeing. Caulfield writes about how mindfulness can aid stress reduction and enhance self-awareness and self-regulation of thoughts and emotions. She discusses the findings of her own study on mindfulness with teachers, where teachers practised mindfulness themselves and used mindfulness in their classrooms, bringing many benefits, particularly in relation to building resilience, healthy relationships and reflection. In the

context that stress is increasing among both the professional and pupil population this article on the potential of mindfulness is very timely.

Articles in this journal reflect the views and opinions of the authors, and not those of the INTO. The *Journal* provides an opportunity for teachers to share their research findings and to offer their colleagues in the teaching profession interesting and stimulating ideas upon which to reflect. Most articles to date have been written by primary teachers, but it is envisaged that teachers across the continuum will contribute articles over time. This edition includes an article written by a post-primary teacher, the topic of which is relevant to all teachers. These articles are an indication of teachers' engagement in lifelong learning through contributing to education research, a core dimension of teacher professional development, which provides an opportunity to enrich one's understanding of teaching and education, whether from a practice, professional or policy perspective. The INTO is delighted to publish the *Irish Teachers' Journal* and to support teachers in bringing their research to a wider audience. The Organisation wishes to record its thanks to all teachers who contribute articles, and would like to encourage many more teachers to do so in the coming years.

DEIRBHILE NIC CRAITH, EDITOR

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Author Notes

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Dr Margaret O'Donnell is a lecturer in the School of Inclusive and Special Education, Dublin City University (DCU). She has wide experience in the field of special education, teacher education, curriculum studies, assessment and educational policy and practice. She has held the post of Director, Curriculum and Assessment, with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). In addition, she has wide research experience, both at a personal and national level, gleaned through her own studies and through her involvement in major national commissioned research projects.

Dr Mark Morgan is Professor of Education and Psychology at St Patrick's College. He has been Head of Education, Dean of Education and currently teaches in the psychology degree jointly organised by DCU and St Patrick's College, as well as supervising doctoral students. Dennis D. Embry PhD is a senior scientist at the PAXIS Institute, co-investigator at John Hopkins Centre for Prevention and Emeritus National Research Advisory Council Senior Fellow of New Zealand. He is a former National Research Advisory Council Senior Fellow in the Commonwealth.

Noel Kelly is Director of Educational Welfare Services, Tulsa, and former manager of Preparing For Life and Conor Owens psychologist CHO8, Primary Care HSE, who received ABC grant funding from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Atlantic Philanthropies to oversee the implementation of the PAX GBG.

Conor Owens, is a Psychologist CHO8, Primary Care HSE, who, together with Noel Kelly, received ABC grant funding from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Atlantic Philanthropies to oversee the implementation of the PAX GBG.

Oilibhéar Ó Braonáin

Oilibhéar Ó Braonáin is a native of Templemore, Co Tipperary. He graduated from St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, in 1996 with a B.Ed and also holds the degrees of MA (DCU; 1999) and M.Ed (UCD; 2002). He has published research papers in *Oideas*, the journal of the Department of Education and Skills; *Panorama*, the journal of the European Schools; *The Tipperary Historical Journal*; *InTouch*; *Feasta*; and *Comhar*. He teaches in Our Lady's BNS, Ballinteer, Dublin.

Dr Máire Thornton

Dr Maura Thornton teaches in St John's, Breaffy NS, Co Mayo. She is also a tutor with Hibernia College on the PME (Professional Masters in Education) course delivering programmes on Arts education, as well as being a research supervisor. Maura has been a keen traditional Irish musician all her life and frequently tours nationally and internationally as a musician with her family, The Heneghans. Maura is founder and co-director of the very successful summer school Westport-Scoil-Cheoil. She has been invited to present at many national and international conferences on music education.

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Cathal de Paor

Tá Cathal de Paor ina Léachtóir Sinsearach i nDámh an Oideachais, Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Luimneach. Chaith sé tamall de bhlianta sa Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta (NCCA) roimhe sin, agus d'oibrigh sé mar mhúinteoir bunskoile roimhe sin arís. Ina thráchtas PhD a bhain sé amach in Ollscoil Nantes, rinne sé staidéar ar an ionductú múinteora atá in úsáid sa Fhrainc agus in Éirinn, agus is airsean a tharraingíonn an t-alt atá á fhoilsiú anseo.

Cathal de Paor is Director of Continuing Professional Development in the Faculty of Education in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Prior to joining MIC, he worked for the NCCA and before that, as a primary teacher. His PhD from the University of Nantes examined the use of teacher induction in France and Ireland and provides the basis for the article being published here.

Beth Cooney

Beth Cooney is a post primary teacher of French and history in St Mary's Secondary School, Nenagh, Co Tipperary. A graduate of NUI Maynooth, she is currently completing her PhD in education in the University of Limerick. Her research explores post primary teachers' beliefs and experience of in-career learning in the Republic of Ireland. She is an elected member of the Teaching Council, representing the voluntary secondary sector in Connaught, Munster and Ulster.

Dr Gareth Burns

Dr Gareth Burns works as a primary teacher in St Paul's NS, Ratoath, Co Meath, and lectures in Sociology on the MEd programme in St Patrick's College, DCU. Gareth was awarded bursaries from the INTO and Teaching Council of Ireland for his doctoral research which explored early career teachers' understandings of 'making a difference'. His research interests include the professional lived experiences of beginning and early career teachers, mentoring and induction, socially just pedagogies and educational inequality.

Dr Ann Caulfield

Dr Ann Caulfield's background spans the fields of education, community development and health. She has a particular interest in mindfulness in the workplace and advocates the practice of mindfulness among educators by designing and delivering continuing professional development in schools and education centres. She has completed doctoral research into the implication of mindfulness on stress reduction among primary school teachers. Her work is deeply informed by her personal mindfulness practice. As a co-founder of Mindfulness Matters, she has co-created the popular face-to-face and online summer course for teachers: 'Developing Mindfulness and Wellbeing in Primary School Children'. Ann is a part-time lecturer in Applied Social Studies at the Galway Mayo Education Centre, Mayo Campus and is a graduate of All Hallows College, Dublin City University, and the University of Lincoln.

as highlighted by the ENTREE project which examined factors associated with teacher resilience (Morgan and O'Donnell, 2016). In turn, teachers' concerns about pupils' misbehaviour have been found to be associated with increased stress and burnout, to undermine teachers' resilience and to be a strong predictor of teacher attrition and dropout (Hastings and Bham, 2003; Ingersoll and Smith, 2003; Klassen, 2010; Klassen and Anderson, 2009; Martin et al., 1999; Miller, 2003). Recent evidence in the Irish context demonstrates the impact of disruptive behaviour on teacher stress (Morgan and Nic Craith, 2015), while results from the Hong (2012) study of the differences between the 'leavers' and the 'stayers' point to teachers' diminished self-efficacy beliefs and emotional burnout as an outcome from the challenge of classroom management and handling students' misbehaviours.

Policy context and rationale

The importance of nurturing pupils' wellbeing is well-documented and advised at national level. Publications such as the National Education and Welfare Board (NEWB) guidelines on developing a code of behaviour (NEWB, 2008) highlight the importance of whole school approaches in promoting wellbeing and mental health in pupils and in addressing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The guidelines, *Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties – A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers* (NEPS 2010), show the continuum of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties ranging from developmentally appropriate behaviours to mild and transient difficulties to difficulties which present as significant and persistent. The guidelines strongly emphasise the importance of creating a whole school approach which respects and supports positive attitudes towards pupils' self-directed behaviour control. "The long term goal is that pupils should behave well because they want to, because it is the 'right' thing to do and because they are intrinsically motivated to do it. Intrinsic motivation is the capacity to feel good when we do something we are pleased with – the reward comes from within" (NEPS, p.33).

While there are many school-based prevention programmes, focused on positively impacting on a range of social, emotional and behavioural outcomes being implemented in schools with varying degrees of success (Domitrovich et al., 2015), the focus of this article is to detail the outcomes of the implementation of the PAX (GBG), (Embry et al., 2003), in a pilot study conducted in Ireland in early 2015.

This study explored the impact of the PAX GBG programme on pupils' self-regulation skills in support of reducing the number of off-task behaviour instances, increasing engagement with the teaching and learning process, and increasing pupils' social emotional competences as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Robert Goodman, 1994, 1997; R. Goodman, Meltzer, and Bailey, 1998).

The implementation of the PAX GBG programme was supported by the Northside Partnership and the Midland Areas Partnership (Health Service Executive Midlands Area), education centres (Athlone, Portlaoise and Carrick on Shannon). A grant for the delivery and evaluation of PAX GBG was funded by a partnership between a government inter-departmental group and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Good Behaviour Game (GBG) and the PAX GBG

The Good Behaviour Game (GBG) was first developed in the 1960s by Muriel Sanders as a strategy to help manage and control pupils' behaviour. Evaluations of the GBG programme by many research teams e.g. Barrish, Sanders, and Wolf, 1969; Tingstrom, Sterling-Turner, and Wilczynski, 2006; Kellam et al., 2008) all point to positive outcomes such as reduction in disruptive, aggressive or inattentive behaviours – leading to longer-term protection from psychiatric disorders in longitudinal studies (Ialongo, Poduska, Werthamer, and Kellam, 2001; Ialongo et al., 1999; Shoemaker, Tully, Niendam, and Peterson, 2015). In recent years, the PAX GBG was developed further by Dennis Embry (Embry, 2002; Embry et al., 2003) to improve the effectiveness of the original GBG model “by adding verbal and visual cues that teachers and pupils can use to promote attentive and prosocial behaviours and to create a positive classroom environment when not playing the Game” (Domitrovich et al., 2010: 1067).

The PAX Good Behaviour Game (PAX GBG; Embry et al., 2002, 2010, 2013) is an integrated classroom-based intervention programme, based on social learning principles, which aims to support and develop pupils' social-emotional competence and behaviour as well as increase supportive peer and teacher relationships.

The PAX GBG programme is focused primarily on supporting positive behaviour in that there is an acceptance, in both longitudinal and effectiveness studies (Bradshaw, Zmuda, Kellam, and Ialongo, 2009; Weis, Osborne, and Dean, 2015), that social behaviour in the classroom and issues relating to classroom climate have a profound impact on academic achievement. Secondly, there is a strong emphasis on fostering pro-social behaviour and developing the motivation and self-control that underlie such behaviours (Embry et al., 2010). Thirdly, there is recognition, in the PAX GBG programme, of the role played by monitoring and limiting opportunities for problem behaviour, especially the importance of rules clarity as well as the replacement of harsh consequences with positive outcomes for co-operative behaviours and engaged learning (Embry et al., 2010). Fourthly, the importance of self-regulation in enhancing pupils' academic skills and impulse control is well recognised.

The PAX GBG programme teaches, structures and reinforces pupils' self-regulation, self-control, and self-management skills in the context of collaborating with others for peace, productivity, health and happiness (PAX), as defined by the students. The desired behaviours that should occur more frequently to create a positive learning environment in the classroom are called PAX (peace, productivity, health and happiness) and the disruptive, inattentive and unengaged behaviours, which should happen less frequently, are called SPLEEMS.

The PAX GBG relies on interdependent group contingencies to improve pupils' behaviour (Maggi, Johnson, Cahafouleas, Ruberto and Berggren, 2012; Wright and McCurdy, 2012) in which the teacher sets up conditions of success for pupils to create PAX, while reducing the occurrence of SPLEEMS either intentionally or unintentionally. This is facilitated through class teams playing the PAX GBG game for increasing periods three to five times daily. Reinforcement is contingent on the team members' behaviour collectively rather than on the actions of an individual pupil (Weis, Osborne and Dean, 2016). Each team which scores three or less SPLEEMS wins a short cost-neutral fun activity prize – typically some novel activity not normally experienced in the classroom. PAX behaviours are also

noted while playing the game. In this regard, the PAX GBG is based on principles of operant conditioning, including self and peer monitoring and positive reinforcement using the Premack Principle for non-material fun activities (Andrews, 1970) but not a rigid token, clip chart, or point systems that involve aversive consequences. The PAX GBG programme is also based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) in that appropriate classroom behaviour is modelled and discussed, with teachers and pupils establishing agreed classroom standards for good behaviour (PAX). The expectation is that all pupils will follow the mutually agreed-upon behaviour standards, avoid (SPLEEMS) and support others in achieving the expected behaviours. In this regard, pupils (Murphy and Zlomke, 2014) are encouraged to observe and comment on others' positive behaviours – class peers, teachers, school personnel, and to write Tootles to them expressing appreciation for their help and kindness (Embry, Flannery, Vazsonyi, Powell, and Atha, 1996; Skinner, Cashwell, and Skinner, 2000). Students are also assigned meaningful roles to help run the classroom and PAX GBG, for which they receive social recognition from peers and adults (Ellis, Volk, Gonzalez, and Embry, 2015). All of these activities serve to promote awareness for pupils of their own and others' behaviours, which in turn helps to support the development of their own self-regulatory skills throughout the school day.

PAX GBG is designed to be self-regulatory for both the teachers and their mentors. This is significantly 'engineered' by inherent and robust design redundancies for early wins by the teachers, mentors and the students. The roll-out sequence provides both children and the adults with almost instant results based on their collective vision of the 'wonderful classroom', showing major reductions in transition time and problematic behaviours using various cues and evidence-based kernels (Embry and Biglan, 2008). This acts as significant social reinforcer for both adults and students to 'want more PAX'. Additionally, the sequence occasions increased peer-to-peer reinforcement for 'PAX behaviours' even before launching the actual PAX Game. Rather than being an 'expert who is there to evaluate the teacher', the role of the PAX mentor is to partner with the teacher and students for their success, helping with setup and modelling skills. Deeply imbedded in the implementation sequence is the deliberate use of Pygmalion or Rosenthal Effect (Rappaport and Rappaport, 1975; Raudenbush, 1984; Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1966) for the students, staff and families.

Why are self-regulation skills important for pupils?

Self-regulation refers to the self-directive processes that are central in acquiring academic skills, such as setting goals, selecting and deploying strategies, as well as self-monitoring their effectiveness. Thus, rather than focusing on the cognitive process of learning, self-regulation is concerned with contextual procedures like planning, organising and evaluating learning but most importantly the direction of these processes is in the control of the learner. Furthermore, the self-regulation process has a motivational component; it involves active learning and places the learner at the centre of this process while improving peer relationships that further protect against psychiatric disorders (Newcomer et al., 2015; Wise, Smith, and Shobo, January, 2014).

Several studies have demonstrated the importance of self-regulation (both effortful control and executive functions) in school achievement and success (Neuenschwander, R othlisberger, Cimeli, and Roebbers, 2012). Lopes et al., (2003; 2004; 2005) claim that the ability to regulate emotions accounts for a major part of school adaptation above and beyond the variables normally considered most important such as IQ and demographic variables (Neuenschwander et al., 2012). Other studies suggest that improvement in self-regulation skills enhances academic readiness and longer-term academic success (Galla et al., 2014), particularly for pupils experiencing social disadvantage (Diamond, 2013). Self-regulation is also especially important for peer-competence in school, which itself contributes separately to multiple positive outcomes including academics (Cerdeira, Im, and Hughes, 2014; McClelland, Acock, Piccinin, Rhea, and Stallings, 2013). Self-regulation is particularly relevant when paired with perceived self-determined versus controlled motivation. Self-determined motivation can be described as “motivation to act out of a sense of choice, ownership, and personal agency” (Hagger, Sultan, Hardcastle, and Chatzisarantis, 2015). Thus, unlike other classroom management strategies or some versions of the Good Behaviour Game with weak or iatrogenic effects (Rasthofer, 2012), PAX GBG adheres closely to procedures to act out of sense of choice, ownership and agency. Specifically, the children create a very detailed vision of the most wonderful classroom in the world of what they would see, hear, do and feel more of and less of. The students make predictions of what they want to increase and decrease in specific contexts, self-monitor, and debrief how they did after playing the actual game. As to purpose, the students learn that the game is purpose-driven to increase PAX, which means productivity, peace, health and happiness, rather than just following teacher or school imposed rules per se.

Evaluations of the PAX GBG intervention programme

There are numerous evaluative reports citing the positive outcomes of the PAX GBG programme. A review by Flower et al., (2014), which examined all versions of the GBG programme, showed that there was a moderate but significant effect on challenging behaviour in classroom and school settings. They concluded that while there was a high level of challenging behaviour recorded during baseline evaluation, there was an immediate decrease following the introduction of the programme. These findings point to positive outcomes with regard to disruptive behaviours including talking out, noise-making and off-task behaviour.

In a review by National Register of Evidence-based Programmes and Practices (NREPP), controlled trials of the PAX GBG programme (2014) showed that there were significant reductions in behaviour problems compared to similar classrooms not participating in the programme or classrooms receiving universal parenting supports (Ialongo et al., 1999). At age 12 there were fewer children with conduct disorders coupled with a significant reduction in suspensions and mental health services (Ialongo et al., 2001). Furthermore, there were associated improvements in achievement, particularly related to reading scores. The benefits of PAX GBG increased over time even with just one year of exposure showing lower rates of smoking in middle school (Storr, Ialongo, Kellam, and Anthony, 2002), and reduced risk

of starting to use illegal drugs by early adolescence (Furr-Holden, Ialongo, Anthony, Petras, and Kellam, 2004). For education professionals and political leaders, a one year investment in PAX GBG in grade one had profound lifetime and public-policy benefits: PAX GBG was associated with higher scores on standardised achievement tests, greater odds of high school graduation and college attendance, and reduced odds of special education service use (Bradshaw et al., 2009). In addition, a one year exposure to the PAX GBG showed increased positive phenotypic of BDNF genes association with protection from multiple mental, emotional, and psychiatric disorders (Musci et al., 2013).

A recent effectiveness study of PAX GBG supports these findings, showing a direct relationship between PAX GBG, the degree of disadvantage and academic gains in mathematics and reading (Weis et al., 2015), which was evident across six school districts with diverse curriculum. Additionally, a province-wide effectiveness policy study found that PAX GBG significantly contributed to pro-social skills amongst the highest risk children (Jiang, Santos, Mayer, and Boyd, 2015). This finding was replicated in a study of PAX GBG in after-school settings (Wise et al., January, 2014).

In more recent years, Fruth and Huber (2015) explored the impact of the PAX GBG on student teachers in pre-service teacher education programmes and revealed that the experimental group had significantly higher efficacy scores than the control group in all targeted areas. Findings from a five year study by Smith (2014) examining the implementation of the PAX GBG in after school settings showed a significant impact in pro-social behaviour. There was an increased sense of agency and empowerment, indicated by the young people encouraging good behaviour in their peers which, in turn, resulted in lower levels of vandalism, theft and other forms of anti-social behaviour.

Two effectiveness studies of PAX GBG have been undertaken. One such study shows county-wide improvements in reading and mathematics scores for students in high poverty schools (Weis et al., 2015). A province-wide randomised policy implementation of PAX GBG in Manitoba, Canada, shows significant improvements mental health indicators on the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* for the most at risk students within one semester (Jiang et al., 2015; Santos, Mayer, and Boyd, 2013).

The PAX GBG is used widely in the US elementary schools – with implementation in 650 schools in 32 different states. In addition, the programme has been adopted by school districts in Canada and several European countries (National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, 2014). The research indicates that the PAX GBG programme serves to create a safe and positive school climate and culture which, in turn, positively affected academic, behavioural, and mental health outcomes for pupils (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). More recently, an independent article published in *Psychiatric Clinics* named PAX GBG as a key, support initiative for the universal prevention of psychiatric disorders (Shoemaker et al., 2015).

This article reports on the evaluation of the first trial of the PAX GBG programme in Irish schools and, as such, will add significantly to our knowledge as to how and in what manner the programme contributes and supports pupils' self-regulation, improved classroom behaviour and on-task behaviour. The full report on the evaluation of the PAX GBG, which this paper discusses, is available at www.paxireland.ie. Two further evaluations

have been conducted on the PAX GBG in Ireland and the findings point to similar positive outcomes, however, they are not reported on in this paper.

Research methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to conduct an independent and objective 'proof of concept' study to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the PAX GBG programme in Irish primary schools over a four month period from January to April 2015. The teachers had already been working with this same group of children for five months prior to the introduction of PAX GBG. The overall objective was to (1) explore the extent to which the programme served to decrease the incidence of disturbing, disruptive, inattentive and un-engaged behaviours in the classroom (SPLEEMS); (2) explore the impact on pupils' self-regulatory behaviour; (3) evaluate the impact upon SDQ scores (prevalence rates); and (4) assess teachers' experience of implementing PAX GBG in Irish classrooms.

Prior studies informed the target behaviours to observe (SPLEEMS); namely, (i) disruptive behaviours such as talking out, noise-making and aggression; (ii) off-task behaviours such as failing to pay attention to academic activities and being unengaged in academic tasks; (iii) out-of-seat behaviour (without permission); (iv) rule violations such as disobeying existing classroom rules or engaging in behaviours contrary to classroom expectations; (v) anti-social behaviour often defined as a composite of several forms of negative social interactions; (vi) externalising behaviours including oppositional behaviours and conduct issues; and (vii) negative comments to others including swearing or inappropriate gestures. In the context of PAX GBG, these unwanted behaviours are given a neutral and novel name, called SPLEEMS (Embry et al., 2010). This is to avoid pejorative ("She's from a bad family"), diagnostic ("He has ADHD") or value laden labels such as "bad behaviour" and to increase a sense of psychological flexibility among students, staff and families about the ability of children to learn self-regulation within the school context.

The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative data from pre and post stages of the implementation. Quantitative data was obtained from (1) classroom observations conducted by the researchers, recording the number of SPLEEMS (i.e. disturbing, disruptive, inattentive and unengaged behaviours) and (2) completion of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) by teachers. The SDQ comprises of five sub-scales with each consisting of five items as follows: (i) hyperactivity (restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long); (ii) emotional symptoms (many worries, often seems worried); (iii) conduct problems (often has temper tantrums or hot tempers); (iv) peer relationship problems (rather solitary, tends to play alone); and (v) pro-social behaviour (helpful if someone is upset, hurt or feeling ill). Qualitative data was derived from (1) interviews conducted pre and post with the teachers. These interviews focused on eliciting teachers' views regarding teacher's self-efficacy, enjoyment of teaching and discipline style and their experiences of the programme; (2) interviews with the PAX GBG mentors to discuss their role and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of the PAX GBG programme.

Participants

The PAX GBG programme was implemented in 21 classes across a number of Irish primary schools designated as socially disadvantaged in the Dublin and Midlands areas. While this programme is suitable for all age ranges and is currently being implemented in the full range of primary school classes in Ireland, in this study, the pupils were either first or second class pupils (n=420) aged between seven and eight years. Teachers (n=21) and mentors (n=2) from the schools who opted to participate in the study, were trained in the background, rationale and strategies of PAX GBG over a three day period by the PAXIS Institute, under the direction of Dr Embry. Teachers were encouraged to use social learning principles within a team-based, game-like context to reduce aggressive, disruptive and off-task behaviour and thus facilitate better engagement by the pupils in the teaching and learning activities. Following the completion of the training days, teachers were prepared to begin implementing the programme immediately so a limited preparation time for implementation was required. In addition, a PAX GBG Partner (mentor) provided an average of four mentoring and support visits to the teachers where they provided advice and guidance on all aspects of the programme implementation and on the use of other PAX GBG resources as required. The role of the PAX mentor was crucial in ensuring adherence to the integrity of the programme at implementation level.

Results

OCCURRENCE OF PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOURS (SPLEEMS) BEFORE AND AFTER GBG INTERVENTION

Following the establishment of a satisfactory level of reliability between the evaluators (91%), a related samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the GBD intervention on the number of SPLEEMS in classes and per pupil. There was a statistically significant decrease in the number of SPLEEMS from pre intervention (M = 110.5) to post intervention (M = 62.0), $t(df, 20) = 2.5, p < .01$. The analysis showed a significant reduction in SPLEEMS in 20 of the 21 classes in both Dublin and the Midlands area. A statistically significant difference was also found regarding the number of SPLEEMS per student from pre (M = 5.7) to post intervention (M = 3.5), $t(df, 371) = 2.4, p < .01$. Importantly, the reduction in SPLEEMS was not associated with factors such as teacher or pupil gender or class size.

Table 1: Mean SPLEEMS pre and after PAX GBG intervention (per 15 minutes)

Mean SPLEEMS for 15 min	Pre	SD	Post	SD	Significance	% change from pre to post
Per class	110.5	112.4	62.0	32.7	$p < .01$	43.4
Per student	5.7	4.9	3.5	1.6	$p < .01$	38.3

STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES RATINGS (SDQ)

Improvements were found in teacher ratings of pupils from pre to post intervention on the SDQ. Based on related sample t-tests, this difference was statistically significant for three of the SDQ sub-scales: hyperactivity, emotional symptoms and pro-social behaviour.

Table 2: Pre and post scores in scales of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scale

Subscales	Pre Mean (SD)	Post Mean (SD)	N	Significance
Hyperactivity	3.19 (3.30)	2.66 (3.10)	410	p<.01*
Emotional symptoms	1.40 (2.11)	1.15 (1.89)	405	p<.01*
Conduct problems	0.89 (1.77)	0.84 (1.65)	392	ns
Peer problems	0.87 (1.41)	0.77 (1.48)	395	ns
Total problems	6.35 (4.77)	5.42 (4.03)	387	p<.01*
Pro-social behaviour	8.80 (1.82)	9.01 (1.63)	397	p<.05*

An important question centres on whether it was the case that the pupils with the greatest need benefited from the programme. Table 3 shows the percentage of pupils in each category before and after the introduction of the PAX GBG programme. The most striking feature is that while 20.4% of the pupils fell into either the borderline or challenging categories before the introduction of the programme, the corresponding figure was 14.5% following the programme. To establish the statistical significance of these findings, the Fisher Exact Probability test was applied. Results, presented below in Table 3, showed a decrease of approximately one-third in the number of pupils who were categorised as 'borderline and challenging'.

Table 3: SDQ total difficulties score pre and post programme

	Pre Numbers (percentage)	Post Numbers (percentage)	Significance	% change
Normal range	308 (79.6%)	331 (85.5%)	p<.05	+7.5%
Borderline	40 (10.4%)	25 (6.4%)	p<.01	-37.5%
Challenging	39 (10.0%)	31 (8.1%)	p<.05	-20.5%
Borderline & challenging	79 (20.4%)	56 (14.5%)	p<.01	-29.1%

Improving pupils' self-regulatory behaviour

Disruptive and inattentive classroom behaviours are among the most prevalent factors that impact on the learning process, reduce instruction time and make it more difficult for pupils to succeed academically (Luiselli, Putnam, and Sunderland, 2002). At a classroom level, disruptive behaviour has been identified as a key barrier to pupils' learning which, if left unchecked, can pose a significant risk factor for a host of other academic and behavioural challenges throughout the pupils' life span (Kellam et al., 2008). To engage effectively with

the learning task and to attend to instruction, pupils need to regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour. These are the essential and fundamental pre-requisite skills necessary so that pupils will attend to instruction and, consequently, benefit from the learning and socialisation opportunities provided within the school.

Qualitative analysis of the pre-intervention interviews with teachers (n=21) highlighted teachers' concerns regarding the frequency of interruptions by pupils on the teaching process and on their own learning. Teachers expressed a desire that pupils would become more independent and confident, to have the ability to resolve problems and, in general, to relate to each other in a caring and friendly manner. All teachers expressed a desire to engage in more interactive learning and explorative activities, however, many teachers reported that this was not possible due to the level of disruptive behaviour in the class. Overall, they wanted to make the classroom a happier place where pupils could engage as self-directed and independent learners while supporting each others' learning in an organised and co-operative manner.

The analysis of the teacher interviews post implementation of the PAX GBG programme presents a positive image with regard to changes in pupils' behaviour with a significant reduction in disruptive behaviour instances in the classroom. Teachers reported that the reduction in the number of disruptive behaviour instances resulted in increased pupil focus on tasks which in turn served to provide more opportunities for learning to take place in an atmosphere of contentment and wellbeing. It is notable that these significant changes occurred following just 12 weeks of programme implementation.

I see more happy faces, more interested pupils, and great improvements in listening skills so they can learn more. They have more control over themselves. They are engaging with the curriculum more – they are more focused, listening more so they are learning more (teacher, school B).

I see much more focused work, they are all definitely on task – I have to do much less – I can stand back (teacher, school M).

In addition, this increased self-directed control by the pupils provided the teacher with more opportunity to work with other pupils who needed additional help or attention. Also I get time to focus on the more able pupils. Before, I was so busy correcting misbehaviours that I had no time for them (teacher, school K).

The findings from the interview analysis point to an increase in pupils' ability to self-regulate. This is an important factor as detailed in the research by Lopes et al., (2012) which showed that the ability to manage emotions was more significantly related to achievement in school even when controlling for socio-demographic factors as well as tests of cognitive ability. Likewise, the work by Diamond (2013) outlines how pupils' self-regulation skills can be improved through training resulting in significant increases in self-regulatory skills, increased attention and impulse control resulting in improvement in pupils' academic skills, including letter naming and maths skills. The importance of embedding self-regulation

training in a variety of learning activities as in the PAX GBG programme is highlighted as more effective than a stand-alone programme training approach by Biglan and Embry (2013).

Following the implementation of the programme, teachers reported that pupils were more aware of their own behaviour and that they had a clear understanding of what constituted good and bad behaviour in the classroom. This awareness enabled them to control their own behaviour and to help others to do likewise.

I see changes – in that they are more aware of their own behaviour and even though I have a couple who would always SPLEEM but once they have learned that is it – they can rein themselves in (teacher, school A).

What I see is that the pupils are more aware of what good and bad behaviour is in the classroom (teacher, school C).

Supporting and developing more effective relationships

Research points to the importance of pupils' liking school and more especially liking their teachers. Results from a meta-analysis study by Roorda et al. (2011) shows that liking for school and for teachers had a strong beneficial effect on engagement with school and a significant and positive impact on achievement.

One consistent outcome of the PAX GBG programme was the positive changes in relationships reported for both pupils and teachers with many teachers reporting that the programme gave them a new focus and enthusiasm for teaching, coupled with increased motivation and confidence to engage in more group activities. There was a view expressed by many teachers that they felt closer to the pupils, their language had become more positive and with the reduction in time spent on controlling and correcting behaviours, they were able to reflect on pupils' background difficulties and experiences. The classroom is reported as a more exciting place, with less time wasted resulting in increased productivity.

I feel that the teacher and pupil relationship has changed – I feel much more motivated – I couldn't wait to get started – I felt that I was fighting the same battles every single day – this programme has given me more enthusiasm for teaching (teacher, school H).

I feel more confident now doing less structured activities e.g. measuring, before I would have them measure at their tables. I feel less anxious about losing control as I know that I will be able to get them back and refocused when I want them to... I can do more group work, more activities, more enjoyable learning really (teacher, school B).

As pupils in this programme became more skilled in self-regulating, less time was wasted on correction, more focused work was completed and, consequently, the pupils received more praise and encouragement from the teacher.

I feel that there is less time wasted – pupils are able to self-regulate so the role of the teacher has changed to one where it is easy to give them more praise and compliments. In this regard, I feel that my relationship with the pupils has changed – we have become closer, become more of a unit with the pupils showing a calmness – which makes for a calmer teacher as well! (teacher, school A).

The relationship between the teacher and the pupils changed with reported greater awareness and empathy being shown by the teacher.

I feel that my language as a teacher has changed – I speak to them now more as equals and there is no negative stuff from me or from them. I feel more aware of what might be going on for a child who is having difficulty – in that I have time to focus on what might be happening for that child outside of school (teacher, school P).

Pupil relationships

There is a substantial body of evidence which suggests that emotional wellbeing has a major impact on school achievement, as well as on self-esteem and physical development (Durlak et al., 2011). This evaluation points to the extent to which the PAX GBG programme contributed to pupils' wellbeing which, while important in its own right, also has major significance for all domains of development.

Substantial changes were reported with respect to pupils' relationships, they became more mannerly, more skilled at resolving conflict, more aware and responsible for their own behaviour due to increased self-regulatory skills and competencies developed through the programme. This resulted in pupils experiencing more feelings of happiness both in themselves and in the classroom environment.

I see more positive behaviour, more listening and more respect generally. They are getting better at being nice to each other – the *TOOTLES (a positive comment written by a pupil and given to another peer, to the teacher or other school personnel) helped a great deal with that. They have definitely more manners, there is less arguing and they can resolve the conflicts themselves (teacher, school R).

I hear less shouting out, less noise, hands going up more and often they correct each other. Less chit chat while they are on task, less arguing, less telling on each other, hearing more helpful words and nice words to each other (teacher, school E).

Pupils' ability to self-direct resulted in a more positive classroom learning environment, with the teachers feeling much more empowered to engage in a more friendly and supportive manner to all pupils.

Pupil outcomes: What skills?

Teachers reported that pupils showed a substantial increase in self-regulation and taking responsibility for their own behaviour. Teachers felt that this, in turn, led to increased awareness of others with pupils knowing which behaviours are/are not acceptable in the class and what factors contribute to a happy learning environment.

The lasting skill that they will take away is self-regulation – they can control their own behaviour. There is no naming of any child – they have to be responsible for their own behaviour (teacher, school R).

The skills that they have developed relate to being more aware of other people, group work, team work, knowing that it is good to have a fun release and then to calm down and refocus. They are able to regulate themselves – even if they have two/three SPLEEMS, they are able to pull themselves back. The pupils are definitely more self-aware, they are able to know what they need to do to get things done (teacher, school F).

Teachers reported that pupils who were previously troubled were more “still within themselves” and more confident that they can achieve “it has turned pupils around”.

PAX has transformed that boy – given him self-esteem and a sense of responsibility, of power, and a belief in himself that he can make a difference (teacher, school H).

Teacher self-efficacy, that is, the confidence that a teacher has in their own capacity to enhance pupils' achievement, emerges as an important factor (Ringwalt et al., 2003) in the programme implementation process. At a class level, teachers observed a calmer classroom atmosphere and increased classroom co-operation. There was significantly more self-regulatory behaviours displayed by pupils, a more co-operative working atmosphere, increased positive teacher and pupil interactions and overall, a more friendly and trusting relationship was established between pupils and teachers. This in turn, increased the teachers' belief and trust in the pupils which served to increase both teachers' and pupils' self-efficacy.

Implementation

The question as to how teachers implement policy directives as intended is the focus of a large corpus of research studies (Spillane et al., 2002). Domitrovich et al., (2015) reveal that teacher perceptions and beliefs emerge as major factors in the frequency of implementation. In this study, teachers' perceptions as to how the programme aligned with their own daily teaching practice was cited as a positive factor for many teachers.

Factors which contributed to the effective implementation of the programme highlight the importance for participants in having all the necessary resources in their given pack so that no time was lost in sourcing support materials. It was evident that the programme can be successfully implemented at individual class level without a whole school approach as

evidenced by teachers who singularly and successfully implemented the programme in their schools.

PAX friend

The PAX friends – referred to as ‘mentors’ were crucial in ensuring adherence to the integrity of the programme at implementation level. In support of effective implementation, the role of the mentor was to listen, discuss challenges, troubleshoot problems and find solutions in consultation with teacher. Teachers were also encouraged and made aware of further support websites and instructional videos.

The mentors were fulsome in their praise of the positive aspects of the programme – catching pupils being good – as opposed to highlighting the negative or poor behaviours that are likely to occur in the classroom on a daily basis. “It addressed a lot of major behavioural issues experienced in the classroom with resultant positive outcomes for all pupils and teachers alike”. In addition, they stated that as pupils developed more self-regulation skills, teachers began to reflect on their own voice – its volume and the extent to which they responded and controlled the pupils in their class. The mentors pointed to the extent to which teachers were open to changing their practice – letting go of the dominant role that they previously held and allowing pupils to self-regulate – this was regarded as a significant challenge for many teachers.

The importance of the student voice was highlighted by mentors and they were clear in their praise of the pupils’ ability to envision a better classroom learning environment – “they wanted to do more activities, to take more control of what they do and to ‘see’ more kindness, be able to have more quiet time: to do more interesting stuff like quiet reading”. They expressed a desire to see “happier faces!” “hear more teachers’ voices” with “less noise and more opportunities to feel secure and safe. It was obvious that the pupils craved quiet and calm time and more opportunities to be given responsibility for self-control. The mentors reported that the impact of the PAX GBG programme extended beyond the classroom with parents reporting positively on pupils’ improved behaviour outside school.

The mentors reported that the impact of the PAX GBG programme is at two levels – individual and general. At an individual level it has “turned pupils around”.

“PAX has transformed that boy – given himself esteem and a sense of responsibility, of power, and a belief in himself that he can make a difference”. Teachers also reported that pupils who were previously troubled are “still within themselves” and more confident that they can achieve. This, in turn, increased the teachers’ belief and trust in the pupils which served to increase pupils’ self-efficacy. At class level, changes that have been observed since the implementation of the PAX, point to a calmer classroom atmosphere, increased classroom co-operation, resulting in reduced negative teacher comments which served to create an overall healthier and happier self-regulatory classroom environment. In conclusion, there was a better working atmosphere that facilitated more self-regulatory pupil behaviour and positive teacher responses, resulting in a friendlier and more trusting relationship between pupils and teachers.

Discussion

The evaluation of the PAX GBG programme suggests a number of conclusions. Firstly, the conceptual basis of the programme is in line with recent advances in social-cognitive applications of psychology and is well supported by recent influential ideas on self-regulation. This implies that the PAX GBG programme has moved beyond traditional conceptions of behaviour modification, and rather than assuming that environmental factors are the critical determinants of learning and classroom management, the programme gives ownership of the learning process to the learner. Embry and colleagues have written extensively about the integration of behavioural strategies in the context of creating nurturing environments for lasting change in human development (A. Biglan and Embry, 2013; Anthony Biglan et al., 2012; Embry, 2004; Embry & Biglan, 2008; Wilson et al., 2014). Embry and colleagues specifically frame PAX GBG as a nurturing environment strategy, not as classroom management or control strategy. The evidence emerging from a large volume of international literature, which strongly supports the use of the programme with different age groups and in different contexts, is indicative of the contribution that the programme is making in the many jurisdictions in which it has been implemented.

Secondly, the evaluation of the implementation of the PAX GBG programme in the Irish context contributes to existing research in the field. The significant reduction in SPLEEMS is an indicator not only of improvements in pupils' behaviour but it points also to the increased opportunities for pupils to develop self-regulation skills (Najaka, Gottfredson and Wilson, 2002; Walker and Shinn, 2002). In addition, the significant improvement in pupil self-regulatory behaviour impacted positively on teachers and pupils relationships alike. Teachers reported reduced stress, more confidence to engage in more active-learning methodologies with the pupils who, in turn, were happier, showed increased respect, better listening skills and, overall, more engagement with the teaching and learning tasks. It can be concluded that the impact of the PAX GBG programme was at three levels – individual pupil level, teacher level and general class level. At class level, following the implementation of the programme there was substantially more self-regulatory behaviour displayed by pupils, a more co-operative working atmosphere, increased positive teacher and pupil interactions overall and a more friendly and trusting relationship between pupils and teachers. This in turn, increased the teachers' belief and trust in the pupils which served to increase both teachers' and pupils' self-efficacy.

The majority of teachers in this study reported that there were no significant challenges in implementing the programme; it was well-structured and easy to implement. Many teachers commended the inservice training that they received and spoke highly of the collaborative support they received from the PAX mentor which contributed significantly to the high level of fidelity at programme implementation level.

While the findings from this evaluation point to positive outcomes for the PAX GBG programme in an Irish context, a longitudinal evaluation should be considered as it would give valuable insight into how the effects endure over multiple school years as found in the original studies at Johns Hopkins as well as in systematic replications in the US and Canada (Domitrovich et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2015; Weis et al., 2015; Wise et al., January, 2014). In addition, the contribution of ongoing and further research to explore the extent to

which self-regulatory skills contribute to better academic outcomes for pupils is highly recommended.

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The Educational Writings of James Connolly: 1889-1916

≡ OILIBHÉAR Ó BRAONÁIN ≡

Abstract

This paper offers a critical overview of the educational writings of the Irish socialist intellectual, syndicalist and revolutionary, James Connolly. It examines his views on education and child welfare as expressed in pamphlets, newspapers, journals and private correspondence between 1889 and 1916. It reviews his advocacy of secularisation of Irish education, reform of school management and control structures, and his demands for enhanced efforts to tackle social exclusion, disadvantage and marginalisation through the vehicle of a free, universal public education system. Connolly's writings in this area are appraised in the context of his lifelong ideological commitment to Marxism. The paper notes the historical trajectory of his reform demands from the Edwardian period in which they were broadly considered radical, seditious and anathema, to the modern era in which the prevailing values of social democracy generally embrace them as beneficial, progressive and enlightened.

Keywords: James Connolly, history of Irish education, Irish socialism, Irish capitalism, denominational and secular education, church-state relations, educational disadvantage, school management, teacher pay and conditions, infant mortality, school meals, late Victorian/Edwardian education, school attendance, child labour, child welfare, school building conditions, [financing of] public education, Marxism, social justice.



Introduction

The recent centennial of the 1916 Rising has afforded a valuable opportunity to reappraise the contribution of James Connolly to Irish social and political thought. The dual legacies of his life and political martyrdom continue to vivify public discourse and ensure his status as a totemic figure of Irish history. Despite this, a critical review of his attitude to Irish education over the course of his active life has never been enterprised. This paper offers a summative evaluation of Connolly's writings in the area of education and child welfare. It is neither an endorsement nor a repudiation of his broader Marxist political ideology. As regards the vexed and controversial question of secular education to which he frequently addressed himself, the paper offers an impartial ventilation of Connolly's views without judgement as to their relative merits or demerits.

Connolly was deeply affected by the appalling social conditions of the working class in general but his especial moral indignation was reserved for the adverse effects of deprivation on the young. As early as 1889 he wrote from Dundee to his future wife, Lillie Reynolds,

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“The children here also work at six years of age going half-time to school and half-time to work”(Nevin, 2007, p. 78). For Connolly, children’s educational and material welfare were complementary and indeed symbiotic. While the attribution to him of a distinct educational philosophy is open to legitimate dispute, the overall thematic arc of his writings in this area between 1889 and 1916 permit the formulation of a particular ‘Connollyite’ vision for education which is both coherent and relevant.

Born in Edinburgh in 1868 to Irish working class emigrants, the doleful conditions of Connolly’s impoverished childhood have been amply recorded elsewhere. Suffice to say that his own formal schooling was limited to a brief attendance at St Patrick’s on the Cowgate where “He had little schooling and from the age of nine earned paltry wages to keep the family above the breadline.”(Nevin, 2005, p. 5). Despite this, Connolly’s capacity for the analysis and exposition of complex social questions reveals a brilliant mind, cultivated by voracious reading (White & Quinn (Ed), 2015, p.94). His breadth of knowledge was encyclopaedic; his style sharp and lucid albeit peppered with occasional flashes of auto-didactic pugnacity. The themes of his writings reflect his commitment to a Marxist vision for Ireland’s future and an identification of capitalism with all social ills. While some today might question the applicability of his more doctrinaire views to modern social conditions, in his analysis of the structural shortcomings of the late Victorian-Edwardian education system, and the social context in which it functioned, he anticipated many of the progressive changes of the 1960s onwards.

Connolly was of course a socialist propagandist and his writings must be interpreted in that light. His didactic style and truculent advocacy reflected a personal frustration with the rigid social hierarchies of the society he inhabited and a revolutionary’s impatience to abolish them. He lived and wrote at a time when:

Schooling was not viewed as a means of achieving greater social equality; rather the poor and the working classes were largely seen by leaders of church and state as a self-perpetuating sector of society for whom a limited education in literacy and numeracy was deemed sufficient (Coolahan, 1981, page 55)

Key amongst Connolly’s prescriptions for educational reform were the curbing of clerical influence in school management, the diminution of the confessional ethos of schools, the provision of school meals, improved financing and resourcing, the construction of suitable buildings, and enhanced pay and conditions for teachers and ancillary staff. Indeed, in 1894, he crossed swords with the Edinburgh School Board for having “recently made an effort to deprive the women cleaners employed by that body of their wages, that is of their means of life, during sickness” and with the town council for “refusing to insert the fair wages clause in a most important contract” (Dudley Edwards and Ransom (Eds.), 1974).

Perhaps the greatest testament to Connolly’s foresight in this domain rests in the fact that many of his ideas, considered radical, impracticable, subversive and even heterodox in his own time, have now passed into common acceptance as truisms of modern educational discourse.

Erin's Hope: The End and the Means (1897)

One of Connolly's earliest socialist tracts, *Erin's Hope* offers valuable insights into the importance he ascribed to education in the development of Ireland's social and political history as well as in the management of her affairs in more contemporary times.

Connolly opened his dialectic by claiming a causal relationship between the equitability of systems of property ownership in ancient societies and the levels of education obtaining within them. Historically he argued "that common ownership of land formed the basis of primitive society in almost every country" but that this "primitive Communism" fell into abeyance amongst "unlettered and uneducated tribes". This proto-Communism endured in Gaelic Ireland where it "formed part of the well-defined social organisations of *a nation of scholars and students*" (Connolly, 1897, p.6.) (My emphasis).

More recent historical experience, Connolly argued, had witnessed the emergence of a bourgeois, political leadership in Ireland, whose influence was born of the transformative and elevating potential of education:

The Irish middle class, who then *by virtue of their social position and education* stepped to the front as Irish patriot leaders (My emphasis) (Ibid p.8).

Connolly hoped that public education could gain for the working class what private schooling had, in past times, achieved for the middle class i.e. increased social mobility leading to an accretion of political influence followed, ultimately, by the appropriation of economic power.

One of Connolly's most remarkable characteristics was his advocacy of enlightened ideas whose time had not yet come but which would eventually come to be adopted as good policy and best practice. In *Erin's Hope* he proposed the provision of what we would now term 'breakfast clubs' for indigent children, an idea which would not be adopted by Westminster until 1907, and then just for schools in England and Wales (Brockliss and Sheldon, Ed., 2012, p.16.). Connolly correctly stressed the vital importance of adequate nourishment for pupils and appreciated the difficulties faced by teachers in educating hungry students:

In all our cities the *children of the labouring class are dying off before their time* for lack of wholesome nourishing food... let (our municipalities and public trusts)... provide at *our schools free breakfasts, dinners and teas to the children* in attendance there.... let us at least save the helpless children of our race from physical and mental degeneracy, *and save our teachers from the impossible task of forcing education upon a child whose brain is enfeebled by the starvation of its body* (My emphasis) (Connolly, 1897, p.16).

Socialism Made Easy (1909)

Socialism Made Easy was a propagandist pamphlet in which Connolly once again addressed the issues of childhood hunger and malnourishment. He described how they were tackled in the US through the agency of the public schools system by offering free meals to needy children via a ticketing scheme which discreetly avoided demeaning them. Connolly

trumpeted this approach as an example of a de facto socialist policy in operation in a capitalist country:

There are tens of thousands of hungry children in New York today as in every other large American city.... Free lunches have been opened in the poorest districts, bread lines have been established and charitable organisations are busy visiting homes and schools to find out the worst cases.... A committee of seven was appointed to inquire more fully into the question of feeding school children.... School Superintendent Maxwell (advocated) the establishment in New York schools with city money of lunch kitchens, these to sell food at actual cost and to give to needy children tickets just like those paid for, to the end that no child might know that his fellow was eating at the expense of the city by the color of his ticket (Connolly, 1909. p.6).

Connolly commended the 'socialist' approach of Superintendent Maxwell which he contrasted unfavourably with the "capitalist method of parading mothers and children for an hour in the street before feeding them". Quoting from a contemporary news report he criticised the practice of obliging needy children and their mothers to queue in public for food which he considered both undignified and belittling:

Five hundred ill-fed children who attend the schools on the lower east side got a hearty luncheon yesterday when the first of the children's lunchrooms was opened at Canal and Forsyth streets. Long before noon there was a large gathering of children, some of them accompanied by their mothers, awaiting the opening of the doors (My emphasis) (Ibid p. 7).

In this same work Connolly recognised the indispensable value of education as a means of harnessing the untapped creative and intellectual potential of all human beings. He decried a system which appeared to privilege the cognitive potential of the wealthy over that of the poor and predicted a time when enhanced levels of educational attainment amongst the labouring classes would lead to more assertive demands for their full inclusion in civic and political life. Connolly saw education as a levelling force which would create enhanced opportunities for all while slowly degrading the myth that social privilege was based upon "intellectual superiority". While his strident rhetoric is that of the agitating ideologue, the essence of his argument largely holds true:

Without our toil (bosses) would never *get the education necessary to develop their brains*; if we were not defrauded by their class.... *we could provide for education enough to develop the mental powers of all*, and so deprive the ruling class of the last vestige of an excuse for clinging to mastership, viz., their assumed intellectual superiority.

As education spreads among the people the workers will want to enjoy life more; they will assert their right to the full fruits of their labour, and by that act of self-assertion lay the foundation of (a) Socialist Republic.... (Ibid pgs.20-21).

Labour in Irish History (1910)

Connolly's view of the education system as a catalyst for social justice was evident from his earliest days as a socialist propagandist. In one of his finest polemics, *Labour in Irish History* (1910), he demonstrated a keen awareness of the historical experience of discrimination, exclusion and disadvantage in Irish education.

Composed in the style of 'history lesson-cum-parable' favoured by contemporary nationalist propagandists (Townsend, 2015, p. 36), Connolly recalled how, under the Penal Laws, "On the head of a Catholic schoolmaster... the same price was put as on the head of a wolf" (Connolly, 1910). The historical retrospective continued with an account of 'the first Irish socialist', William Thompson of Cork who, as early as 1824, had called for "free education for all" and who had "went into great detail to prove its feasibility, giving statistics to show that the total cost of such education could easily be borne by Ireland...". Connolly also praised Thompson for having "the courage and the foresight... to plead for secular education" (Ibid.), a radical proposition to which he was personally sympathetic.

Connolly included a fascinating account of a short-lived and long-forgotten 'Socialist Colony' established in 1831 at Ralahine, Co Clare, by local landlord Arthur Vandaleur. Connolly considered the model for schooling adopted by the Ralahine Colony – which was free and inclusive – as a viable pluralist alternative for a country cleaved by sectarian antagonism and class consciousness. He quoted the letter of an English visitor to Ralahine's school:

....the Bible was not used as a school-book; no sectarian opinions were taught in the schools; no public dispute about religious dogmas or party political questions took place; nor were members allowed to ridicule each other's religion; nor were there any attempts at proselytism.... The teaching of religion was left to ministers of religion and to the parents.... Nevertheless, both Protestant and Catholic priests were friendly to the system as soon as they understood it.... (Ibid).

Connolly never repudiated his Roman Catholicism (Connolly, 1988, p.203 and p.239; McKenna, 1920, p. 47) but, nonetheless, retained a strong ideological attachment to the principle of secularism in public affairs, a principle with which denominational schooling was clearly incompatible.

The Re-Conquest of Ireland (1915)

In 1915 Connolly published *The Re-Conquest of Ireland*, in which he revisited familiar themes of inequality and workers' rights and set out his socialist prescriptions for the remedying of Ireland's ills. He devoted an entire chapter to the deficiencies of the Irish education system under the heading *Schools and Scholars of Erin*. Here Connolly gives expression to his views on education with more depth and conviction than anywhere else in his corpus. Supported by meticulous research, he offered a comprehensive, Marxist critique of the failures of the contemporary education system as well as suggestions for its amelioration.

Once again, Connolly prefaced his critique with an historical tour d'horizon of Irish education from ancient times. He contrasted his idealised vision of education in the Gaelic civilization of pre-conquest Ireland with the darker post-conquest experience of exclusion and disadvantage. In Connolly's romanticised view, education in Gaelic Ireland was an embodiment of the social contract between chief and clan in contra-distinction to the repressive and marginalising experience of Irish scholars under the alien ascendancy of penal times.

Latter-day investigators have set beyond all doubt the truth that in Ancient Erin the chief and clan held in most repute were they who most esteemed and fostered the schools for the teaching of the wisdom of the day; and that even long after the Norman invasion, the Irish schools and scholars continued to shed a lustre upon Gaelic civilisation, and to redeem Erin from the imputations her would-be masters so consistently strove to cast upon her native life (Connolly, 1987, p.246).

Connolly identified pre-feudal Ireland as a proto-Marxist polity in which all tribal land and property was held in common ownership and vested in the chieftain in a quasi-fiduciary capacity (Connolly, 1897, pgs 1 and 7; Connolly, 1910; Nevin, 2005, p361). While the historicity of this analysis is arguable (McKenna, 1920, pages 72-3), it is instructive for what it reveals about Connolly's own views on the function of education in society. He held that education was inherently valuable in and of itself, rather than a means to a utilitarian end or a superfluous adjunct of social rank. Its broader purpose was to redeem and "shed a lustre" upon cultural life and to transmit the collective "wisdom of the day". Connolly's writings here imply a view of education as a self-actualising experience with access to it being the inalienable right of all.

Connolly genuinely believed that capitalism was the sole source of Ireland's misfortunes. It was a controversial thesis in its own time and not one that would command universal support today – despite his near-mythic status in the historical pantheon. Connolly argued that capitalism was a foreign ideology imposed upon a subject people whose capacity to resist had long been neutralised by centuries of oppression. He viewed the penal restrictions on educational opportunity as a metaphor for the broader historical trauma of dispossession, dislocation and deracination. The stubborn attachment of the Irish to scholarship and erudition despite the draconian proscriptions of the 18th century implied their rejection of a broader agenda of feudalism, capitalism and colonisation. Connolly viewed the illegal hedge schools of the 18th and early 19th centuries as iniquitous necessities of the times. They formed a virtual, parallel system of education whose self-sustaining dynamic was commendable but whose chief flaw lay in its exclusivity. Free universal education "up to the highest university grades" (Connolly, 1896; Nevin, 2005, p.63; Collins, 2015, p.53), was a key point of Connolly's socialist doctrine:

But with the consummation of the conquest.... the education of the Irish became an offence against the law... Still the hunger for learning persisted, and overcame in many cases the evil laws and penalising decrees of the conquerors, and on lone mountain sides,

in the midst of almost trackless bogs, and at the back of hedges, Irish boys and girls strove to snatch, illegally, the education denied them by their masters. Needless to say, however, *under such conditions, education could not be universal; it was, on the contrary, only the few who could snatch some crumbs of learning in the midst of difficulties so appalling. Upon the great majority such conditions necessarily imposed ignorance as an inevitable result* (My emphasis) (Connolly, 1915).

Connolly's strongest critique of the national school system, established by Lord Stanley in 1831, was that its structures of governance had failed to evolve in a way that reflected the growing democratisation of the society in which it operated. The national schools of 1915 were indistinguishable from those of 1831, being wedded to the clerical-managerial model which was de jure secular but de facto denominational. It was also undemocratic and largely unaccountable. In addressing this sensitive and controversial issue Connolly, although obliged to tread gingerly, demonstrated great moral courage. He was conscious that even a constructive critique of clerical autocracy in school management was likely to be misconstrued, at best as a veiled form of anti-clericalism, at worst as a proxy assault on the Churches' prerogatives:

But in our treatment of the schools for our Irish children there is not to be observed any such radical or fundamental change *as the development of the democracy would seem to warrant*. On the contrary, that seems to be the one ground from which the public guardianship and responsibility, welcomed elsewhere, are here most resolutely forbidden to enter. Public responsibility, indeed, is admitted in a half-hearted form, but the right of control, of guardianship that goes, or should go, with responsibility is bluntly denied, and its *assertion treated as a veritable attack upon the basis of public morality* (My emphasis) (Connolly, 1915).

Connolly felt that the lack of public accountability and transparency in the management structures of national schools had acted as a brake on their progress and development. He inferred a causal relationship between antiquated governance structures and the neglect of schools' physical infrastructure with deleterious consequences for pupils and teachers alike:

The National Schools of Ireland have ever been left in the rear of progress, a menace to the health of the pupils and teachers, unsightly and dangerous products of a low standard of civic conscience (Connolly, 1915).

Connolly's critique of the management structure is admittedly partisan and tendentious. As a socialist he was a doctrinaire proponent of public control and ownership in all aspects of civil life while, as a secularist, his opposition to hieratic influence was a point of unerring dogma. Therefore, his identification of all the failures of the system with clerical-control is not entirely impartial. In his treatment of church-control of schools, Connolly veers from polemical critique to thundering denunciation. All shortcomings of the national school system, infrastructural, curricular, pedagogic, are seen by him through the opaque prism of

clerical management, the only curative to which was a local, democratically-elected board of management:

The problem presented by the schools is a problem that can only be settled one way – viz, by the extension to those institutions of the democratic principle, and all that principle implies. We have had, ever since the establishment of the National Schools, an attempt to perform, by a mixture of bureaucracy and clericalism, what can only be accomplished by a full and complete application of democratic trust in the people (Connolly, 1915).

Connolly argued that the denominational principle had fractured and balkanised the education system leading to a proliferation of small, inferior-quality schools catering – inadequately – to diffused, disparate, sectional populations on a sectarian premise:

In order to cater to the rival churches the question of school accommodation has been left to the zeal of the various denominations, with the result that there are at least ten small schools where one large one could more efficiently and economically meet the requirements of the district. Instead of the magnificent public schools of American, Scottish or English towns we have in our cities squalid, unhealthy, wretched abominations, where teaching is a torture to the teacher, and learning a punishment to the taught (Connolly, 1915).

Connolly adumbrated a schema of school management, based vaguely upon democratic and ecumenical ideals, which he proposed as a panacea for all the ills of the national schools. While estimable, it also revealed the naivety of his idealism. Connolly underestimated the implacable *non possumus* which such suggestions were bound to receive from conservative, vested interests and blithely ignored the centuries of political mistrust and religious antagonism which the national school system had successfully negotiated, to some extent camouflaged, but never expunged. Connolly predicted that his demotic paradigm of school management would lead effortlessly to a brave new pluralist world of fully-resourced, finely constructed schools, staffed by generously remunerated teachers, teaching a progressive, liberal curriculum to eager and receptive minds. It was a New Jerusalem which has yet to be realised:

Whatever safeguards are necessary to ensure that the religious faith of the parents shall be respected in the children will be adequately looked after.... Such safeguards are quite compatible with the establishment of popular control of schools, with the building and equipment of schools that shall be a joy to the scholar and an inspiration to the teacher, and with.... a radical overhauling of the curriculum.... When such Palaces of Education shall replace the torture houses at present doing duty as schools, when such honoured and loyally-paid teachers shall replace the sweated sufferers of today.... Erin may once more have reason to be proud of her scholars (Connolly, 1915).

Connolly was one of the few voices outside of the INTO who decried the poor conditions of service under which most national teachers laboured, and suggested that a reform of the management structure would lead to improvement:

Where the democracy, functioning through a representative public body, would supply a competent staff of well-paid teachers, and splendidly equipped, heated and lighted buildings, the present system of despotically-controlled education gives us *a staff of wretchedly-paid teachers with no rights, but with duties continually increasing*. These unfortunates are condemned to carry out the most important functions of modern society, in buildings totally unsuited for the purpose, badly ventilated and drained, and in most instances totally unheated save at the expense of the unfortunate head of the teaching staff (My emphasis) (Connolly, 1915).

Connolly's advocacy of the devolution of school management to elected and accountable boards combined keen hindsight with perceptive foresight. The Powis Commission had recommended as early as 1870 that "All state-aided schools should have management committees" (Coolahan, 1981, p.26,) but it was not until 1975 that this became a reality with the establishment of the first boards of management of national schools (Ibid. p. 137). Indeed Connolly was probably one of the earliest public figures in Ireland to demand the democratisation of school management through elected boards of governance. As early as 1896 the programme of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, which he founded, called for "Public control and management of National Schools by boards elected by popular ballot" (Nevin, 2005, p.63). In this matter Connolly was arguably a visionary, proffering a model of school management which would not come to pass until 60 years after his death. Nonetheless, his projection of all deficiencies of the system onto the clerical management model was somewhat unfair, ignoring as it did the pioneering work of managers over many decades in stewarding the establishment of a functioning primary school system *ab initium* with frugal state supports.

Connolly was not alone in discerning a link between the physical conditions of schools and the health and progress of pupils. He was, however, a prime mover in drawing public attention to what would now be described as educational disadvantage. In highlighting the negative health effects of compromised buildings, poor sanitation and overcrowding on pupils and teachers alike, he presaged the educational reformers of more recent times. The unhygienic conditions in antiquated and decrepit schools roused his ire. In agitating for radical improvements he invoked data drawn from official reports.

He quoted a 1900 report by *The Lancet* into "the sanitary conditions of the national schools of Dublin" which appals even the blunted sensibilities of the modern reader:

Schoolrooms dark and ill ventilated; gas burning in the daytime; no recreation ground; no break from ten till two o'clock; no lavatory for the boys; manure heaps against walls of schools; dark brown liquid manure oozing from it, forming stagnant pools, saturating unpaved porous ground; emanations from school garbage, dust heaps, black mud, fish heads, offal, &c., in the lanes and yards about (Connolly, 1915).

Connolly quoted a 1900 inspector's report which illustrated the grave consequences for staff in the Ballymacarrett district of Belfast of unhygienic working conditions. The report acknowledged the effects of poor housing and drainage on the health of the local inhabitants while noting starkly that "...the school-houses, no doubt, help the work of disease." It also noted the grim impact on staff mortality rates of unsanitary teaching conditions:

I can count up fourteen monitors who have retired through ill-health, and have, I imagine, all since died. Two young monitresses employed in an over-crowded school have died within little more than a year. (Connolly, 1915)

Connolly also cited the 1904 report into "the sanitary conditions of the national schools" of Dublin. He observed that the report "shows that the general sanitary conditions of the city schools was truly deplorable" (Ibid). Connolly was concerned not just at the immediate impact of such conditions on the physical wellbeing of children but at the long term consequences for their emotional and psychological development:

When it is remembered that habits of cleanliness or uncleanliness contracted in childhood tend to root themselves in our natures, it will be understood how great an influence for evil such a school environment must have been to the children unfortunate enough to have been subjected to them (Ibid).

Connolly's rhetoric was again supported by empirical evidence from official sources:

...the detailed reports of Dublin inspectors show, that the Dublin schools seldom reach one-half of the standard necessary in the interests of health and decency. In some schools, for instance, St Patrick's, Lower Tyrone Street, attended by 144 pupils, boys and girls, the w.c.s were open to and used indiscriminately by boys and girls alike (Ibid).

Connolly was one of the earliest critics of classroom over-crowding and, characteristically, his calls for this issue to be tackled were underwritten by meticulous research. He cited a 1909 inspector's report which observed ruefully:

It is a pity... that little children almost at the threshold of existence should be thrust into over-crowded rooms where their young blood is slowly poisoned (Ibid).

In order to highlight "this over-crowding.... and.... its effects upon the health of the children, as well as their ability to benefit by the education provided" (Ibid) Connolly quoted a shocking extract from the 1909-10 report of the Belfast inspector Mr Keith:

Serious cases of over-crowding continue to occur. One city school supplies space for 291 children. At one visit I found 386 present.... At another school, where there is accommodation for 232, 324 children were in attendance.... Part of the time, about 50.... were taught in a tiled unheated passage, and this occurred on a snowy day in winter.... In

another school 103 children were given a conversational lesson in a room 16 feet by 15 feet, accommodation 24. In this room 49 babies spent their school days.... At another infants' school an unheated room 10 feet by 10 feet, is used as a classroom. *There the children have to endure one of two evils in the winter, either to perish with cold if the door is left open, or to inhale vitiated air if it is shut.*

....I found 37 pupils (boys and girls) under instruction in a small yard. Sixteen boys were sitting on the tiled floor of the yard, and two others were *sitting with their backs to the door of one of the out-offices. The teacher thought this preferable to crowding the children into a class-room that is no better than a den* (My emphasis) (Ibid).

Connolly, the agitator, was, of course, indistinguishable from Connolly, the socialist. His indictment of educational inequality was also an indictment of the Capitalist System which he believed underpinned, extended and perpetuated it. Connolly saw its iniquities most damningly revealed in the interface between the abstract ideal of free universal education and the mundane obstacles to school construction, financing and administration in working class districts. He wrote reprovingly of "The bearing of the capitalist system upon the problem of educating the young" (Ibid) as borne out by the difficulty in purchasing affordable sites for school construction. He quoted from the report of one inspector:

The cost of sites is a difficulty to be reckoned with in Belfast. I was informed that a rood of inferior building ground cost the promoters of a school about £500 (Ibid).

Connolly viewed such brakes on educational expansion and development as concrete exemplars of Marx's materialist dialectic in operation. For him they reflected the sinister power of the 'possessing class' to obstruct the building of schools through land speculation – possibly owing to its anxieties about the longer term consequences of mass education:

Five hundred pounds to be paid before Belfast can secure a rood "of inferior building ground", upon which to educate its children; and the landlords who exact this tax upon enlightenment, are the political leaders of the people whose children they obstruct.... has the fear of educating the masses nothing to do with it? (Ibid).

Connolly regarded the provision of universal education as a touchstone of socialism, quoting inspector's reports which he felt demonstrated the haughty indifference of Belfast's prosperous burgher classes to the educational needs of the poor:

Again, the well-to-do classes in Belfast take very little interest in the schools.... The condition of many.... presents a powerful contrast to the phenomenal progress made by the city in so many directions.

It is a pity that a city, in many respects so progressive.... should have to look calmly on, while its children are either cooped-up in ill-ventilated class-rooms or left to face the perils of the streets (Ibid).

The economic imperatives of the labour market and how they impinged upon working class children exercised Connolly. Child labour remained an economic necessity for many working class families in an industrial city like Belfast. Despite laws on mandatory school attendance, part-time work for children remained a feature of city life leading to higher rates of illiteracy relative to Dublin. Connolly viewed this as a searing illustration of establishment cynicism in paying lip-service to an ideal while conniving at obstacles towards its realisation:

None acquainted with the lower paid working-class population.... can have failed to note the extraordinary prevalence of illiteracy in Belfast as compared with Dublin. This... exists despite compulsory school attendance by, first, the rapid growth of the former city, and second, the fact that the *textile industries in Belfast depend upon women and child labour*.... (My emphasis) (Ibid).

Connolly deprecated industrial capitalism as a system which corroded family life, corrupted natural ties and was inimical to progress at school. It was a blight whose nefarious effects registered themselves in school-absenteeism and the degraded home-life of those exploited by it. Once again he allowed "the Report of the Belfast (I) School Inspector for 1911-12" to make his point for him:

There is no doubt that a great many Belfast children do not attend school. The local schools may be overcrowded... *When the children are old enough, they get on half-time in the mills, and are then obliged to go to school.* At a recent visit to a school attended by half-timers and other pupils, it was noticed *that there were 104 half-timers in Standards I and II. These children were all over 12 years of age. Where were they between the age of 6 and 12?* (My emphasis) (Ibid).

Connolly was not oblivious to the issue of rural poverty and its adverse effects on disadvantaged children. He bridled at the social consequences of an economic system which he felt was destructive of community life through involuntary emigration, low rates of marriage and birth, child labour and school absenteeism. Connolly quoted from the report of a Sligo inspector:

There are some places where there are no children. Those who in the past did not emigrate, but remained at home, have grown up; and, confronted by the difficulty of subsistence, have never married.

In other places the young men and women emigrate year after year, and there are none left to help on the farm except the children, *who are, therefore, kept away from school* (My emphasis) (Ibid) .

The Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP)

As a Marxist apologist Connolly had little patience for the moderate, temporising and compromising tendencies of the IPP and frequently had the party in his rhetorical cross hairs for its position on a host of issues, including education.

As part of a raft of reform measures Britain's Liberal government passed the Education (Provision of Meals) Act of 1906 "to make provision for Meals for Children attending Public Elementary Schools in England and Wales" (irishstatutebook.ie; Brockliss and Sheldon, (Eds.), 2012, p.16). For reasons now obscure (possibly to shy away from a pointless internecine squabble with ecclesiastical authorities who guarded jealously against any interference in the internal administration of their schools), the IPP did not insist on the extension of the law to Ireland, thus invoking Connolly's wrath. Connolly saw the IPP's inaction on the question as a gross dereliction of its duty of care to the most vulnerable in Irish society and an abrogation of its broader responsibilities to the labouring poor in general. He seemed particularly riled by the discrimination in treatment of Irish and British children and harried the IPP doggedly for years after with reminders of what he interpreted as a betrayal of his class.

Writing in the socialist paper, *Forward*, in 1911, five years after the passing of the measure, he claimed that:

....the harmless Act to empower a public provision for the feeding of necessitous school children was kept out of Ireland with the connivance – if not directly at the desire – of the Home Rule Party (*Forward*, March 18, 1911).

The following week he reproached the party leader John Redmond for his position on the question:

Mr Redmond's heart bleeds for the poor of Ireland, but he would not vote for the Feeding of School Children's Act to be applied to Ireland.... If it was right.... to demand state aid for Irish farmers, why is it not equally right to demand state aid or local aid for starving Irish school children? (Ibid).

In 1913 Connolly derided the fact that:

....there was no one in the house to fight for the inclusion of Ireland in the Meals for Necessitous School Children Act and thus while reformers in England are now fiercely fighting for the right to feed children during holidays, the school children of Ireland are yet denied the primary right of being fed during school hours (*Forward*, May 3, 1913).

Connolly believed that, by their unwillingness to pursue the school meals issue, the IPP had sacrificed working class children on the altar of political expediency:

...the Dublin workers are not so green as to believe that a party.... which intrigued against the application to Ireland of the Feeding of Necessitous School Children.... can be described as anything else than a treacherous "friend" of Labour (*Forward*, June 7, 1913).

In 1913 Connolly contested the Dock Ward in Belfast's Municipal elections, promising the electors in an open letter:

To advocate.... that the Act for the feeding of children at school at present in force in Great Britain, be applied to Ireland.... as the British workers have secured that their children must be fed before being educated (because it is impossible to educate hungry children), we also claim that when the poverty, or neglect, of the parents is such that the children are suffering, that the local authorities should be empowered to make provision for the supply of at least one good meal per day to each child (Connolly, 1988, p.277-8).

In 1914 it was Dublin Corporation which Connolly charged with not merely failing in its responsibilities in this respect, but of stymying the efforts of Left wing activists:

A law is on the statute book empowering the Corporation of Dublin to feed the children starving at school, and the Corporation mocks the law and the children by appointing on that committee the bitterest enemies of the measure, and a chairman who has made up his mind that it shall never be enforced.... (*Irish Worker*, November 14, 1914).

Connolly also scolded the IPP leadership for its reluctance to agitate for more democratic control of national schools, arguing that the Local Government Act of 1898 had represented a missed opportunity for just such a measure:

Mr Redmond believes that the Irish people are capable of governing their country, but opposed the proposal of Mr TW Russell to allow the Irish people to control their own schools under the Local Government Act of 1898 (*Forward*, March 18, 1911).

Connolly charged John Redmond with hypocrisy for exalting Canada's Dominion status as an example for Ireland to emulate while prevaricating on denominational control of schools, a phenomenon altogether alien to the Canadian experience:

If we are, as we are, capable of running our own country, how comes it we are not fit to be trusted with our own schools? And if the public control of schools by the Catholic Irish people would lead to atheism and to the persecution of the clergy, how has it not produced the same effect in Canada which Mr Redmond is continually praising as an example for Ireland? (*Ibid*).

By 1915, against the backdrop of a Europe convulsed by war and with the prospect of violent insurrection dawning, Connolly's writings became infused with an increasingly militant radicalism. In November he claimed that:

Ireland has the most inefficient educational system, and the poorest schools in Europe. Empire compels us to pay pounds for blowing out the brains of others for every farthing it allows us with which to train our own (*Workers Republic*, November 20, 1915).

The following month he railed against:

This discrimination against equality of treatment for Irish workers (which is) universal in Ireland... and ranges all the way from the wages of a tramp navvy to the 'salary' of a national school teacher (*Workers' Republic*, December 4, 1915).

For Connolly, the Great War confirmed his darkest suspicions of establishment cynicism regarding social reform and improving the lot of the labouring classes.

Conclusion

For James Connolly, education was not a theoretical abstraction but a blunt reality. Indeed he counted schoolteachers such as A. Anderson and John Carstairs Matheson amongst his friends and confidantes (Nevin, 2005, pages 179 and 186). While Pearse is rightly acknowledged as an educational pioneer for the enlightened and progressive theories on pedagogy which he developed in print and advanced in practice at St Enda's (Pearse, 1916, Ó Buachalla (1980), due recognition has never been granted to Connolly for his views on education as a potent instrument for eradicating social injustice. Connolly's influence in the planning of 1916 subtly realigned its ideological axis towards the Left and transformed Easter Week from politico-cultural uprising to socio-politico-cultural revolution. The Proclamation's promise to cherish 'all the children of the nation equally', although more metaphorical than literal, may well have been his final immortal testament to the principles for which he sought to offer his life in expiatory sacrifice.

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and fixed. It is fluid and respondent to its cultural context.

This paper, therefore, argues that knowledge, whether it is discussed in the context of the traditional paradigm or in the context of the new sociology of education, is a particular representation of the dominant culture and is, therefore, a selective process of emphases and exclusions. Knowledge may, therefore, just as easily reproduce capitalist rationality as traditionalism (Freire, 2005). In summary, culture is linked to power and the dominant class or ideology: interestingly, the French philosopher, Bourdieu, argues that money is not the only form of capital in society. Bourdieu posits that cultural and social capital are the foundations on which we create society: cultural capital, he suggests includes symbols – such as music, flags, anthems and sport through which we, as humans, create identity and a sense of belonging (Bourdieu, 1991). In his critique of education in the nation state, Baumann explains that the education systems of all countries share common-ground: “the nation-state school is expected to perpetuate a sense of nation-state identity” (Baumann, 2004, p.1). Significantly, within all education systems, language and music have long been viewed as the principal subjects of achieving the enculturation of a nation’s citizens and, ultimately, a sense of national identity in the nation state (Cox, 2010; Frega et al., 2010; Gruhn, 2010; Ho, 2010; Southcott and Hao-Chun Lee, 2003; McCarthy, 1999). In fact, the distinguished music scholar, John Blacking, contends that “cultural politics – that is, the use of culture and the arts to promote political interests – invariably exploits and contains the power of music” (Blacking, 1990, p.131).

This article, therefore, sets out to examine the divergence between globalisation and nationalist theory in an educational context: more particularly it explores the effect of that political conflict on the content of the music curriculum in Ireland. The argument developed and defended here, in essence, is that there is an inherent bias in our contemporary music curriculum in Ireland towards presenting an intercultural/global music education which reflects the contemporary ideology of globalisation. The direct consequence of this is that there is less emphasis on our own Irish traditional music and song in the classroom since the introduction of the 1999 curriculum. This paper argues that the political and ideological objectives in any subject are best revealed by outlining the value and function of that subject: by this exposition, this article situates the role of music in education within its larger social framework. Indeed, the subject matter of the content of the music curriculum is considered very timely because between 1916 and 1922 the Irish Republic celebrates its hundred years as a new nation and music has played a very significant role in schools’ celebrations of this historical event. Accordingly, it is argued that teachers, and indeed the wider community, who are advocates of preserving Irish culture in Irish education must first of all make themselves critically aware of the prevailing orthodoxies of the content, value and function of music in the curriculum.

This paper draws heavily on the work of Freire who insists it is incumbent on us, as teachers, to be aware of and familiar with underlying ideologies and paradigms in education (Freire, 1970). Freire’s critical pedagogy is further explicated and advanced in the telling title *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach* (Freire, 2005). Freire posits, that as teachers, we must first and foremost regard ourselves as cultural workers: he explicates how we can empower ourselves to become critically aware of our reality: by asking

the questions: 'What?' 'Why?' 'How?' 'To what end?' 'For whom?' 'Against whom?' 'By whom?' 'In favour of whom?' 'In favour of what?' These are the questions that provoke (us) to focus on the substantiveness of things – that is, their reason for being, their purpose, the way they are done and so on (Freire, 2005, p.xii).

Spring consolidates Freire's argument by explaining that the four cornerstones of globalisation theory in education are: world culture, world systems, post-colonialism and culturalism (Spring, 2008). This leads us to the next section where, by invoking the Freirian questions posed above, we are led to analyse the educational paradigms that are associated with globalisation theory.

Globalisation

Since 2008, in several first world countries, the economic takeover of many nation-states, including Ireland, meant that many of the theories of globalisation have actually come to pass in reality (Stevenson, 2010). The teaching profession in Ireland has been dramatically and directly affected by the economic downturn in the last decade: however, the effects of globalisation do not stop at financial implications (ibid). There has been a realisation that the consequences of internationalisation are widespread: this has compelled critics to call for an evaluation of the social and educational changes that have emerged as a result of changing historical conditions (Stevenson 2010, Steger 2007). However, it is felt that it is essential to understand that globalisation is not a new process associated only with this millennium: in their *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels identified internationalisation of humanity as the major consequence of capitalism (Marx and Engels, 1848). Indeed, the following prophetic excerpt from Abraham Lincoln over 150 years ago sums up the effects of globalisation succinctly:

I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country..... corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed (Abraham Lincoln, 21 November 1864).

Globalisation theory contends then, that the world is being reconfigured to strengthen the dominance of a world capitalist economic system, supplanting the primacy of the nation state by transnational corporations and organisations whilst eroding local cultures and traditions through a global culture (Stevenson, 2010; Steger, 2007; Kellner, 2002; Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Green, 1997). As alluded to earlier, Freire explains that the new sociology of education, that is associated with the internationalising of culture in schools, emerged in the 1970s as a critical response to the discourse of traditional educational theory and practice (Freire, 2005). In Ireland, this watershed in an educational context was marked by the introduction of the child-centred 1971 *Primary School Curriculum*, the second curriculum since the formation of the state in 1922.

Banerjee and Linstead posit that at the heart of globalisation theory lie the multicultural or intercultural paradigm (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001). They posit that 'multiculturalism does little more than facilitate assimilation within the dominant ideology' (globalisation) (ibid, p.683). It is significant then to note that the contemporary 1999 primary school curriculum advocates an intercultural music education and promotes the ideology of global citizenship: a varied repertoire of songs and music is recommended in its loose framing, "Various genres and styles (of music) from different periods, cultures and ethnic groups" (Department of Education and Science, Primary School Music Curriculum, 1999b, p.13). The language of the 1999 music curriculum is written in the language of globalisation and standardisation, with its re-conceptualisation of race within the multicultural paradigm (Campbell, 1986).

Freirian theory concurs by explaining that, in an educational context, interculturalism and multiculturalism is the central tenet of the new sociology of education (Freire, 2005). In the opening paragraph of this paper it was mooted that the new sociology of education emerged as a result of a critique of the traditional paradigm in education: it is now timely to discuss the social and cultural framework of that paradigm in an Irish context and the impact of that on the primary school music curriculum.

A traditionalist nationalist ideology

The literature on post-colonial Irish national identity suggests that it was the Anglo-Norman invasion of the 12th century that had the most enduring effect on Irish national identity, as this invasion remained a constant for a millennium (Beckett 1976). The process of the 'anglicisation' of Ireland, is inextricably associated with "the decimation of the Gaelic language and culture" (Kiberd, 2001, p. 460). In Ireland, in the 19th century, the millennium old, relentless British cultural annihilation of 'Irishness', moved a young, mainly Protestant bourgeois urban intellectual class to develop, at first, a social critique of corrupt imperialism, which later advanced to creating an alternative identity, a new Irish nationalism, for the new Free State (Dunne, 1988). The nationalist political agenda of the Irish separatists was diametrically opposed to the preceding British colonialist view (Daly, 1974). Nationalism, as advocated by the Irish cultural nationalists in the emerging Republic, sought to create a thoroughly nationalist identity, as it was felt that political independence was meaningless if the cultural individuality of the Irish nation could not be restored (Daly, 1974, citing Douglas Hyde, a Protestant and subsequent first president of the Free State 1938–45). Hyde, a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, became Ireland's leading cultural nationalist: he founded the Gaelic League in 1893 as a countrywide nationalist, cultural, educational movement that would permeate all sections of Irish life (ibid).

It was against this background that, in January, 1921, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) took the initiative, as the War of Independence raged in the background, to convene 'The First National Programme for Teachers' (National Programme Conference, 1922, p.14). This curriculum was implemented for all national schools in Ireland from the first of April 1922. The historical context of this curriculum then was that political freedom from the British Empire had just been attained and Ireland had just declared itself a Free State. It is no surprise, therefore, that the chief educational function of the traditional

paradigm in Ireland was to conserve and develop Irish nationality: the revival of the Irish language was seen as the *sacra insula* in achieving this aim (MacNeill 1925, cited in Stakelum 2004, p.80). In 1922, the chief executive officer of national education, Pádraig Ó Brolcháin, stated:

It is the intention of the new Government to work with all its might for the strengthening of the national fibre, by giving language, history, music and tradition of Ireland their natural place in the life of Irish schools (*National Programme Conference 1922*, p.2-3).

It is clear that education was recognised by the cultural nationalists as the primary structure for creating Irish identity in the Free State and that Irish music was seen as one of the principal ways of achieving this aim (Stakelum, 2004; McCarthy, 1999). Significantly, the 1922 curriculum lasted for almost 50 years, until the 1971 curriculum, albeit with some revisions, therefore the literature on Irish music in education clearly illustrates that the 1922 curriculum had an enduring effect on the development of music on generations of Irish citizens (White, 2008; 1998; 1984; O’Shea, 2008; McAuliffe-Ryng, 2005; Stakelum, 2004; McCarthy, 1999; Ryan, 1995). Indeed, the singer, John Spillane’s successful album, *Songs we learnt at school*, reflects the extent to which generations associated with this common set of songs. Song titles such as *Péigín Leitir Móir*, *Baidín Fheidhlimí*, *Óró ‘S é do bheatha bhaile*, *Trasna na dTonnta*, *Beidh Aonach Amárach*, agus *An Poc Ar Buile* are remembered by and sung by heart by the cohort of primary school attendees between 1922 right up to the 1980s. Thus, in its objective to create a nationalist identity, official educational policy required that: “Instruction in singing is to be given through the medium of Irish, and for juniors all songs are to be in the Irish language” (*National Programme Conference 1922*, p.14). This very slender first curriculum recommended that the junior group (first, second and third classes) learn “at least six easy folk songs”, and that the seniors (fourth, fifth and sixth classes) learn – as well as the existing six songs – “at least four new songs..... every year in each group.” In the first Programme’s appendix 1 there was *liosta na leabhair go bhfuil glactha leo ag aireacht an oideachais* (a list of acceptable books in each subject). For singing, ‘amhránaíocht,’ in the senior classes the list of books comprised of *An Smólach* by Rooney, *The Irish Minstrel* by Goodman, *Ceol ár Sinsear*, *Ár gCeol Féinig*, and *Roinnt Amhráin* by An tAthair Pádraig Breathnach, *Sean-Amhráin na Mumhan* by Fingin Leamhna, and *An Solfadóir* by T Ó hAodha (*National Programme Conference 1922*).

As regards the development of Irish instrumental music in schools, McCarthy states “tin-whistle bands became a feature of primary schools from the 1940s” (McCarthy 1999, p.120). This feature of the Irish primary school is largely attributed to Carl Hardebeck, composer, arranger, collector of folk music and member of the Gaelic League. He arranged Irish dance tunes for the relatively cheap, but authentic traditional tin-whistle in a book published in 1937 entitled *Ceol na nGaedheal* (Music of the Gaels). This book fulfilled Hardebeck’s aim of “raising the standard of musical appreciation throughout the country, and (will) constitute a tremendous force in the revival of our national tunes” (Hardebeck 1937, p.1). Although the 1971 curriculum, unlike the 1922 curriculum, did not explicate a

specific set of nationalistic aims, it is clear that nationalist sentiment was still a central theme in its ideology:

The educational system is a mechanism by which one generation transmits to the next... the common culture of society... the social habits, customs and national attitudes on which the health and cohesion of society depend (An Roinn Oideachais 1971, Part 1, p.14).

Indeed, the set of songs listed above from the 1922 curriculum remained on the list of songs to be taught in the 1971 *Primary School Curriculum* (An Roinn Oideachais 1971, Part 1 and 2).

It is apparent then that we, as teachers and cultural workers, recognise that ethnic belonging is not a coherent path through unproblematic instances, but a precarious sense of constructions produced by sets of arbitrations and discourses and a “whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things” (Said, 1995, p.60). This brings us to examine, in the next section, how the current ideology in our third curriculum since the foundation of the Irish State is articulated, namely the 1999 *Primary School Curriculum*.

Intercultural Ideology

One of the most significant factors for music in the contemporary curriculum is that music is no longer a discrete subject in the curriculum; instead, it finds its place in a new subject area, arts education, a practice that is now common in many countries (Cox, 2010). Music, therefore, has seen a change in its function and value. Interestingly, opinions are divided amongst those who believe that the inclusion of music as part of arts education, enhances the experience of music (McCarthy, 1999; Mark, 1982) and those who maintain it weakens the function of music as a compulsory subject (Cox, 2010; Gruhn, 2010). Many teachers feel that the value of music has been diminished in the 1999 *Primary School Curriculum* as reflected in this statement in the primary school teachers' union, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation's (INTO) report *Creativity and the arts in the primary school*: “Since the advent of a common curriculum, arts educators have struggled to have the arts taken seriously” (INTO, 2009, p.13). We will now consider the function of music in the contemporary 1999 curriculum.

The European Commission's Eurydice report *Arts and cultural education at school in Europe* states that the function of arts education in Europe is “to develop competencies in innovation and creativity for citizens of the twenty-first century” in a global economy (European Commission 2009:13).

The 1999 music curriculum has three strands:

1. listening and responding;
2. performing;
3. composing.

“Musical elements are suggested within each strand unit that enable the child to develop an awareness of and sensitivity to the inter-related elements of music (pulse, duration, tempo, pitch, dynamics, structure, timbre, texture and style)” (Department of Education and Science, Government of Ireland 1999b, p.7). The 1999 music curriculum reflects a paradigm shift from nationalism to globalisation: it is non-prescriptive, written as it is in the language of multicultural paradigm; the teacher is given full autonomy in song selection. The guidelines on song-singing for fifth and sixth class (11-12 year olds) state:

The child should be enabled to recognise and sing from memory a more demanding repertoire of songs with an awareness of the music’s social, historical and cultural contexts: amhráin Ghaeilge (Irish songs), folk-tunes and dances from other countries, simple rounds or canons, hymns or carols, ballads, songs from musicals, popular songs, art songs (Department of Education and Science, Government of Ireland 1999a, p.71).

It is clear that Irish music and Irish songs (in the Irish or English language) are included and may be done if a teacher wishes to engage with them. However, it is apparent that in Ireland there will no longer be a common set of national songs, songs we learn at school. In the 1999 *Primary School Curriculum*, the recorder, which derives from the Western classical tradition is described thus: “The recorder is the ideal classroom instrument (having) one of the richest and most varied repertoires of any instrument, ranging over the medieval, Renaissance, baroque and contemporary periods” (Department of Education and Science, Government of Ireland 1999a, p.106). The traditional tin-whistle no longer merits the central role in instrumental music in Irish primary schools.

Significantly, in the history of music in education, the year 2016 has been important as schools in Ireland were encouraged by the DES to commemorate the centenary of the 1916 Rising (www.military.ie/info-centre/defence-forces-2016/flags-for-schools-initiative/). Schools were also asked also to celebrate ‘Proclamation Day’ on 15 March 2016. Interestingly, many teachers taught Irish music, songs in the Irish language and Irish dance to celebrate our nation’s centenary. Indeed, 2016 saw many teachers teach overtly Republican songs to the children in schools for the first time since ‘The Troubles’ in Northern Ireland made it politically incorrect to do so. Professor White, the eminent Irish musicologist, attributes such anti-Republican sentiment in the practice of Irish music to the Irish broadcasting authority’s (RTE’s) decision in 1972 to ban traditional rebel ballads associated with Republicanism in Northern Ireland, the IRA (Irish Republican Army) or ‘The Troubles’ (White, 1984). Interestingly, only three years previous to 2016, findings from Thornton’s doctoral research in 2013 reveal that teachers were vociferous that they would not teach a rebel or republican set of songs or advocate their presence in the curriculum. Whilst most of the teachers referred to political ballads in their definition of Irish music, all said they had categorically dismissed them from the repertoire of songs they would hand on to the children in their school and confessed they would not be comfortable with the transmission of this genre of the music. Sinéad (pseudonym) speaks of experience of learning rebel ballads in primary school in County Mayo in the late 1970s:

I'm laughing now or whatever but when I was at school we had an awful lot of rebel ballads. I still remember the words of them, songs like *Kevin Barry* and *James Connolly*, *Seán Sabhat from Garryowen*. I can't imagine me teaching those now! (Thornton 2013, p.107).

Commemorative ballads, such as those named above, have a common anti-British sentiment, as this line from *The Ballad of Kevin Barry* illustrates: "another martyr for old Ireland, another murder for the crown". Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a very strong sentiment amongst all the teachers to resist anything to do with overt with rebel songs, as typified by Clíona's (pseudonym) statement:

We learnt an awful lot of rebel songs (laughs) that I wouldn't be teaching now to be honest with you. Anyway they are not really in evidence now, and besides, I have absolutely no interest in going down that route now at all (Thornton 2013, p.107).

The issue about teaching Republican songs aside, it is incumbent on teachers in Ireland to be aware of the cultural shift that has occurred in our curriculum. Ireland, in this 21st century holds its reputation as a nation famed for its music and dance: recently this image has been reinforced by such worldwide phenomena as *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance* (Fleming, 2004; McCann, 2001). However, juxtaposed to this renowned perception of a musically rich Ireland, several studies such as *Deaf Ears* (Herron, 1985) and *MEND: Music Education National Debate* (Heneghan, 2001) contend that music for the Irish youth is a much neglected field in Irish education, with "the young Irish person (having) the worst of all European musical worlds" (Herron 1985: 40–41). White concurs, stating "Irish music endures an educational void which is perhaps unparalleled in post-war Europe" (White, 1998, p.2). Indeed, Johnston's recent research on the transmission of Irish traditional music sums up the situation well:

A comment on the state of music education in Ireland, if approached from a school perspective, might very well by-pass traditional music without being guilty of too grave an omission.... there is but a token presence in formal education (Johnston 2013, p.18).

Conclusion

It is incumbent on us as teachers to be critically aware "that globalisation is the colonialism for this millennium", despite its triumphant rhetoric of "one world many peoples" (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001, p.683). From reading this article it is hoped it is now apparent to teachers that schooling at state-level is inherently political, however, it is considered essential for teachers to realise that actions at a personal level, that is curriculum selection, are also political, as is acknowledged by Cohen et al.:

Actions are meaningful to us only in so far as we are able to ascertain the intentions of actors.... curriculum is (therefore) an ideological selection from a range of possible knowledge (Cohen et al. 2007, p.21, 31).

This resonates with the view that knowledge and curriculum selection is neither neutral nor innocent (Habermas, 1972). Thus, in the contemporary music curriculum in Ireland a wide and eclectic programme is advanced; Irish music may or may not be part of primary schooling depending on teachers' choices. This would appear to have major repercussions for future generations, because not only is there no longer a common set of Irish songs learnt at school, but children may not even hear Irish music in their education. Psychological studies reveal that this may result in Irish children not even liking Irish music, as it is familiarity with a music which fosters its appreciation (Johnston, 2013; Hargreaves et al., 2008; Morrison et al., 2008; Abeles and Chung, 1996). We, as teachers in Ireland, should "know our reality" (Freire, 1970) and be aware of changing political ideologies that affect our practice. In conclusion, we may consider the renowned Palestinian philosopher, Edward Said's hypothesis that expanding the universal is always achieved at the expense of the native (Said, 2005).

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sa Fhrainc. In Éirinn, i bhformhór na gcásanna, is comhleacaithe iad an meantóir agus an múinteoir sa scoil chéanna, agus tá deiseanna acu aithne mhaith a chur ar a chéile. (Bíonn cásanna ann chomh maith ina mbíonn meantóir amháin freagrach as cnuasach de scoileanna.) Sa Fhrainc, áfach, is é an conseiller pédagogique (CP), ó oifigí an chigire, atá freagrach as an múinteoir nua a thionlacan. Agus bíonn idirdhealú cinnte idir an tacaíocht seo, agus an tástáil a dhéanann an cigire níos déanaí mar chuid den phromhadh. Bheifí ag súil, mar sin go mbeadh difríochtaí suntasacha idir na cruinnithe iar-cheachta sa dá chás. Ar an ábhar seo a bheartaigh an t-údar, díriú ar chóras ionductaithe na Fraince agus na hÉireann mar ábhar don tráchtas dochtúireachta ar a bhfuil an t-alt seo bunaithe (údar, 2012).

Déanann an t-alt comparáid mar sin, idir dhá chruinniú iar-cheachta mar chuid den tionlacan isteach sa ghairm do mhúinteoirí bunscoile nua in Éirinn agus sa Fhrainc. Is cruinnithe iad seo a leanann am breathnóireachta i rang an mhúinteora nua, cruinniú idir an múinteoir A agus conseiller pédagogique (CP) sa Fhrainc, agus idir múinteoir B agus meantóir anseo in Éirinn.

Is í príomhcheist an ailt ná cad iad na difríochtaí suntasacha atá idir an dá chóras agus cén tionchar atá aige seo ar an gcomhrá féin. Uaidhsean a thagann mion-cheisteanna eile den tsóirt seo: cén t-ábhar a phléitear? Cén struchtúr a chuirtear ar an gcruinniú? Cad iad na dúshláin a bhíonn ann? Ní bheidh spás anseo dul isteach go mion sna freagraí, ach díreoidh an t-alt ar roinnt pointí spéisíúla, go mórmhór ar an aird a thugtar sa chomhrá ar chúrsaí teagaisc agus foghlama agus riachtanais eile an mhúinteora.

Ionduchtú in Éirinn

Is mar chuid den chlár ionductaithe do mhúinteoirí a oibríonn an meantóir. Bhí an Clár Píolótach Náisiúnta ar Ionduchtú do Mhúinteoirí (nó an NPPTI mar ab fhearr aithne air) ar fáil ó 2001/02 go 2009/10 agus é ag freastal ar chéatadán áirithe de dhaonra na múinteoirí nua in earnáil na bunscoile agus na hiar-bhunscoile. Bunaíodh é ar bhonn seasmhach i Meán Fómhair 2010 mar an National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT), agus tá an t-ionductú éigeantach do mhúinteoirí nua ó Mheán Fómhair 2012 i leith. Is í an phríomhaidhm atá leis ná tacú le 'forbairt phearsanta, ghairmiúil agus oideolaíochta an mhúinteora nua' sa chéad bhliain ag múineadh dó/di (NIPT, 2016). Tá na heilimintí seo a leanas mar chuid den chlár: tacaíocht ó mheantóir oilte; breathnóireacht agus aiseolas ó mheantóir; breathnóireacht ar chomhleacaithe eile ag múineadh; treoir agus áiseanna ó fhoireann an NIPT. Cuirtear ceardlanna ar fáil um thráthnóna ar théamaí den tsóirt seo: gairmiúlacht mhúinteora; leas/folláine an mhúinteora; bainistiú ranga agus eagrú; measúnú; litearthacht; cosaint páistí; pleanáil agus ullmhú; tacú le tuismitheoirí; difreálú; uimhreas; cuimsiú, agus araile.

Níl an clár ionductaithe ar an bhfód in Éirinn ach le tamall gearr (i gcomparáid le tíortha eile) agus beidh a lán forbairtí i ndán dó sna blianta atá romhainn. Faoi láthair, tá an Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta ag obair ar chóras nua a bhunú chun tabhairt faoi ionductú agus promhadh na múinteoirí, ar a dtugtar Droichead (An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta, 2016a). Tá sé seo á thriail ar bhonn píolótach faoi láthair agus tá an tástáil agus an phlé fós ar siúl. Droichead a thugtar ar an tréimhse ama atá le comhlíonadh ag an múinteoir roimh

chlárú leis an gComhairle mar bhall cáilithe. De réir an pholasaí, beidh an t-ionductú ina phróiseas, agus an promhadh mar phointe ar leithligh i rith an ama. Bunófar foireann tacaíochta nó professional support team (PST) sa scoil chun tacú leis an múinteoir, ach is é an príomhoide féin agus/nó ball eile na foirne tacaíochta (seachas an meantóir) a bheidh freagrach as promhadh a mholadh don Chomhairle. Sa chás go bhfuil cabhair bhreise ag teastáil chun teacht ar chinneadh, beidh tacaíocht le fáil ón bhfoireann NIPT agus ón gCigireacht. Pé struchtúr a chuirfear ar an ionductú agus an promhadh ag an deireadh, is léir go mbeidh ról tábhachtach ag an meantóir i bhfoghlaim an mhúinteora.

Tionlacan isteach sa ghairm sa Fhrainc

Leanann an clár tacaíochta do mhúinteoirí nua sa Fhrainc thar dhá bhliain. Leagtar béim ar an tionlacan a fhaigheann an múinteoir nua, rud a fhágann gurb é an teideal, accompagnement de l'entrée dans le métier (Tionlacan ar an dul isteach sa ghairm) is mó a úsáidtear chun tagairt a dhéanamh don chlár. An aidhm atá leis ná forbairt a dhéanamh ar chumas agus ar fhios ghairmiúil na múinteoirí (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2007). Áitíonn an ciorclán go bhfreastalaíonn sé, sa chéad áit, ar riachtanais choinearacha an mhúinteora ach go dtacaíonn sé le machnamh an mhúinteora ar a chleachtas ranga chomh maith.

Is chuige sin na cuairteanna agus an tionlacan pearsanta a thugann an conseiller pédagogique (CP) ar an múinteoir. Ball foirne in oifigí an chigire áitiúil is ea an CP, a bhfuil cúram agus post lánaimseartha aige/aici ag cabhrú le forbairt ghairmiúil na múinteoirí sa cheantar. Is gá triail stáit a dhéanamh chun cáiliú mar CP. Cúig nó sé cinn de chuairteanna breathnóireachta a thugtar ar an múinteoir nua sa chéad bhliain (PET₁ - Professeur des écoles Titulaire 1) agus laghdaítear é sin sa dara bliain ag brath ar riachtanais an mhúinteora. I ndiaidh an chruinnithe iar-cheachta, scríobhann an CP tuairisc chuairte (bulletin de visite) agus tugtar cóip amháin don mhúinteoir. Tugann sé sin cuntas ar an am breathnóireachta, an cruinniú a lean é, agus aon spriocanna nó tosaíochtaí a socraíodh don chéad tamall eile. Coimeádtar cuntas i gcaitheamh an dá bhliain ar fhorbairt an mhúinteora maidir leis na deich gcumas gairmiúil (compétences professionnelles) atá le baint amach. An cigire féin atá freagrach as na múinteoirí a phromhadh i dtreo dheireadh an dara bliain. Dhá phróiseas neamhspleách is ea an tionlacan agus an promhadh, ach má tá amhras ar an CP i dtaobh chumas an mhúinteora i gcaitheamh an tionlacain cuirtear é sin in iúl don chigire níos luaithe ná sin.

Chomh maith leis an tionlacan pearsanta, freastalaíonn múinteoirí nua ar stages de formation nó cúrsaí oiliúna. Tugtar iad seo i mbloic ghairide de laethanta i gcaitheamh na bliana. Tionóltar iad in ionad lasmuigh den scoil agus bíonn na múinteoirí saor ó dhualgais teagaisc na laethanta sin. Mar shampla, bhí ocht lá oiliúna ag an múinteoir A atá faoi thrácht san alt seo agus í ag múineadh mar PET₁ in 2009/10; bhí ceithre lá oiliúna le fáil aici sa dara bliain (PET₂) in 2010/11. Is iad na cigirí, na conseillers agus lucht teagaisc ón gcoláiste ollscoile a chuireann an oiliúint seo ar fáil. Tá cead ag an ngrúpa an clár traenála a leasú ag brath ar riachtanais áitiúla na múinteoirí ach tá ábhar ginearálta molta ag an Académie réigiúnach chomh maith, mar shampla : gairm an mhúinteora agus an tseirbhís phoiblí; ag obair le tuismitheoirí; bainistíocht ranga; pleanáil; forás na foghlama; an nuatheicneolaíocht;

measúnú; cabhair phearsanta breise (aide personnalisée); an léitheoireacht; agus an tacaíocht foghlama.

Comparáid idir an da chlár tacaíochta

Ar bhonn ginearálta, is ar thopaicí den tsóirt céanna atá na seimineáir oiliúna dírithe sa dá chóras. Tá difríochtaí suntasacha ann, áfach, sa mhéid is gur um thráthnóna a bhíonn siad ar siúl in Éirinn. B'shin athrú amháin a d'imigh ar an tionscnamh píolótach nuair a leathnaíodh an scéim i 2010. Sa Fhrainc, áfach faigheann na múinteoirí laethanta speisialta saor ó dhualgais ranga chun freastal orthu.

Tá de dhifríocht eatarthu chomh maith gur post faoi leith atá ag an CP murab ionann agus an cúram breise a bhíonn ag an meantóir in Éirinn. Dá bharr seo, bíonn níos mó ama ar fáil aige/aici cuairteanna a thabhairt ar na scoileanna ina mbíonn múinteoirí nua ag feidhmiú. Fágann sin, áfach, nach mbíonn an deis chéanna ann bualadh go neamhfhoirmeálta leis na múinteoirí mar a tharlódh in Éirinn, de bharr gur chomh-mhúinteoirí iad de ghnáth sa scoil chéanna.

Ach an bhfuil tionchar ag na difríochtaí seo ar an gcur chuige sa chruinniú iar-cheachta sa dá thír? Is ar an gceist seo a dhíríonn an t-alt.

Creat teoiriciúil

Tá mórán teoiricí ann a thugann léargas ar obair an mheantóra. Bhí tagairt thuas do na ceithre chúram a bhaineann leis an meantóireacht (Portner, 2003) agus dúradh, gurbh í an chóitseáil an chuid ba thábhachtaí astu seo.

Sa litríocht Fraincise, accompagnement nó 'tionlacan' a thugtar ar an slí ina dtacaíonn duine amháin le turas foghlama duine eile. De ghnáth, bíonn taithí agus eolas na slí ag an duine a thugann an tionlacan, sé sin an tionlacaí (accompagnateur). Déanann Paul (2004) idirdhealú idir trí sheasamh a bhíonn ag an tionlacaí, ag brath ar na cúinsí agus ar riachtanais an fhoghlaimora. Is féidir linn trí fhocal dar tús T a ghairm orthu seo: tiomáin (conduire); treoraigh (guider); agus téigh i dteannta (escorter). Uaireanta, tabharfaidh an tionlacaí stiúir cinnte, ach uaireanta eile, fágfar níos mó saoirse leis an múinteoir a shlí féin a dhéanamh amach. Bíonn ar an tionlacaí malartú idir na seasaimh seo mar is gá.

Tugann Donnay agus Charlier ón mBeilg léargas breise air seo san idirdhealú a dhéanann siad idir asamhlú (assimilation) agus difreálú (différentiation). Is gá don tionlacaí gan í féin agus a 'tionscnamh' féin a bhrú ar an múinteoir, sé sin, gan an ceann scríbe a shocrú roimh ré agus iachall a chur ar an múinteoir cloí go dlúth leis sin. Ach ar an dtaobh eile, má choimeádann an tionlacaí siar an iomarca, gan súil chriticiúil a thabhairt ar chleachtas an mhúinteora, tá an dainséar ann gur asamhlú a tharlóidh, agus nach mbeidh aon fhorbairt ghairmiúil ann dá bharr.

Tá an creat teoiriciúil bunaithe chomh maith ar 'anailís ar chleachtas' (analyse des pratiques) (Altet, 1994). Ciallaíonn sé gur gá aird an CP a tharraingt ar a cleachtas féin mar thionlacaí. Chuige seo, déanann an taighdeoir anailís ar an gcruinniú iar-cheachta agus pléann sé an anailís leis an CP i dtreo is go bhfoghlaímíonn sé/sí óna gníomhartha féin

(Vinatier agus Altet, 2008). Ní bheidh spás san alt díriú ar an ngné seo, ach moltar é mar shlí chun tarraingt ar na torthaí ar mhaithe le forbairt ghairmiúil na meantóirí.

Baineann an teoiric seo leis an dtuiscint a bhí ag Piaget (1974) go mbíonn fios in úsáid ag an duine agus é/í i mbun gnímh. Maireann an fhios folaithe in aigne an duine mar ‘scéimeanna’, sé sin, nósanna smaointe seanbhunaithe, cailcithe. I ngan fhios don duine, nó ag leibhéal neamh-chomhfhiosach, stiúrann na scéimeanna sin iompar an duine, agus imríonn siad tionchar ar a ghníomhartha. Bíonn an fhios i bhfolach sa ghníomh, agus ní bhíonn aird ag an duine (an meantóir agus an CP sa chás seo) ar an bhfios chéanna. Baineann sé seo le stór teoiricí ar a dtugtar an didactique professionnelle atá curtha ar an bhfód ag Gérard Vergnaud (1996), agus forbartha ag daoine eile ó shin (Pastré, 1999 mar shampla). Chun feidhm níos fearr a bhaint as an bhfios seo, is gá í a chur i bhfocail, labhairt fúithi, machnamh a dhéanamh uirthi, le taighdeoir mar shampla, agus tuiscint níos fearr a fháil. Is mar seo a chuireann an duine feabhas ar a chleachtas an chéad uair eile.

Tá cosúlachtaí ann idir an teoiric seo agus an ‘cleachtas machnamhach’ de chuid Schön (1987), sé sin, an tslí ina gcabhraíonn an ‘machnamh i ndiaidh an ghnímh’ (reflection-on-action) leis an duine, a bheith ábalta ‘machnamh i mbun gnímh,’ (reflection-in-action), agus máistreacht a bhaint amach dá réir. Is féidir na teoiricí seo a chur in éineacht le teoiric theangeolaíoch de chuid Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1992) chun léargas breise a thabhairt ar nithe a bhaineann le cumhacht agus caidreamh sa chomhrá (interactions verbales), mar atá déanta ag Vinatier (2009).

Modheolaíocht

Baineann an dá chruinniú atá i gceist le taighde níos fairsinge a rinneadh do chéim dhochtúireachta in Ollscoil Nantes (de Paor, 2012). Dhá chruinniú iar-cheachta a bheidh faoi chaibidil, ceann amháin acu idir CP agus múinteoir sa Fhrainc (Cruinniú A) agus an dara ceann idir meantóir agus múinteoir in Éirinn (Cruinniú B). Sa dá chás, thug an taighdeoir cuireadh do ghrúpa de mheantóirí agus conseillers pédagogiques páirt a ghlacadh sa taighde. Cé gur sampla an-teoranta é den teagmháil ar fad a tharlaíonn ó thús deireadh na bliana, agus cé gur iomaí difríochtaí a bhíonn ann ó chruinniú amháin go chéile, tugann an t-alt, mar sin féin, léiriú éigin ar an bhfoghlaím ghairmiúil a tharlaíonn sa dá chás.

Oibríonn múinteoir A in école maternelle mar a bhfuil 23 páistí in aois trí nó ceithre bliana faoi chúram aici, seachtar sa chéad bhliain (petite section) agus seisear déag sa dara bliain (moyenne section). Bhí cúig chruinniú iar-cheachta foirmeálta ag an múinteoir leis an CP i gcaitheamh na bliana chomh maith le cuairteanna gairide eile. Ba é an cruinniú atá faoi chaibidil anseo an chéad cheann acu sin (Deireadh Fómhair 2009), cé go raibh cruinnithe gairide acu roimhe sin chun aithne a chur ar a chéile.

Is comh-mhúinteoirí iad an meantóir agus an múinteoir B i nGaelscoil i mbruachbhaile cathrach in Éirinn. Rang na naíonán sinsearach atá á mhúineadh ag an múinteoir. Sa seomra in aice láimhe a oibríonn an meantóir mar a bhfuil meascán de Rang 1 agus grúpa beag de naíonáin shinsearach a aici. Bhí triúr múinteoirí nua ar fad á dtionlacan ag an meantóir an bhliain chéanna, múinteoir B agus beirt eile. I mí na Nollag a tionóladh an cruinniú atá faoi thrácht anseo, agus ba é an chéad cheann a d’eagraigh siad go dtí sin é.

An meantóir agus an CP a rinne taifeadadh ar an dá chruinniú le trealamh a thug an taighdeoir dóibh roimhré. Bhailigh an taighdeoir an dá thaifeadadh ina dhiaidh sin, rinneadh tras-scríobh ar an gcomhrá, agus bhris sé suas an comhrá ina n-eipeasóidí san anailís a rinne sé. Is aonad ann féin é gach eipeasóid ina bhfuil an bheirt chainteoirí dírithe ar ábhar áirithe. Tá cur síos san aguisín ar na heipeasóidí.

Tugtar thíos eolas ar an dá sheal breathnóireachta agus an dá chruinniú iar-cheachta. Tá sé le tabhairt faoi deara láithreach gur mór an difríocht atá eatarthu maidir le fad. Lean an bhreathnóireacht sa chás Francach thar dhá uair agus fiche nóiméad go dtí meán lae agus bhí raon leathan gníomhaíochtaí ar siúl ag an múinteoir leis na páistí, mar shampla, gnásanna na maidine, ceardlanna (obair ghrúpa), insint ar scéal agus rannta. Fágann an CP an scoil ag meán lae ach filleann sé ar an scoil níos déanaí nuair atá na páistí imithe abhaile. Tosaíonn an cruinniú iar-cheachta ansin agus leanann sé chomh fada le huair a' chloig.

Bhí am breathnóireachta agus cruinniú i bhfad níos giorra ag Péire B in Éirinn. Ceacht mata dar fad daichead is a cúig nóiméad a bhí i gceist chun tuiscint na bpáistí a fhorbairt ar thréithe na gceithre chruth déthoiseach (cearnóg, triantán, dronuilleog agus ciorcal). Bhí roinnt ceachtanna déanta ar an ábhar seo an tseachtain chéanna. Buailéann an meantóir agus an múinteoir le chéile díreach i ndiaidh an cheachta.

Tábla 1: Fad ama a caitheadh ar bhreathnóireacht agus ar an gcruinniú iar-cheachta

Péire	Breathnóireacht ranga : fad	Cruinniú iar- cheachta : fad	Cruinniú iar- cheachta: focail
A : Conseiller pédagogique agus Múinteoir A sa Fhrainc	2 uair, 20 nóiméad	55 nóiméad	10, 666
B : Meantóir agus Múinteoir B in Éirinn	45 nóiméad	27 nóiméad	5, 527

Torthaí

Tugtar roinnt torthaí anseo thíos ar phointí suntasacha agus tá achoimre ar an dá chruinniú curtha san aguisín. An taighdeoir a bhris na cruinnithe suas ina n-eipeasóidí, agus a chum na teidil chun léiriú gonta a thabhairt ar an ábhar a bhí á phlé. I nGaeilge a labhair Péire B, agus is aistriúchán ar an bhFraincis atá sna sleachta ó phéire A. Úsáidtear lúibíní cearnógacha (...) chun na sleachta a ghiorrú.

Cruinniú A (an Fhrainc)

Is faide go mór an cruinniú a bhí ag Péire A ná Péire B agus luíonn sé le réasún gur mó an raon topaicí a phléann siad (Tábla 2). Labhraíonn siad ar feadh tamaill mhaith faoin mbainistiú ranga agus is í an eipeasóid ar eagrú na gceardlanna an eipeasóid is faide, mar a thugann Figiúr 1 le fios. San eipeasóid sin atá an deighilt is mó idir an méid cainte a dhéanann siad beirt, mar tá an CP ag iarraidh réitigh éagsúla a mholadh don mhúinteoir chun cabhrú léi.

Is léir ó theidil na n-eipeasóidí (agus ón achoimre san aguisín) go bpléann siad a lán topaicí a bhaineann le cúrsaí teagaisc, fios oideolaíochta, agus foghlaim na bpáistí. Molann an CP an dea-theagasc, ach ní bhíonn drogall air lagaí sa cheacht a lua. Mar shampla, in Eipeasóid 5, impíonn sé ar an múinteoir a bheith ar an airdeall maidir leis na botúin atá á ndéanamh ag na páistí san obair scríofa.

CP: (...) ní féidir na páistí a fhágáil ina n-aonar leo féin i gceardlann mar seo (...) Benoit, mar shampla, (...) bhí na litreacha san ord ceart aige, ach, don T, thosaigh sé leis an líne trasna ar barr, níor thosaigh sé ag an mbun, leis an gcos, agus chuaigh sé ó dheis go clé...

Múinteoir: Is ea, ceart go leor, rachaidh siad i dtaithí ar dhroch-nósanna.

CP: An 'L' rinne sé an rud céanna (...)

Múinteoir: Tá go maith.

CP: Bhí sé ar fad mícheart.

Múinteoir: Hmm. Is ea, é sin ar fad. Ní fhaca mé é sin.

Mar sin féin, molann sé na dea-iarrachtaí agus go deimhin, uaireanta, is ag cosaint an mhúinteoir óna cáineadh féin atá an CP. Mar shampla, ag tús an chruinnithe thug an múinteoir breithiúnas diúltach ar an teagasc a bhí díreach déanta aici. Chuir an CP a mhalairt de bhreithiúnas in iúl láithreach agus dhearbhaigh sé go raibh an méid a chonaic sé féin go maith agus nár cheart di a bheith faoi strus nó chomh buartha sin.

CP: Ar an gcéad dul síos, táim chun a rá leat, chun tú a chur ar do shuaimhneas, mar dúirt tú liom (...) gur chuir an chuairt strus ort, (is ea, beagáinín), nár cheart duit a bheith faoi strus, mar bhí an méid a chonaic mé inniu, bhí sé go maith.

Teastaíonn ón CP áfach, nach eisean amháin a mholfadh na réitigh ar pé deacrachtaí atá aici, ach go bpléadh siad le chéile an deacracht, agus go dtiocfaidís le chéile ar réiteach. In Eipeasóid 4, mar shampla, molann sé di gur fiú cur i láthair a lorg ó gach grúpa ar an méid a rinne siad sna stáisiúin ceardlainne. Sa tslí sin beidh sí ábalta measúnú a dhéanamh ar an bhfoghlaim agus chomh maith leis sin, beidh tuairim mhaith ag na páistí eile ar cad a bheidh le déanamh acu nuair a thiocfaidh siad chomh fad leis an stáisiún sin. Meabhraíonn an CP di go mbeidh uirthí eagar a chur ar an straitéis sin, cé gur léir ón gcomhrá thíos go gceapann an múinteoir nach mbeidh go leor ama aici chuige sin.

CP: (...) De réir a chéile, beidh a fhios acu conas labhairt faoin obair, agus ag an am céanna, cabhraíonn sé leo, leatsa, measúnú a dhéanamh ar an méid atá déanta acu, agus ansin, cabhróidh sé le foghlaim na bpáistí eile. (Is ea ach), ach beidh eagrú ag teastáil, agus tusa a aimseoidh an t-eagrú sin.

Múinteoir: Agus ag an am céanna, caithfear an t-am a bhainistiú, mar is gá, chun go leor ama a bheith ann don dul siar sin, mar sleamhnaíonn an t-am an-tapaídh.

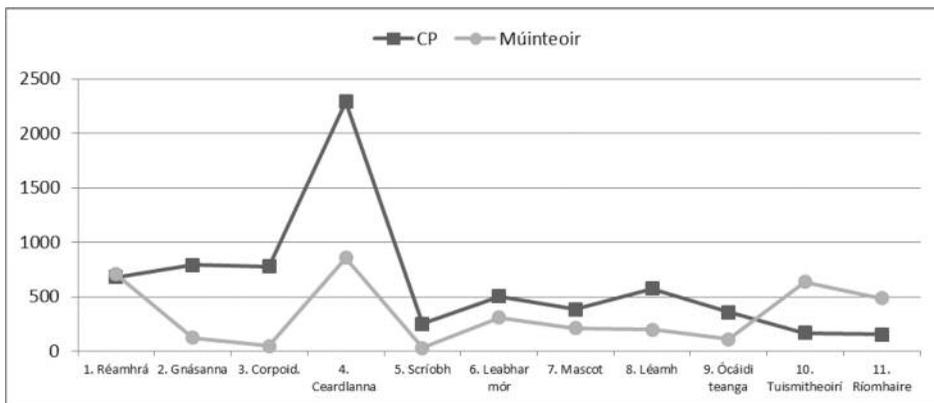
Tugann struchtúr na n-eipeasóidí le fios go bhfuil ról ceannasach ag an CP i mbainistiú an chruinnithe tríd síos. Eisean a osclaíonn formhór na n-eipeasóidí trí cheist a chur nó

tuairimí an mhúinteora a lorg. Dúnann sé formhór na n-eipeasóidí freisin, nuair atá siad réidh chun bogadh ar aghaidh go dtí an chéad topaic eile. Eisean a labhraíonn an chuid is mó den am chomh maith, beagnach dhá oiread focal níos mó ná an múinteoir: 6, 939 focal (65%) ón CP agus 3, 727 focal (35%) ón múinteoir. Labhraíonn an CP níos mó in Eipeasóidí 2 go dtí 9 mar a bhfuil sé ag roinnt a thuairimí, ag freagairt ceisteanna an mhúinteora, agus ag tabhairt samplaí di mar réiteach ar roinnt deacrachtaí sa bhainistíocht ranga.

Tábla 2: Na heipeasóidí i gComhrá A – topaic, oscailt, dúntadh agus fad

Eipeasóid	Oscailte ag	Dúnta ag	Focail		Iomlán
			CP	Múint.	
1. Réamhrá ginearálta agus clár	CP	CP	681	708	1389
2. Gnásanna na maidine: ciall agus tuiscint	CP	CP	790	124	914
3. Corpoideachas: samhlaíocht na bpáistí	CP	CP	779	50	829
4. Ceardlanna: eagrú agus críochnú	CP	CP	2294	859	3153
5. Scríbhneoireacht: maoirsiú ag teastáil	CP	Múinteoir	253	30	283
6. Leabhar mór: cur chuige agus tairbhe	CP	CP	505	310	815
7. Sonóg agus forbairt teanga	CP	CP	384	212	596
8. Páistí ag léamh go neamhspleách	Múinteoir	CP	574	199	773
9. Ócáidí cainte don fhorbairt teanga	Múinteoir	CP	359	110	469
10. Tuismitheoirí	CP	CP	166	638	804
11. Ríomhaire agus an chabhair bhreise	CP	CP	154	487	641
Iomlán			6939	3727	10666
Iomlán i bhfoirm %			65%	35%	100%

Figiúr 1: An méid focal a labhraíonn an CP agus an múinteoir i gCruinniú A



Cruinniú B (Éire)

Tá an cruinniú B roinnte ina naoi n-eipeasóid mar atá léirithe thíos (Tábla 3). Taispeánann na torthaí go bhfuil toirt na cainte ón mbeirt chainteoirí cothrom go maith. Labhraíonn an bheirt acu thart ar leath den am, 2, 658 focal (48%) ón meantóir agus 2, 869 focal (52%) ón múinteoir. Ach mar a tharla i gcás Péire A, caitheann siad cuid mhaith den am ag labhairt faoin mbainistíocht ranga (Eipeasóid 4), agus is anseo atá an deighilt is mó idir an méid a labhraíonn siad; an meantóir a dhéanann formhór na cainte san eipeasóid seo. In Eipeasóid 8 caitheann an meantóir tamall maith ag labhairt faoi bhainistiú ranga agus faoi eachtra amháin ina raibh míthuiscint ar pháiste faoi thréithe an triantáin. Labhraíonn sí níos mó ná an múinteoir san eipeasóid deireanach chomh maith, áit a ndéanann sí achoimre ar an gcruinniú agus ar na príomhtheachtaireachtaí.

Bhí dhá cheist roghnaithe ag Péire B roimh an cheacht mar fhócas don bhreathnóireacht agus is orthu seo a dhírigh siad ar dtús: (1) cé chomh maith is a bhí an bhainistíocht ama; (2) agus cé chomh ghníomhach is a bhí na páistí. Choimeád an meantóir an liosta topaicí ó lámhleabhar an mheantóra in aice láimhe chomh maith agus thagair siad do raon leathan ábhar bunaithe ar an liosta seo, mar shampla, cuspóirí an cheachta, struchtúr an cheachta, bainistiú ranga agus an obair ghrúpa, measúnú, agus guth an mhúinteora. Tá patrún cuibheasach rialta mar sin ag baint leis an gcomhrá gairid a bhíonn acu ar gach topaic díobh seo. Tosaíonn an meantóir le ceist den tsóirt, cad a cheap tú faoi.....agus piocann sí ceann de na topaicí sa lámhleabhar. Freagraíonn an múinteoir í, agus leanann malartú gairid ar thuairimí ansin.

Is léir go bhfuil an múinteoir ar a dícheall muinín an mhúinteora a chothú agus tugann sí breithiúnas an-dearfach agus ard-mholadh ar an gceacht ag tús an chruinnithe.

Meantóir: (...) ehm, cheap mé go raibh sé iontach, bhfuil a fhios agat, bhí an dul siar iontach nádúrtha (...) Conas a mhothaíonn tú féin go raibh sé?

Múinteoir: Ehm, bhí sé go maith, bím, nuair a, nuair a chuireas suas na cruthanna, an ea? (sea) bhain mé taitneamh mar bhí, bhí a lán oibre déanta againn air (...)

Meantóir: Mhothaigh mise go raibh an píosa sin ar fheabhas nuair a d'amharc mé air sin, go raibh an-spraoi, agus tá caidreamh iontach agatsa leis na páistí.

Mar a léirítear thuas, is ar an eagrú agus an bhainistíocht ranga is mó a dhíríonn an comhrá mar is iad seo a chothaíonn deacrachtaí don mhúinteoir. Chomh maith leis sin, is amhlaidh a shocraigh an múinteoir ar cheacht a mhúineadh ina mbeadh obair ghrúpa ar siúl ann, chun tuairimí an mheantóra a fháil ina leith sin:

Meantóir: (...) cad iad na cuspóirí a bhí agat don cheacht?

Múinteoir: Cuspóirí, ehm, go mbeadh, go n-aithníonn na páistí na cruthanna, go mbeidís in ann tréitheanna faoi leith a aithint sna cluichí (...) agus go mbaianeann siad spraoi agus taitneamh as an ceacht mar sin, seachas a bheith ina suí ag an bord ag féachaint ar chruthanna (...)

Cuspóir amháin atá ag an meantóir, ná a chur in iúl don mhúinteoir go raibh tús an cheachta ró-fhada, agus chuige sin, déanann sí tagairt don chlog:

Meantóir: Sea, ag féachaint ansin, ehm, bhí sé 11.25 nuair a thosaigh sibh, is bhí sé 11.45 nuair a bhog muid ar aghaidh go dtí lár an cheachta (...) cad a shíleann tusa?

Múinteoir: (...) an t-aon rud (...) bíonn an rang trína chéile nuair nach bhfaigheann siad seans páirt a ghlacadh, so, rinne mé iarracht (...) (sin é), bhí sé de cheart agam a rá, 'beidh seans agatsa amárach' (...).

Meantóir: Ach bhí siad ag baint sult as, so, just a rá go foirmeálta, bhfuil a fhios agat, coimeád tús an cheachta níos giorra, ach, d'oibrigh sé duit (hmm).

Díríonn an meantóir ar mheasúnú ag deireadh an cheachta in Eipeasóid 7, áit a dtugann an múinteoir le fios go n-úsáidfeadh sí leathanach oibre an chéad uair eile chun measúnú a dhéanamh ar an bhfoghlaim.

Meantóir: (...) an bhfuil aon rud eile a thiocfadh leat a dhéanamh chun críoch a chur leis an gceacht sin?

Múinteoir: (...) dá mba rud é go raibh, go rabhas chun ceacht mar sin a dhéanamh arís, leis na cruthanna (...) is cuimhin liom ó chleachtadh múinteoireachta, bheadh saghas leathanach oibre nó rud éigin (...)

Meantóir: Sin é, dá mbeadh an ceacht sin ar siúl arís, agus na páistí ag dul as a meabhair, ach ansin ní raibh, ach dá mbeadh rang eile agat, agus tú á dhéanamh sin, b'fhéidir bheinnse ag smaointiú (sea) rud éigin mar sin a bheith agat chun iad a shocrú síos arís (sea). Ach d'oibrigh sé go maith duit, ní raibh sin de dhíth (sea) (...)

Sula gcuireann sí deireadh leis an gcruinniú, tugann an meantóir le fios go bhfuil sí chun an ceacht céanna a dhéanamh lena rang féin an lá ina dhiaidh sin:

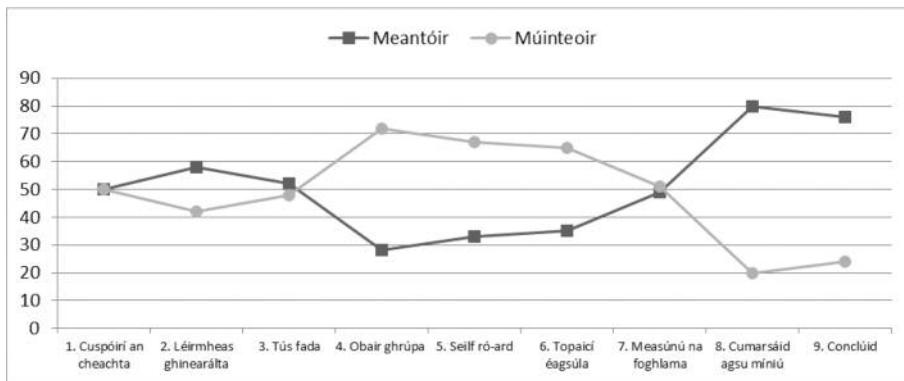
Meantóir: (...) tá mé chun an ceacht sin a dhéanamh le mo rang amárach (gáire ón múinteoir) (...) agus ní fhaca mé déanta mar sin roimhe é, an triail mata agus go háirithe sa rang, bhfuil a fhios agat, d'oibrigh sé an-mhaith ar fad (...)

Fágann sin go bhfuil críoch dearfach leis an gcruinniú agus go dtuagann an meantóir aitheantas do dhea-iarrachtaí an mhúinteora.

Tábla 3: Na heipeasóidí i gComhrá B – topaic, oscailt, dúntadh agus fad

Eipeasóid	Oscailte ag	Dúnta ag	Focail		Iomlán
			Meantóir	Múint.	
1. Cuspóirí an cheachta	Meantóir	Meantóir	113	114	227
2. Tuairimí ginearálta ar an gceacht	Meantóir	Meantóir	573	414	987
3. Tús rófhada leis an gceacht	Meantóir	Meantóir	192	175	367
4. An obair ghrúpa: roinnt deacrachtaí	Meantóir	Meantóir	287	739	1026
5. Cruthanna ar sheilf ró-ard	Meantóir	Meantóir	236	487	723
6. Topaicí éagsúla: guth, muinín	Meantóir	Meantóir	209	296	505
7. Críoch agus measúnú ar fhoghlaim	Meantóir	Meantóir	474	489	963
8. Cumarsáid agus cumas mínithe	Meantóir	Meantóir	369	90	459
9. Achoimre agus conclúid	Meantóir	Meantóir	205	65	270
Iomlán			2658	2869	5527
Iomlán i bhfoirm %			48%	52%	100%

Figiúr 2: An méid focal a labhraíonn an meantóir agus an múinteoir i gCruinniú B



Plé

Cé nach bhfuil i gceist ach cruinniú amháin ón dá shuíomh, is féidir roinnt pointí a ardú a bheadh tábhachtach le cur san áireamh sa mheantóireacht do mhúinteoirí nua-cháilithe.

Ábhar cainte

Tagann na torthaí leis an méid atá cheana féin ar eolas againn faoin dúshlán a bhaineann leis an mbainistíochta ranga do mhúinteoirí nua (Ginnane, 2011; Killeavy agus Murphy, 2006). Labhair an dá phéire ar feadh i bhfad faoi bhainistíocht ranga agus ama. Sa dá chás ba í an eipeasóid ar bhainistíocht ranga an eipeasóid ab fhaide (Eipeasóid 4 sa dá chás), mar chothaigh sé roinnt mhaith deacrachtaí do na múinteoirí. Is léir mar sin go bhfuil an meantóir agus an CP ag iarraidh freastal ar riachtanais na múinteoirí trí am a chur ar leataoibh don topaic seo.

Ach mar atá ráite, bhí Cruinniú A i bhfad níos faide ná Cruinniú B, agus éiríonn leis an bpéire Francach i bhfad níos mó topaicí a phlé dá bharr. Díríonn siad cuid mhaith den am ar chúrsaí teagaisc agus ar fhoghlaim na páistí. Teachtairacht amháin a thugann sé go minic i rith an chomhrá ná an obair a bheith ciallmhar do na páistí, nó a bheith tomhaiste agus in oiriúint dá leibhéal cumais. Ní bhíonn leisce ar an CP aird an mhúinteora a tharraingt ar na lagaí, dar leis atá le ceartú, an ghníomhaíocht sa pheannaireacht mar shampla. As na trí sheasamh atá luaite le ceird an tionlacaí ag Paul (2004), dhealródh gur 'tiomáint' a bhí ar siúl ag an CP sa chás seo, agus é ag cur ina luí ar an múinteoir gan na páistí a fhágáil leo féin i gceardlann mar seo.

Cothromaíocht agus cuimsitheacht san ábhar cainte

Tá an fócas seo ar chúrsaí teagaisc agus foghlama ag teacht le ról agus le cúraimí an CP, mar atá leagtha síos go hoifigiúil. Mar a thugann an teideal le fios - *conseiller pédagogique* – is í an oideolaíocht nó an teagasc féin is príomhchúram dó. Dúshlán a bhaineann lena chúraimí, mar sin, ná conas an caighdeán is gá a lorg, agus ag an am céanna, gan tógáil ó mhisneach an mhúinteora atá fós ag dul i dtaithí ar rang, ar scoil agus ar ghairm nua. Is ceist í seo atá go minic á plé sa chomhthéacs Francach agus taispeánann an taighde go mbíonn teannas ann uaireanta idir ról an CP mar thionlacaí an mhúinteora nua ar lámh amháin agus mar ionadaí na Roinne, ar lámh eile (Perez-Roux, 2009). An chothromaíocht a fháil idir an chabhair ghairmiúil, sóisialta agus pearsanta atá mar dhúshlán don CP sa chás seo. Dhealródh, áfach, go raibh an CP áirithe seo ábalta teacht ar an gcothromaíocht chuí, agus nach ndearna sé faillí ar aon ghné den tacaíocht a bhí ag teastáil ón múinteoir.

Ní théann an meantóir isteach i gcúrsaí teagaisc agus foghlama chomh mion agus a théann an CP. Tá aird aici ar mhuinín an mhúinteora agus ar an gcaidreamh atá aici féin leis an múinteoir mar chomhleacaí. Tá an breithiúnas dearfach a thugann sí ar an gceacht ag teacht le cur chuige Bubb a mholann do mheantóirí gan leisce a bheith orthu ardmholadh a thabhairt (Bubb, 2005, lch. 61), ar mhaithe le muinín an mhúinteora a chothú. Ní chun leasa an mhúinteora, gan amhras, má cheapann sí go bhfuil gach rud in ord, agus go bhfuil barr feabhais bainte amach aici. Bheifí ag súil go dtuigfeadh an múinteoir nach bhfuil brí liteartha ag baint le foirmlí cainte mar seo. Bíonn ar an meantóir a chinntiú, mar sin nach 'asamhlú' a tharlaíonn (Donnay agus Charlier, 2006), ach go bhfanann an meantóir dílis don méid a tharla (*garant du réel*) agus go labhrann sí faoi, mar a rinne sí mar shampla, nuair a thagair sí don méid ama a bhí caite ar an gclog ar thús an cheachta, a bhí ró-fhada. Sa tslí seo, cuireann sí ar shúile an mhúinteora gné den chleachtas atá le forbairt.

Agus ag deireadh an chruinnithe arís, éiríonn leis an meantóir teachtaireachtaí tábhachtacha a thabhairt nuair is gá, mar atá, tús an cheachta a choimeád gairid agus leathanach oibre a mholadh mar mhodh measúnaithe. Ar an ábhar sin, is féidir a rá go bhfuil meascán de na trí sheasamh taobh thiar de chaint an mheantóra ó na catagóirí a mholann Paul (2004): tiomáin, treoraigh agus téigh i dteannta. Tá tiomáint ar siúl aici nuair a deir sí amach go neamhbhalbh leis an múinteoir tús an cheachta a choimeád gairid. Tá treorú ar siúl nuair a thugann sí moltaí, m.sh., leathanach oibre a úsáid má bhí sí chun an ceacht a mhúineadh arís. Agus téann sí i dteannta an mhúinteora mar chompánach, nuair a deir sí go n-úsáidfidh sí an ceacht céanna lena rang féin an lá ina dhiaidh, ag tabhairt le fios go bhfuil

an fhoghlaim ag dul sa dá threo. Tá an chomhleacaitheacht idir í féin agus an múinteoir le feiceáil sa chothromaíocht i ndáileadh na cainte (thart ar a leath an duine) agus sa chur chuige roimhré. Bhí cruinniú acu roimh an bhreathnóireacht inar shocraigh siad an fócas, mar a mholtar i lámhleabhar an NIPT (2016) agus sa litríocht (mar shampla, Portner, 2003).

Ábhar machnaimh don mheantóireacht

I bhfianaise an méid atá ráite thuas, dhealródh go mbeadh tairbhe ann anailís mar seo a phlé leis an meantóir agus an CP ar mhaithe lena bhfoghlaim ghairmiúil féin. D'fhéadfaidís, mar shampla, machnamh a dhéanamh ar cad a chuir ionadh orthu sa téacs den chruinniú, an méid den chaint a bhí acu, an t-ábhar cainte, na foirmlí cainte a d'úsáid siad, na hathruithe a dhéanfaidís dá mbeadh an cruinniú le déanamh arís, agus araile. Tógann sé seo sinn ar ais go dtí an creat teoiriciúil a cuireadh i láthair thuas, mar is ar mhaithe le forbairt ghairmiúil na conseillers pédagogiques a úsáidtear an analyse des pratiques (Altet, 1994) agus teoiricí an didactique professionnelle sa Fhrainc (Vinatier, 2009). Taispeánann an anailís seo go bhféadfaí tarraingt as in aon fhorbairt ghairmiúil a chuirfí ar fáil do mheantóirí anseo in Éirinn.

Conclúid

Cé gur mór an dhifríocht idir an córas Francach agus Éireannach, tá cosúlachtaí áirithe ag baint le hábhar an chomhrá, mar shampla, an aird a thugtar ar bhainistíocht ranga. Tá meascán de sheasaimh le sonrú sa tionlacan a thugann siad beirt ina suíomh féin agus malartaíonn siad mar is gá; tiomáineann, treoraíonn agus teann siad i dteannta na múinteoirí nua ar a aistear foghlama ag brath ar na cúinsí agus na riachtanais.

Gné amháin a sheasann amach ón gcruinniú sa Fhrainc is ea an méid ama agus suntais a thugtar don teagasc féin agus d'fhoghlaim na bpáistí. Ní haon ionadh é seo má chuirtear san áireamh gur comhairleoir oideolaíochta (pédagogique) go bunúsach atá ann. Ar ndóigh, ba ghá é seo a dhéanamh i slí chomhtháite, gan tógáil ón tacaíocht phearsanta agus sóisialta.

An dúshlán atá ann don tionlacáí ná teacht ar an gcothromaíocht chuí idir na trí riachtanas: gairmiúil, sóisialta agus pearsanta, i dtreo is gur fearr an toradh a bheidh ar an gcomhrá. Agus maidir leis na riachtanais ghairmiúil, is gá ceisteanna a bhaineann le foghlaim na bpáistí agus le measúnú a thabhairt isteach sa chomhrá, mar a rinne an CP agus an meantóir anseo. Baineann foghlaim agus measúnú go dlúth le cúraimí an mhúinteora, agus tá sé tábhachtach go mbeadh siad chun tosaigh in aon chomhrá gairmiúil ón tús. Is léir ó na torthaí go dtugann an bhreathnóireacht ranga agus an comhrá gairmiúil deis do mhúinteoirí labhairt lena chomh-mhúinteoirí faoi seo ar bhonn cuimsitheach agus gairmiúil. Tá impleachtaí aige seo gan amhras do na forbairtí atá i ndán don ionduchtú mar chuid den pholasáí nua, Droichead atá á thástáil faoi láthair.

Agus maidir le foghlaim na meantóirí féin, nó go deimhin féin, na múinteoirí ar fad a chabhraíonn le foghlaim a gcomhleacaithe, dhealródh go mbeadh ábhar agus anailís den tsóirt seo úsáidfeadh chun cleachtas machnamhach a chur chun cinn ina measc siúd. Is ceann de na tosaíochtaí é seo a moladh i gCosán, an creat d'fhoghlaim mhúinteora atá á phíolótú faoi láthair (Comhairle Mhúinteoireachta, 2016b), sé sin, tacú le múinteoirí atá i mbun tacaíochta iad féin, le foghlaim a gcomhleacaithe (bíodh siad ina múinteoirí nua nó a mhalairt).

Maidir le tógáil ar an taighde seo, b'fhiú mion-léiriú breise a thabhairt ar chomhráite dá leithéid (níos mó sleachta agus anailís níos doimhne ar an idirghníomhú) chun cur lenár dtuiscint ar an gcomhrá iar-cheachta mar ócáid foghlama. Thaispeánfadh sé sin an scil agus an dua a chaitheann an meantóir le riachtanais éagsúla na múinteoirí a shásamh i slí a chabhraíonn lena foghlaim, agus i ndeireadh thiar le foghlaim na bpáistí.

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Aguisín*Tábla 1: Clár ama – Breathnóireacht A (sa Fhrainc)*

9:10	Gnásanna na maidine: laethanta na seachtaine; rolla; rannta.
9:30	Corpoideachas: lúthchleasaíocht.
10:00	Obair ghrúpa agus sé cheardlann: (1) scríobh ainmneacha; (2) damhán alla a dhearadh le cruthanna; (3) damhán alla a phéinteáil; (4) an nuachtán ranga a scríobh; (5) an litir B a dhathú; (6) matamaitic (dathanna agus bouquets de bhláthanna).
10:30	Scéal.
10:40	Sos.
11:10	Ceardlanna: matamaitic (dathanna agus bouquets de bhláthanna) agus mar a bhí sa chéad sheisiún roimh shos.
11:55	Amhráin agus réiteach don lón.

Tábla 2: Clár ama – Breathnóireacht B (in Éirinn)

11:25	Tús an cheachta – sórt cluiche ‘20 cheist’ atá ann; cuirtear cruth taobh thiar den pháiste agus bíonn air/uirthi a rá cén cruth é trí cheisteanna a chur ar na páistí eile; ceisteanna tá/níl atá ceadaithe, m. sh., an bhfuil sé déthoiseach? an bhfuil ceithre thaobh ann?
11:45	Míniú do na páistí ar an obair ghrúpa; cluiche ar nós biongó atá ann; roinntear an rang ina cheithre ghrúpa agus bíonn bailiúchán de chruthanna ag gach grúpa; glaonn an múinteoir amach cur síos ar chruth agus bíonn ar an ngrúpa an cruth a aithint, agus a rá má tá sé acu.
11:55	Obair ghrúpa; tosaíonn an múinteoir ag glaach amach na leideanna agus bíonn ar gach grúpa an cruth ceart a roghnú ón mbailiúchán atá acu.
12:05	Conclúid; iarann an múinteoir ar na páistí na cruthanna a chur in ord de réir patrúin; is féidir leo siúd atá críochnaithe luath róbat a dhéanamh le cruthanna.

Bosca 1 : Achoimre ar na heipeasóidí i gCruinniú A (An Fhrainc)

1. Iarann an CP ar an múinteoir labhairt faoin teagasc a rinne sí. Labhraíonn an múinteoir ar feadh i bhfad faoi na deacrachtaí a bhí aici, m.sh., tús fóna a chur leis na ceardlanna mar is gá treoracha difriúla a thabhairt do gach grúpa agus ní bhíonn fonn éisteachta ar na páistí. Dearbhaíonn an CP go raibh an teagasc go maith. Níl aon dabht air ach go bhfuil sí ina maitresse de la classe; bhí atmaisféar maith sa rang agus tá sí cneasta leis na páistí.
2. Socraíonn siad clár an agallaimh ansin agus diríonn an CP ar na deacrachtaí a d'ardaigh sí agus ar na pointí a bhí scríofa síos aige féin. Is gá a bheith sa teagasc do na páistí, m.sh., tagairt do ainmneacha na laethanta amháin seachas dátaí mar nach dtuigeann siad. Tugann sé le fios go raibh an troscán sa tslí ar roinnt páistí agus bogann sé é. Ceistíonn sise é ar roinnt pointí eile.
3. Labhraíonn an CP go dearfach faoin gcorpoideachas, ag cur san áireamh gur thug an múinteoir le fios lá éigin roimhe sin go raibh easpa cumais aici san ábhar sin. Thuig na páistí rialacha an chluiche agus chloígh siad leo. D'oibrigh an cluiche ar shamhlaíocht na bpáistí agus bhain siad ciall as. Mhol sé di na gníomhaíochtaí a fhorbairt an chéad uair eile ar mhaithe le dúshlán breise agus foghlaim chéimnithe.
4. Diríonn sé ansin ar na deacrachtaí in eagrú na gceardlann. Tugann sé roinnt moltaí ginearálta ach cuireann ina luí uirthi gur gá di féin teacht ar na mionscruithe. Críochnaíonn na páistí an cheardlann ró-luath uaireanta, gan aon suim acu an ghníomhaíocht a athdhéanamh. Míníonn an CP gur gá nósanna a chothú iontu ionas go bhfuil a fhios acu cad atá ceadaithe dóibh mar ghníomhaíocht bhreise. Cleas amháin a mholann sé ná grianghrafanna de na gníomhaíochtaí atá ceadaithe a chur ar an mbord ina bhfuil siad ag obair. Molann sé chomh maith go dtabharfadh grúpa cur i láthair ar a ndearna siad sa cheardlann mar shlí chun measúnú a dhéanamh agus chun é a mhíniú do na páistí eile; chabhródh sé sin leis an múinteoir sa mhéid is go gcloisfeadh na páistí eile cur síos ón ngrúpa ar cad a bheadh le déanamh acu nuair a bheidís tagtha chomh fada leis an stáisiún sin. Freagraíonn an múinteoir áfach nach mbeadh go leor ama aici chuige sin.
5. Tagraíonn an CP don ghá a bheith ar an airdeall faoi dhrochnósanna na bpáistí sa cheardlann pheannaireachta. Thug sé le fios go ndearna siad roinnt mhaith botún agus iad ag scríobh na litreach i ngan fhios don mhúinteoir nuair a bhí sí gafa le ceardlann eile. Diríonn an múinteoir an comhrá ar ais go dtí eagrú na gceardlann.
6. Diríonn an CP ar cheist a bhí ag an múinteoir faoi léamh an scéil ón leabhar mór. Míníonn sé conas tairbhe a bhaint as chun teanga na bpáistí a fhorbairt. Pléann siad an tábhacht le teanga, léitheoireacht, tuiscint agus forbairt aigne.
7. Agus iad ag labhairt ar chothú na teanga, fiafraíonn an CP den múinteoir an bhfuil sé i gceist aici úsáid a bhaint as sonóg ranga. Deir sí go dtabharfaidh sí isteach bóin Dé agus labhraíonn an CP faoi conas é a úsáid ar mhaithe le teanga na bpáistí a fhorbairt.
8. Lorgaíonn an múinteoir tuairimí an CP ar phlean atá aici na páistí a chur ag léamh go neamhspleách. Míníonn an CP go mbeadh níos mó tairbhe ann do pháistí den aois sin dá mbeadh na leabhair pléite sa rang roimh ré. Molann sé di iarracht a dhéanamh an obair seo a dhéanamh le grúpaí beaga.
9. Tugann an CP cuireadh di ansin aon ábhar eile a ardú. Labhraíonn an múinteoir ar fhorbairt teanga sna grúpaí an athuair mar tá sí buartha faoin easpa dul chun cinn. Molann an CP di níos mó ócáidí teanga a thabhairt isteach sa teagasc, más go gairid féin iad agus tugann sé samplaí.
10. Labhraíonn siad ansin faoin gcaidreamh le tuismitheoirí. Deir sí gur éirigh go maith léi sna cruinnithe a bhí aici leo le déanaí. Mhíniú sí dóibh gur leag sí béim ar chomhoibriú agus 'obair as a stuaim féin' ó na páistí, agus go mbeadh an súgradh in úsáid mar chur chuige. Molann an CP an obair seo ar fad.
11. Ar deireadh ceistíonn an CP faoi úsáid an ríomhaire don teagasc. Freagraíonn an múinteoir go bhfuil sí chun é a úsáid don chabhair phearsanta bhreise (aide personnalisée). Molann an CP di an ríomhaire a úsáid mar áis foghlama oiread agus is féidir.

Bosca 2 : Achoimre ar na heipeasóidí i gcuinníú B (in Éirinn)

1. Fiafraíonn an meantóir faoi chuspóirí an cheachta. Míníonn an múinteoir gur theastaigh uaithi go n-aithneodh na páistí na ceithre chruth, go dtuigfidís na difríochtaí idir na tréithe agus go mbeadh an fhoghlaim gníomhach agus taitneamhach. Labhraíonn siad faoi cad a bhí i gceist le 'gníomhach'.
2. Molann an meantóir an cluiche a d'úsáid an múinteoir mar shlí chun dul siar ar na cruthanna. Míníonn an múinteoir gur críoch ar chluiche a thosaigh sí an lá roimhe sin a bhí ann. I ndiaidh an chluiche, d'úsáid sí obair ghrúpa; bhí sí neirbhíseach ceacht mar sin a dhéanamh ach theastaigh uaithi rud éigin as an ngnáth a thriail. Deir an meantóir nach raibh aon neirbhís le brath uaithi in aon chor agus molann sí an dea-chaidreamh a bhí ag an múinteoir leis na páistí.
3. Ceistíonn an meantóir faoin méid ama a bhí beartaithe do thús an cheachta. Míníonn an múinteoir gur baineadh geit aisti nuair a chonaic sí go raibh daichead is a cúig nóiméad caite nuair a stop sí an taifeadán ag an deireadh. Cuireann an meantóir ar a súile gur chaith sí an iomarca ama (20 nóiméad) ar an gcluiche ag an tús; ní raibh fonn uirthi é a stopadh níos luaithe mar theastaigh uaithi go mbeadh deis ag gach páiste sa rang an cluiche '20 cheist' a imirt.
4. Iarann an meantóir ar an múinteoir labhairt faoi na modheolaíochtaí agus conas a d'eagraigh sí na grúpaí. Dar leis an múinteoir go raibh an rang trína chéile ag an tús ach cuireann an meantóir ina luí uirthi go raibh sé an-eagraithe. Níos faide ar aghaidh san eipeasóid chéanna, áfach, dearbhaíonn an meantóir go raibh páistí ann nach raibh a fhios acu cén grúpa lenar bhain siad agus gur lean an mearbhall seo ar feadh tamaill.
5. Fiafraíonn an meantóir den mhúinteoir an mbeadh sí sásta na stáisiúin chéanna a úsáid, má bhí sí chun an ceacht céanna a dhéanamh an athuair. Freagraíonn an múinteoir go gcuirfeadh sí ar siúl taobh amuigh den rang é ar mhaithe le cruthanna a aithint sa timpeallacht. Luann an meantóir go raibh stáisiún do ghrúpa amháin curtha ar sheif ró-ard, ach cuireann sí in iúl láithreach nach raibh aon fhadhb ann.
6. Ceistíonn an meantóir faoi roinnt topaicí éagsúla i ndiaidh a chéile agus tugann an múinteoir a tuairimí i gcás gach ceann acu. Maidir lena guth, tá an múinteoir den tuairim go labhraíonn sí ró-thapaigh uaireanta ach deimhníonn an meantóir nach raibh aon fhadhb leis. Dúirt an múinteoir go mbeadh níos mó muiníne aici anois tabhairt faoi obair ghrúpa dá leithéid feasta. D'fhreagair an meantóir go raibh sé ionmholta nár chaill sí an misneach nuair a rinne sí botúin agus í ag tabhairt treorach (dearmad beag a rinne sí maidir leis na cruthanna oráiste do ghrúpa amháin).
7. Fiafraíonn an meantóir an raibh aon rud eile a d'fhéadfadh sí a dhéanamh mar chríoch leis an gceacht. Tuairimíonn an múinteoir go bhféadfadh sí leathanach oibre a úsáid agus aontaíonn an meantóir go gcabhródh sé sin chun na páistí a shocrú síos agus measúnú a dhéanamh ar an gceacht.
8. Fiafraíonn an meantóir ansin faoin gcumarsáid idir an múinteoir agus na páistí. Úsáideann sí na fotheidil éagsúla ó lámhleabhar an mheantóra (NIPT) agus labhraíonn an múinteoir faoi gach ceann acu, m.sh., caidreamh agus idirghníomhú, ceisteanna, agus míniú. Molann an meantóir an teicníc a bhí ag an múinteoir chun ciúnas a fháil i rith an chluiche agus na mínithe soiléir a thug sí.
9. Déanann an meantóir achoimre san eipeasóid seo. Deir sí go raibh sí an-sásta leis an gceacht agus fógraíonn sí go bhfuil sí chun é a thriail ina rang féin an lá ina dhiaidh. Molann sí don mhúinteoir aird a thabhairt ar bhainistíocht ama ach deimhníonn sí gur 'sár-mhúinteoir' í agus gur gá níos mó muiníne a bheith aici aisti féin.

invigorated practice of the extended professional (Hoyle, 1975). Part of this redefinition is the understanding of teacher learning as a continuum (Teaching Council, 2012), thereby challenging the view that teachers graduate from initial teacher education as fully formed professionals.

It is my view that teachers at all levels can and should be enquirers, formally (through award-bearing programmes), informally, individually and collectively; previous issues of this journal contain pertinent examples. Teacher associations, the Department of Education and Skills, agencies with the remit for teacher development, support services, teacher unions and, more recently, the Teaching Council, all play a role in supporting teacher enquiry. In addition, the in-school management structure, school self evaluation, school development planning and the implementation of national strategies, such as *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life*, provide opportunities for teachers to engage in enquiry on their own, or with colleagues. Teacher education programmes usually involve enquiry in/on practice.

I believe that teacher enquiry is a valid, relevant and powerful tool to support teacher professionalism at every stage of the continuum. It is important from the outset to distinguish it from the 'what works' model of evidence-based education, where complex issues are addressed with simplistic, decontextualised solutions (Biesta, 2007). This kind of research is carried out by the insider in context (an emic perspective) and strengthens the professional autonomy of teachers, who move from being subjects or consumers to the creators of their own knowledge. Stenhouse stated that research is systematic enquiry made public, later modified to include the view that findings did not have to be published unless they made a contribution to public knowledge on education (1975, 1981). Teacher enquiry is a robust form of research when it is intentional, systematic and, when appropriate, diffused. Furthermore, certain circumstances propitious to its development should be created in schools to help teachers create knowledge that directly affects teaching and learning in their classrooms.

The concept of teacher enquiry

Generally, teacher enquiry is the systematic, intentional study of one's professional practice, including particular features:

- ✎ the teacher is the researcher,
- ✎ the locus of research is the professional context, the community of practice,
- ✎ there is emphasis on collaboration,
- ✎ practice itself is the focus of the research (Cochran-Smyth and Lytle, 2009).

Is teacher enquiry research? Yes, if it is intentional, systematic and disciplined; if the enquirer can identify his or her beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology) and how that can be known (epistemology); if s/he employs a research methodology congruent with these beliefs (depending on the aims and scale of the enquiry) and if, when appropriate, findings are diffused beyond the research context. Menter et al. (2011) define enquiry as a 'finding out' or an investigation with a rationale and approach that can be explained or defended. If this is the case, it is evidence and not simply observation, speculation or critique.

Hammersley states that “sound practice cannot amount to the straightforward application of theoretical knowledge, but is an activity that necessarily involves judgement and draws on experience as much as on... scientific knowledge” (1993, p.430). Teacher enquiry, in my view, is the combination of theory, reason and research in a systematic and methodologically rigorous way, the findings of which may be diffused in the general body of knowledge on teaching and learning. Many educationalists support the view that it is necessary: Stenhouse states that a good classroom is “one in which things are learned every day which the teacher did not previously know” (1975, p.37). Pring (2012) believes that teachers have to be the researchers – not the deliverers of other people’s research. Cochran-Smith and Lytle see teachers as uniquely positioned to provide an insider’s view that “makes visible the way that students and teachers together construct knowledge and curriculum” (1993, p.43).

Types of teacher enquiry

Teacher enquiry, teacher research, practitioner research, action research and self-study are all labels attached to this kind of investigation. It is conducted by teachers, individually or collaboratively, with the primary aim of understanding teaching and learning in context and from the perspectives of teachers and students (Zeichner 1999; Meier and Henderson 2007). Whatever form it takes, it encourages the development of the “cultured” teacher (Rinaldi, 2005) who not only has a multidisciplinary background, “but possesses the culture of research, of curiosity, of working in a group; the culture of project-based thinking” (p.73). The analysis of their evolution below outlines some distinguishing features.

The history of teacher enquiry

In 1929, Dewey described teachers’ involvement in educational research as an “unworked mine”. Throughout the 20th century, educationalists and academics on both sides of the Atlantic developed conceptualisations of teacher enquiry that recognised its power and value for teaching and learning. In a systematic literature review, McLaughlin, Black-Hawkins and and McIntyre (2004) identified two broad categories of teacher enquiry and charted the key theorists in each:

(i) Research/enquiry undertaken for personal purposes.

USA	UK
Collier (1945), Lewin (1946) Action research to redress social imbalances, promote democratic forms of leadership, address the needs of the disenfranchised.	Stenhouse (1975) Teacher-as-researcher. Extended professionalism: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commitment to a systematic questioning of one’s own teaching as a basis for development.• Commitment and skills to study one’s own teaching.• Concern to question and to test theory in practice.

Corey (1956) Collaborative action research to help teachers make better pedagogical decisions.	Elliott (1976) Action research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The realisation of an educational ideal and changing practice to be consistent with it. • It seeks explanation of inconsistencies by gathering evidence about contextual factors. • It problematizes some of the tacit theories that underpin and shape practice. • It involves practitioners in generating and testing action-hypotheses about how to shape educational change.
Schön (1983) Reflective practice (reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action).	
Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) Inquiry as stance.	
Zeichner and Noffke (2001) The re-emergence of teacher research with the acceptance of qualitative methods.	
Whitehead (1989) Living Theory: individuals can generate their own unique explanations for their educational influences in their learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations	

(ii) Research/enquiry for political purposes.

Critical emancipatory action research	Participatory research
Carr and Kemmis (1986) Action research is a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situation in which these practices are carried out.	Freire (1970) Liberation pedagogy that produces knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people through research, adult education and socio-political action. It empowers people via a second and deeper level through the process of constructing their own knowledge. It is usually conducted by an outsider.

They went on to analyse more recent trends in practitioner research, noting three in particular:

- (i) Practitioner research as evidence-based practice, linked to the school improvement agenda.
- (ii) The need for better professional knowledge about school management and effective teaching and learning because academic researchers had not been successful in the creation and dissemination of such knowledge (Hargreaves, 1999).
- (iii) Practitioner research/enquiry as best practice research.

More recently still, Timperley (2007) and Cordingley et al. (2008) found that teacher enquiry combined with specialist support is the most effective model to improve outcomes for teachers and learners.

This history, while not exhaustive, is helpful in establishing one's motivation for engaging in teacher enquiry. For example, proponents of the critical emancipatory and participatory models of enquiry see it as authentic and democratic, lending itself to the struggle for social justice (Hammersley, 1993). Others see teacher enquiry fitting in to the 'what works', problem-solving model more familiar to large organisations and industry, generating data

and findings that support/defend the corporate model of education (McWilliam, 2004). In any case, teacher enquiry is made robust when the process involves reflection and justification before adopting whatever approach might best suit the investigation. We are confronted with choices about how each of us wants to live the life of a social enquirer (Schwandt, 2000) but these choices should be made in a conscious, deliberate way.

Making decisions about teacher enquiry

There are many excellent texts on research methodology (see reference list) and a wealth of journal articles available online (EBSCO portal, www.teachingcouncil.ie). It is important, however, to begin by considering critical reflexivity and positionality. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) identify two elements in reflexive research: interpretation and reflection. Interpretation is necessary to take account of the effect of research on participants and on the researcher. All attempts to describe, analyse or critique social actions must consider the context in which they occur, as actions and context are “mutually interdependent” (Cohen et al. 2010, p.23). This is because speech and action “are constitutive of the social world in which they are located” (Bryman 2012, p.393). Furthermore, the impact of the researcher on the research process and outcomes demands constant reflection as the study progresses.

There is overlap between the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher and their conceptualisation of reflexivity. Objectivists search for a single, pre-existing reality and use the reflexive process to ensure that they do not influence the research findings in any way. Subjectivists such as interpretivists, believe that reality is created through the interaction between researcher and participant. Therefore, the researcher must question his/her prior knowledge, beliefs and experience to understand the effect this will have on the study. Reflexivity offers a lens through which reflective practice may be harnessed. Hibbert et al. (2010) suggest that the process should involve different stages: repetition, extension, disruption and participation as they emphasise the “changing process of engaging with research material over time” (p.58).

Gregory et al. (2009) define positionality as the fact that a researcher’s social, cultural and subject positions affect:

- (a) the questions they ask and how they frame them,
- (b) their relations with those they research in the field or through interviews, and interpretations they place on empirical evidence,
- (c) access to data, institutions and outlets for research dissemination,
- (d) the likelihood that they will be listened to and heard.

The aim and scale of the enquiry dictate to what extent the teacher should be able to justify his or her research choices. There should be congruence between the research methods employed and the ontological and epistemological stance of the inquirer: for example, if one is a social constructivist, one is more likely to use qualitative, interpretive methodologies or if one is a positivist, numerical data will be the priority.

Ethical issues

All research begins and ends with ethics, so the ethical framework is of critical importance to the study. Institutional and professional guidelines (university/institution, BERA, ESAI and so on) exist to help the teacher to plan a study responsibly, as opposed to engaging in a 'research raid'. But this is more likely to be possible in the context of a formal study, supported by academic experts. Ethical considerations still exist in small scale studies; teachers should consider if research can be conducted impartially, if informed consent can be obtained, if participants have the right to withdraw and how the findings may be used and diffused, for example. As part of a wider issue in education, attention should be given to ethics in professional life, 'including virtues, relationships of care and the critical moral competence for everyday and transformatory practice' (Banks, 2008, p.1245). This is addressed in the Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (2012), underpinned by the values of respect, care, integrity and trust.

Considering validity in teacher enquiry

In qualitative research, validity "should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state" (Gronlund 1981, cited in Cohen et al. 2010, p. 133), given that the subjectivity of participants and researcher form part of the process and findings. Instead of replicability, the standard by which quantitative research is measured, qualitative researchers aim to minimise invalidity and maximise validity. Bryman (2012) understands validity as "the issue of whether an indicator (or set of indicators) that is devised to gauge a concept really measures that concept" (p.171). For Guba and Lincoln (1994), trustworthiness and authenticity are the key criteria for judging goodness or quality in any enquiry.

The status of teacher enquiry has been disputed by those who do not recognise it as a research methodology at all because it lacks the methodological rigour of conventional academic research. Zeichner and Noffke (2001) characterised practitioner research as part of a 'fugitive literature' that is accessible only locally, without academic legitimacy. As stated earlier, I take a different view; agreeing with Shulman (1997) that such enquiry, when intentional, disciplined, systematic and diffused, is a valid way to extend teacher professional knowledge.

Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (1994, cited in McLaughlin et al. 2004) elaborate a useful set of criteria to establish validity in practitioner research:

- (i) **Democratic validity:** the extent to which the research is done in collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation, and multiple perspectives and interests are taken into account.
- (ii) **Outcome validity:** the extent to which actions occur that lead to a resolution of the problem under study or to the completion of an action research cycle.
- (iii) **Process validity:** the adequacy of the processes used in the different phases of the research such as data collection, and analysis. This validity includes the issue of triangulation as a guard against viewing events from one data source or perspective. It also goes beyond research methods to include several general criteria such as the plausibility of the research.
- (iv) **Catalytic validity:** this validity describes the degree to which the research energises the participants to know reality so that they can transform it.

- (v) **Dialogic validity:** the degree to which the research promotes a reflective dialogue among all the participants in the research.

As McLaughlin et al. point out, there is no reference here to diffusion of research findings and this is one of the main obstacles faced in supporting the growth of a research-rich, enquiry-oriented teaching profession and culture. What is required is teacher interconnectivity: a dynamic, flexible and, above all, accessible framework built by stakeholders (those who have a specific remit in this regard and informed by teacher experience) to which teachers can contribute and from which they can draw, as their requirements demand. There is risk for teachers in opening up their practice to others but there is also opportunity to demonstrate that their findings are credible and trustworthy and to describe the effects on teaching and learning in their classrooms.

Case studies of teacher enquiry

The contemplation of enquiry can originate in ‘cognitive dissonance’ (O’Donoghue, 2007 p.xi), a sense that things are not as they should, or might, be. When this happens to the teacher in the context of his or her practice, s/he is best positioned to investigate. It may be that, in response to curiosity or confusion, a gap in existing knowledge presents itself. Over time, I have engaged in teacher enquiry of differing kinds and duration, examples of which are described here:

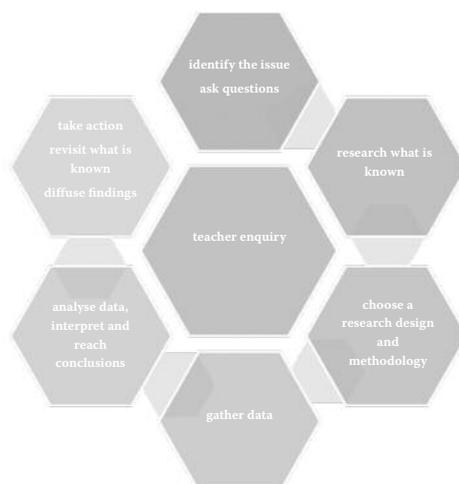
Example one: Curriculum co-ordination in a post-primary school

Motivation:	Initiated as part of a Special Duties Teacher post.	Democratic validity: Yes, collaborative, multiple perspectives included, shared interest in the aim of the enquiry. Cross-curricular, inter-departmental links were established.
Aim of enquiry:	To move forward curriculum planning by supporting departments in developing ‘live’ subject plans and building structures for sustained cross-curricular engagement.	
Ownership:	Teacher owned.	
Ethical approval:	Approval of school leader.	Outcome validity: Yes, resolution achieved, subject plans were fully completed, with more frequent, on-going review.
Research skills	None.	
Type of enquiry:	Action research.	
Literature review:	None.	
Research method:	Interpretivist	Process validity: No, not independently supported or verified.
Methodology:	Qualitative methods for data collection (inter-departmental focus groups).	Catalytic validity: Yes, teachers reflected on reality and changed the way they drafted and reviewed subject plans.
Use of findings:	Data used to support claim for time allocation: (i) to bring all departments to a similar point in subject plan development; (ii) to strengthen cross-curricular collaboration and make it explicit in subject plans.	

Further diffusion:	No	Dialogic validity: Yes, promoted collaborative enquiry.
Example two: PGDEL (Toraiocht) leadership-focused project in a post-primary school		
Motivation:	Completion of PGDEL.	Democratic validity:
Aim of enquiry:	(i) To help a community of practice, committed to the principle of life-long learning, tailor its CPD provision to realise collaboratively individual talents and abilities and improve teaching and learning. (ii) To ensure that this provision is based on the values of that school community. (iii) To empower teachers in this process	Yes, collaborative, multiple perspectives included.
Ownership:	Teacher owned, supported by academic tutor in context of post-graduate diploma programme.	
Ethical approval:	Approval of Board of Management in school/locus of research.	Outcome validity:
Type of enquiry:	Action research (McNiff 2002).	Yes, discussion of shared values and change in provision of CPD to reflect that.
Literature review:	Broad literature search.	Process validity:
Research skills:	High level understanding of quantitative and qualitative research methods.	Yes, with supervisor/academic support.
Research method:	Interpretivist.	Triangulation of data from surveys and focus groups.
Methodology:	Qualitative methodologies – qualitative survey and focus group.	Catalytic validity:
Findings:	(i) A series of claims relating to the conceptualisation and enactment of CPD in the school in question. (ii) Development and piloting of a self-reflection tool to identify CPD needs, including consideration of values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions. (iii) A set of proposals for school leaders and BOM to consider in future CPD provision in the school.	Yes, participants gained insights through reflection on reality and changed practices.
Further diffusion:	No.	Dialogic validity: Yes, promoted collaborative enquiry.

These enquiries vary in aim and scale. In retrospect, the first example of action research, while intentional, was carried out instinctively, without the systematic process advocated here. Neither example planned for diffusion; another possibility for teacher enquiry. They demonstrate how capacity is built through on-going enquiry, underpinned by ontological and epistemological awareness, supported by experts and, perhaps, diffused beyond the research context. But many teachers are not trained in research and, realistically, training is costly, time-consuming and contingent on individual circumstances.

Teacher enquiry illustrated



Implications of teacher enquiry for the practitioner and their community of practice

In the Republic of Ireland, teaching remains a high-status, respected profession, affording practitioners a high degree of autonomy in how they work and learn; this is not the case everywhere. Day (2004) lists the elements of professionalism that distinguish teachers from other workers:

- (i) having a strong technical culture (knowledge base);
- (ii) service ethic (commitment to serving clients' needs);
- (iii) professional commitment (strong individual and collective identities);
- (iv) professional autonomy (control over classroom practice);

The combination of knowledge base (technical and contextual), commitment and autonomy are the factors that enhance the potential of teacher enquiry. An enquiry orientation allows teachers to make justified pedagogical decisions informed by their own (and others') research evidence, with a resulting positive effect on teaching and learning. It is an invaluable way to build capacity, increase professional confidence and 'professionalise' practice, in the way that Day describes.

Teacher enquiry and school improvement

The improvement agenda, with a simplistic deductive assumption of the relationship between theory, enquiry and practice can be incomplete; representing elements of research without consideration of the whole, that is, a moral consideration. Beginning with Dewey's (1933) descriptions of the moral dispositions of wholeheartedness, openmindedness, and responsibility, which he holds necessary for reflective thought, and moving through the development of critical reflection and its moral implications, many moral aspects of reflection have been explored. Enquiry, as a complex, social and moral undertaking should not be subject to "complexity reduction" (Biesta, 2010, p. 497).

Cordingley and Groll (2014) state that the most effective model of teacher learning is evidence informed, rather than evidence based. This distinction is important; Cordingley and Groll believe it implies a proactive involvement on the part of the teacher; the latter is decontextualized and can be prescriptive and demotivating in teacher professionalism. Others take a different view, that evidence informed practice needs to be problematised, both in terms of where the evidence comes from and how it 'feeds in' to practice (Hall, 2009, p.672). Perhaps semantics are less important than the fact that teachers are more likely to be able to develop a critical stance towards research if they themselves are active enquirers.

Benefits

High quality research and enquiry.... can enable practitioners to distinguish myth from reality and help identify strategies that have the best chance of success in the contexts in which they work (BERA 2014. p11, cited in Cordingley and Groll, 2014).

The benefits of teacher enquiry are partly evident in the examples presented earlier. With each successive engagement, the teacher is empowered, skills and confidence improve, knowledge deepens and the motivation to continue is strengthened. The teacher enquirer is best placed to understand and 'read' the cultural artefacts and discourses generated within their particular context and to proceed in a way that is most likely to be impactful in that context. It is a democratic, 'bottom up' form of insider research, where the voice of the practitioner is held in the same esteem as the eminent educationalists by which they are informed.

Teacher enquiry is indispensable in encouraging practitioners to reflect, to consider their own assumptions critically, instead of continuously re-enacting the routines and rituals of everyday school life. There is deeper, richer learning from experience as teachers recast themselves in the role of knowledge workers (Kincheloe, 2003). Teacher enquiry lends itself to the development and sustainability of collaborative practice among colleagues and further afield. Since an element of enquiry is intra-personal, teacher enquiry has huge potential for enhancing self-awareness. Self-awareness is at the root of relating and relating is at the heart of teaching (Hederman 2012), a huge dividend is possible here. Teaching is an emotional activity. Self-awareness, too, is an in-built apparatus for managing stress and pressure, so it has a very positive contribution to wellbeing. In my view, teacher enquiry is a cornerstone of our professional identity as teachers.

Barriers

It is impossible to present the ideas in this article without recognising the significant and persistent challenges that hinder teacher enquiry. A lack of time coupled with an unprecedented intensification of workload is the reality for many teachers. The impact of productivity measures means that teachers find it impossible to strike a balance between their core responsibilities and duties they perceive to have little effect on teaching and learning. This echoes the findings of the survey on stress, workload and resilience among primary teachers in last year's issue of this journal (Morgan and Nic Craith, 2015). Other researchers have identified the belief among teachers that local findings are unimportant and a lack of confidence in presenting research for wider scrutiny, an act that may be frightening (Richards, 2003). Becoming research minded is as much "a process of identity construction as acquisition of competence" (Cousin and Deepwell, 2005, cited in Orme and Powell 2007, p.1003). Furthermore, there is tension between the policies dictated by the Teaching Council and the Department of Education and Skills, influenced by global agenda, and teachers' ability to comply with them at micro level. It is simply not sustainable, or indeed feasible, for teachers to become enquiry-oriented without a commitment from those in authority to support them with time and resources. This is not a new phenomenon; in 1981, Stenhouse observed that: "In this country teachers teach too much. So research by teachers is a minority activity... Much clearly needs to be done to ameliorate the burdens of the teacher prepared to embark on a programme of research and development." (p.111).

These difficulties are symptomatic of a broader problem of the conceptualisation of teacher professionalism. Are teachers civil servants, employees of the state and governed with their consent by others in authority? Or are teachers autonomous professionals, best placed to understand the needs of their students and free to develop their practice as they see fit? This is a matter for personal and collective reflection by teachers. At the policy level, serious consideration must be given to whether continuing to exchange opportunities for professional growth, including teacher enquiry, for productivity is a worthwhile trade-off. The reality is that, in our professional lives, we have many competing accountabilities that must be balanced and it may be that those accountabilities need to be critically examined to ensure that teacher professionalism is protected.

A key element of teachers' enquiry orientation is the culture that exists within their own schools. Leaders must take responsibility for creating and maintaining a supportive research culture in schools and that requires 'messy' solutions: finding time for collaboration, being patient when progress seems slow, trusting teachers even when findings are challenging. This also means creating shared understandings among teachers about enquiry and opening classrooms and the school itself to contact and collaboration with other schools and stakeholders.

I hope this article encourages teachers to think about critiquing practice in a systematic way. I am convinced that teacher enquiry has the capacity to develop skills and influence dispositions because it builds capacity in a hermeneutical circle. For this reason, the language and practice of teacher enquiry should be embedded in teachers' practice in a way that is practicable and sensible.

Why now? The policy landscape

....a number of scholars.... argue for an urgent consideration of how to tie more closely the theoretical knowledge base learned in teacher education programmes to teachers' classroom practices. Sexton (2007) suggests that 'action research' initiatives be used to deepen teachers' knowledge. Lynch, Hennessy and Gleeson (2013).... also argue for more opportunities for practitioner research as a way of deepening the knowledge base of teaching.... teachers' participation in individual or collective research is included as a component of the knowledge base (OECD (2016) p.33).

Teacher enquiry supports the development of teachers as extended professionals in that they go beyond consumption and become the creators of educational research. It must be recognised that, since 2008, teachers have faced an unprecedented intensification of their workload, combined with a significant deterioration in pay and conditions. As a result, policy makers operate in a febrile, political atmosphere where change, regardless of its nature and potential, is not generally welcomed. *Cosán: Framework for Teachers' Learning*, published by the Teaching Council in March 2016, outlines professional standards and expectations in this regard. It encourages teachers to find value in a range of learning processes, one of which is research.

Cosán, Framework for Teachers' Learning (March 2016) Learning Processes detailed.



Action research is given specific mention here; this is understandable since it is teacher-led, situated and used to address relevant issues. Lewin (1946) described it as cyclical process, a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action. It is systematic and has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on the development and growth of teachers (Hensen, 1996). It is also a viable form of research for teachers in practice. It would have been helpful to add diffusion as a discrete element to this framework so that practitioners would include this crucial aspect at the planning stage.

A great deal depends on the communication of the goals of these policy initiatives and their resourcing to create the necessary conditions for them to succeed, as envisaged by the Teaching Council's continuum of teachers' learning.

Conditions necessary to foster teacher enquiry

In a systematic study of the impact of educational action research on teacher and student learning, Zeichner (2009, p.35) identifies a number of conditions that result in a positive outcome for both:

- (i) A culture of enquiry that respects the voices of teachers and the knowledge that they bring to the research experience. This requires teacher knowledge to be given the same status as other forms of knowledge. It also requires of teachers that they critique what they know.
- (ii) Teachers should control most aspects of the research process: whether or not to take part, the research focus, the methods of data collection and analysis.
- (iii) Teachers are enabled to think deeply about their practice instead of applying externally generated solutions to classroom issues.
- (iv) Research takes place over time in a safe and supportive community, where the research rituals and routines have become internalised.
- (v) Participation in research is voluntary.

McLaughlin et al. (2004) also establish conditions for practitioner enquiry to flourish:

- (i) External and internal agents must support it. External agents, often colleagues in universities, provide research knowledge and training.
- (ii) There is a process of critical debate in either a supportive partnership or community (Stenhouse's conception of research as critical enquiry).
- (iii) The chances for development are enhanced in collaborative research if at least one team member has experience of research/development.
- (iv) When the focus of the research and enquiry is important to the practitioner, the commitment and ownership of the problem or the topic are clearly linked to the motivation to undertake/act on the research/enquiry process.
- (v) There is time, space and the appropriate resources to undertake the research and enquiry e.g. financial support.

The knowledge exists as to how to promote teacher enquiry and, although these are challenging conditions to meet in the current climate, they do represent threshold concepts that might form the basis of a shared understanding of the importance of enquiry in schools.

Conclusion

The idea that research is concerned only with correct techniques for collecting and categorising information is now inadequate (Schatz and Walker, 1995, 3, cited in Ryan, 2006, p.13).

This article is written at a critical juncture for the teaching profession in the Republic of Ireland and globally. Teachers are caught up in a maelstrom of regulation, curriculum reform, globalisation and societal pressure. As we try to serve the increasingly complex needs of a diverse community whose expectations of teachers have never been greater, we have experienced a downward trend in pay and conditions and an unprecedented level of casualisation. This harsh reality is not the ideal environment in which teacher enquiry can flourish. But I believe that engaging in enquiry has a protective effect against deprofessionalisation and demotivation because of its potential for empowerment and change. This is not an unrealistic call to arms since it would be impossible for teachers to commit continually to enquiry. But when circumstances and professional judgement require, it is a worthy pursuit. Teachers will not change the way they teach “simply by being told to do so” (Ball and Cohen, 1999, p.3) but enquiry can have profound impact on practice.

The diffusion of teacher enquiry is problematic for teachers. The fact is that much of this work is conducted as part of award-bearing programmes and often at teachers' own expense. The opportunity to share knowledge is not immediately available in these circumstances. Similarly, if enquiry takes place at school level, to meet individual or school needs, this is not usually shared. If appropriate, it might be useful for this research to contain a diffusion plan that would explain how the outcomes of the project could be shared with stakeholders, relevant institutions, organisations, and individuals. The critical link in the chain is the development of frameworks to facilitate such diffusion.

The issue remains as to how the broad sharing of that knowledge might be facilitated. In an age of open educational resources and virtual communities of practice, solutions are possible that were unheard of in the recent past. There are significant challenges, not least of which is quality control, and it would be crucial to shape perceptions of such a resource: it should not be a ‘click and go’ option.

The real opportunity now is in broadening opportunities for teachers to become enquirers, not in resentful compliance with regulatory mechanisms, but willingly and constructively. This requires creative solutions (and investment), because of the difficulties alluded to earlier; substitution or reduction in class contact time, training for in-career teachers and convenient ways to diffuse findings. Support at school level is essential. It is the job of all stakeholders to assert the right of teachers to the necessary resources that would embed enquiry in professional practice. The question of leadership inevitably arises in relation to teacher enquiry. Questions are begged about attention, support, recognition, incentivisation, sustainability, embedding and so on. Would it be foolhardy to posit a new and radical paradigm of pedagogical leadership in which we, the practitioners, become the leaders?

Dewey's analogy of teacher research as an “unworked mine” is perhaps no longer accurate as a rich seam of teacher enquiry has begun to emerge but there are further depths to explore. This prospect may, in time, “... introduce or reacquaint teachers with the importance of who they are as professionals, returning to teachers their voices as thinkers, curriculum creators, data analysts, and generators of knowledge about teaching” (Campbell, 2012, pp.1/2)

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test scores (Conway and Murphy, 2013). In relation to DEIS schools, new policies and discourses of performativity and accountability only add to the already rigorous testing regime that the DEIS programme obliges participating schools to implement (Kitching, 2010).

In response to this new environment, the majority of research on teachers' work in DEIS schools has been quantitative research based on test results and measuring student achievement (e.g., Shiel, Kavanagh, and Millar, 2014; Smyth, McCoy, and Kingston, 2015; Weir and Denner, 2013). Consequently, the voices of teachers have received little attention from researchers and policymakers. This paper attempts to address this research gap by giving full legitimacy to the lived experiences of teachers. Focusing specifically on early childhood teachers (ECTs) in DEIS schools, this study explores their daily practices and contextualises their perception of their ability to incorporate a social justice agenda into their understanding of their professional role and responsibilities. For the purpose of this research, ECTs are defined as those with a minimum of three and a maximum of nine years' experience. ECTs' explicit and tacit understandings of what they deem possible and practical, in terms of their felt responsibilities and practices, assumes critical importance in light of the fact that the majority of those teaching in urban DEIS schools have been teaching for less than five years (McCoy, Quail, and Smyth, 2014).

The policy context

In order to provide a contextual backdrop for the educational landscape that primary ECTs working in designated disadvantaged schools must navigate, a critical analysis of the policy on educational disadvantage and the implications for teachers' practice is provided. The level and nature of engagement student teachers and ECTs have with themes of social justice and educational equality, along the continuum of teacher education, is also afforded due consideration.

In response to persistent concerns over the low levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy for pupils experiencing inequality (Eivers, Shiel, and Shortt, 2005; Shiel, and Kelly, 2001), the primary focus of DEIS (DES, 2005) is on raising literacy and numeracy standards in participating schools. The introduction of *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020* (DES, 2011) has intensified the emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy attainment in DEIS schools. While recent evaluation reports on the DEIS programme highlight enhanced achievement in literacy, and to a lesser extent in numeracy, as measured in test scores (Shiel et al., 2014; Smyth et al., 2015; Weir and Denner, 2013), there has been an improvement in test scores across all types of schools, meaning that the gap in achievement between DEIS and non-DEIS schools has largely been maintained (Smyth et al., 2015).

Reflecting the legislative and policy framework, DEIS is exclusively concerned with changing the student and the school, rather than challenging inequalities that are rooted in the social structures of society. The belief that given enough concerted support to adapt and change, the student experiencing educational inequality can avail of the opportunities that the system offers reflects this deficit orientated thinking (Archer and Leathwood, 2003).

Tormey's (2010) critique of the 'outputs-led' approach to measurement of educational inequality embedded in the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy* (NAPS) (Government of Ireland, 1997, 2002) is particularly instructive in terms of unpacking the relationship between targets and dominant 'deficit' understandings of educational disadvantage. This analysis is of critical relevance to current measures aimed at addressing educational inequality, as the objectives of DEIS are indexed to targets set in NAPS. The outputs model focuses on setting minimal standards of attainment (such as minimal levels of literacy and numeracy or attainment in state examinations) and identifying those who do not attain this level as being educationally disadvantaged (Tormey, 2010). The model assumes that the test used to determine a successful educational outcome is, in itself, a meaningful measure. As Mac Ruairc (2009) identifies, the bias inherent in standardised tests exists at a fundamental level in favour of middle class students. The model is also based on identifying individuals as being 'disadvantaged' so that targets and areas for intervention can be set. Here we can clearly see ideas of deficit at play, with the focus on changing the person, the school or community, rather than the broader education or economic system (O'Sullivan, 1999).

Evidence of a prioritisation of economic outcomes is also strikingly evident in DEIS. Its basic principles are drawn from the knowledge economy, national social partnership agreements and the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy* (NAPS) (Government of Ireland, 1997, 2002a) which equates social progression with economic progression (Kitching, 2010). Consequently, the curriculum-based intervention programmes that have been put in place in schools have a narrow focus on the raising of test scores or achievement levels.

In Ireland, as elsewhere, the scope, intensity and intent of accountability has increased significantly in recent years. Mirroring the characteristics of the global systems, these 'new' accountabilities are defined by their narrow focus on literacy and numeracy and higher stakes standardised testing-based accountability (Conway and Murphy, 2013). In relation to DEIS schools, the intensity of focus on test scores and measurable outcomes only add to the already rigorous testing regime that the DEIS programme obliges participating schools to implement. Indeed, as Kitching (2010) notes, such rigorous testing is not required in 'advantaged' schools. In terms of teaching and learning, there are many potential negative outcomes of a focus on standardised testing. According to Mac Ruairc (2009) these negative consequences include a "teach to test" culture in schools (Anagnostopoulos, 2005) and the avoidance of risk taking and innovative practice (Williams and Ryan, 2000).

Preparing teachers for the challenge of working in DEIS schools

Irish research has pointed to the need for a greater emphasis to be placed on preparing teachers for the challenge of teaching in designated disadvantaged schools (Inspectorate of DES, 2005b). A number of studies have clearly indicated that newly qualified teachers (NQTs) feel ill-prepared to commence their careers in a designated disadvantaged school (Inspectorate of DES, 2005a; Tormey, Ryan, and Dooley, 2003). Tormey et al.'s (2003) study into the views of graduates of the B.Ed course in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, is particularly insightful in terms of identifying the specific areas of initial teacher education (ITE) that they felt contributed to their feeling of unpreparedness. The need for greater: "discussion and debate surrounding problems of disadvantage", "description of the range of educational

disadvantage initiatives available” and “questioning of assumptions and expectations regarding disadvantage” were identified by graduates as requiring greater levels of treatment in ITE.

This concern is also reflected in the identification by the working group on primary pre-service teacher education (Government of Ireland, 2002b) and the Educational Disadvantage Committee (EDC, 2004) of the need for all ITE programmes to offer modules dealing explicitly with the issue of teaching in disadvantaged settings. While these bodies provide little detail as to how ITE should engage with such a project of change, the EDC (2004) did recommend that student teachers have the opportunity of conducting at least one practicum in the ‘disadvantaged’ setting. The homogenous middle class population of pre-service primary teachers (Drudy, Martin, Woods, and O’Flynn, 2005) and the lack of pre-service engagement they have with working class and ethnically diverse populations (Leavy, 2005), heightens the need for pre-service teachers to gain experience of working and engaging with people living and working in areas experiencing intense social challenge. The recent re-conceptualisation of the school placement experience offers exciting opportunities in this regard. Not only does it allow for student teachers to integrate theory and practice better through collaborative professional practice and enquiry-based learning, it also encourages them to participate actively in school life, including supported engagement with parents and other professionals working in the community (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2013). However, a significant weakness of the new school placement programme is its failure to make school placements in marginalised communities an integral and mandatory part of the process.

The need for greater provision of continuing professional development for teachers working in disadvantaged schools has also been continuously highlighted (EDC, 2004; Inspectorate of DES 2005b). While there has been a concerted focus on ‘training up’ teachers to implement the various literacy and numeracy initiatives that DEIS participation entails, less progress has been made in terms of developing opportunities for teachers to reflect and engage in a self-renewal process. For example, the now disbanded EDC’s call (2004) for the introduction of a sabbatical year designed to encourage more teachers working in DEIS schools to engage in postgraduate studies gained little traction with successive Irish governments.

METHODOLOGY

Through their participation in this phenomenological study, participants were provided with an opportunity to reflect critically upon their own professional role, responsibilities and priorities; and to consider and discuss their own positionality in the social and policy context and its influence on their professional practices. Interviews were carried out with 18 ECTs² who had begun their teaching careers in urban primary DEIS schools. In order to elucidate on the lived experiences of ECTs, their voices are articulated through quotes from participants³

2 A pilot study was initially conducted with a small number of ECTs (n=3).

3 Pseudonyms used in order to ensure anonymity.

Table 1: Participants' biographical information.

Name	Teaching Qualification	Years Teaching	Current Teaching Position
Limefield DEIS 1			
1. Fiona	B.Ed	9	Junior Infants
2. Bernie	Postgrad	4	Senior Infants
3. Marta	B.Ed	4	Senior Infants
4. Donna	B.Ed	5	Pre-School Educator
5. Moira	B.Ed	4	First Class
6. Ciara	B.Ed	3	First Class
7. Linda	B.Ed	3	Second Class
Millplace DEIS 1			
8. Hannah	B.Ed	9	Learning Support/Resource
9. Barbara	Postgrad	3	Fifth Class
10. Claire	Postgrad	3	Learning Support
11. Ryan	B.Ed	5	Sixth Class
12. Grace	B.Ed	4	Third Class
13. Frances	B.Ed	9	Learning Support
Tupper DEIS 2			
14. Frank	B.Ed	9	Sixth Class
15. Conor	B.Ed	9	Fifth Class
16. Sarah	Postgrad	4	Fourth Class
17. Leona	B.Ed	3	Senior Infants
18. Anna	Postgrad	7	Senior Infants

The ECTs were sampled using non-probability purposive sampling. The biographical details of the study's participants are presented in Table 1. The sample's gender ratio was 15:3 in favour of females, which was representative of the gender split amongst the primary teacher population as a whole (Heinz, 2008). As the majority of teachers working in urban DEIS schools have less than five years' teaching experience (McCoy et al., 2014), the sample is biased towards this cohort of ECTs and is split along a ratio of 2:1 in favour of those participants with three to five years' teaching experience.

In order to explore the possible effects, if any, of contextual factors on teachers' practice, the study's participants were drawn relatively evenly from two urban DEIS 1 schools (Millplace NS and Limefield NS) located in the suburbs of a major city, and one DEIS 2 school (Tupper NS) located in a provincial town. Taking school level into consideration, the sample was drawn from a junior (Limefield NS), senior (Millplace NS) and vertical (Tupper NS) school, so participants were teaching in each of the primary class levels. It also contained three teachers that were currently working as learning support/resource teachers, and one pre-school teacher working in a pre-school unit.

Relevant ethical procedures were followed throughout the study and approval was granted through the research ethics committee of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, where the author was engaged in doctoral studies. Interviews with ECTs were conducted during the months of April, May and June 2011 and took an average of one hour and 15 minutes to complete. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. As a phenomenological piece of research, the researcher was required to return to the starting point, i.e. the individual participants' stories of being teacher at many points during the data analysis phase (Crotty, 2003). This back and forth engagement with the data and the theory in order to generate new understandings of the phenomenon meant that the constant comparative method of data analysis was employed. Each unit of these transformed meanings selected for analysis was then completed to all other units of meaning and subsequently grouped, categorised and coded with similar units of meaning. In this way, new categories were formed.

The second and key stage of the analysis involved looking across the sample as a whole. In so doing, it became possible to identify patterns of shared practice amongst participants. Career stage and school-specific factors were found to exert considerable influence on the way participants perceived their professional role and responsibilities. In particular, the influence of school leadership and culture, as well as the socio-cultural context of the school (DEIS categorisation) was a central concern of this second-phase analysis. Finally, the use of counting helped the researcher to identify, isolate and report on a theme (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this way, counting was employed to help test the robustness of the researcher's understandings which were primarily generated through engagement with the data and the associated intellectual discourse.

Findings

Central to realising a vision of social justice is an educator's commitment to 'praxis' – a combination of both action and reflection which achieves a powerful and liberating force (Freire, 1996). A philosophy of praxis is based on the premise that people's previous experiences must be the starting point for new learning. Focusing exclusively on participants' daily practices, and informed by critical educator and sociology discourses, equality perspectives, and teacher identity literatures, the findings section assesses participant engagement with a justice praxis that is 'connected' with students' life experiences (Lingard and Keddie, 2013).

Participant commitment to a transformative praxis is explored in relation to the following four themes that emerged from the data:

- ⌘ Promoting experiential and holistic learning, and developing students' critical thinking skills.
- ⌘ A devolved, power-sharing approach to classroom management.
- ⌘ An ethic of care that is conscious of achieving the balance between supporting students, and making enough intellectual demands of them.
- ⌘ Working with and valuing of diversity.

Promoting experiential and holistic learning, and developing students' critical thinking skills

An analysis of participant commitment to pedagogies that are 'connected' with students' life experiences (Lingard and Keddle, 2013) is conducted across the following three dimensions of praxis derived from the data:

- 1 promoting experiential learning;
- 2 implementing a holistic approach to the development of students;
- 3 developing students' critical thinking skills.

An analysis of participants' accounts of their daily practice found that 16/18 participants expressed some level of engagement with at least one of the three themes. The strength of this engagement is dispersed along a continuum of commitment. Six out of the total cohort of 18 participants demonstrate 'modest commitment' levels, referencing only one of the three sub themes; 8/18 participants express 'good commitment' as they make reference to two of the three themes; while 'strong commitment' is confined to only 2/18 of the participants who discuss their engagement with all three themes.

Promoting experiential learning

Just over half of the participants (10/18) reference the importance of basing their teaching on the contextually relevant interests and experiences of their students. Recognising that optimum participation and engagement is achieved when student interest is heightened, coupled with a willingness to diverge from planned activities is deemed by Frances as being essential to the success of the approach. Frances states: "I tend to, if I am teaching a particular subject say or topic and... some part of it really jumps out for them that I hadn't planned for, I will go with it". Donna's desire for students to assume ownership of their learning runs parallel with providing a structured, focused learning environment. Donna states:

I think there is a role for it (objective driven approach) if you could combine the two (student driven and objective driven approaches)... I absolutely think there is a role for really focused, extremely well planned.... learning objective driven teaching.

This cohort's misgivings about exclusive reliance on moments of 'spontaneity' to stimulate student engagement mirrors Shor and Freire's (1987) assertion that an ad hoc approach to the general organisation of learning leads to rudderless, incoherent debate, which they consider to be the antithesis of effective political advocacy which is defined by its clarity of aims.

Implementing a holistic approach to the development of students

A commitment to ensuring that their students are given full access to all curriculum subjects is stressed by only 3/18 participants. Maximising opportunities for students to succeed in subjects that they find interesting is identified by Ciara, Sarah and Moira as forming a central tenet of their pedagogical approach. Sarah's following contribution encapsulates this shared consensus:

I think teachers should try and cover everything.... I think also some of the teachers leave out PE (physical education) and art, and I think every child should get the experience of them because you always have the children that are going to be good at everything. Then you have your lower achievers who maybe find that they are not doing so well in English, Irish and maths; but art could really be their thing, drama could be their thing, PE could be their thing.

The adverse effect teachers' failure to provide opportunities for students to experience 'success' is also highlighted by Sarah: "if they don't get to see that they are good at something their confidence goes way down, and it is horrible to see a child with no confidence in their ability".

Although only 3/18 participants reference their commitment to ensuring full curriculum coverage, 12/18 interpret their commitment to a holistic, pedagogical approach in terms of their involvement in providing extra-curricular activities in their respective schools. Poor attendance is a continual challenge for schools situated in marginalised communities and its strong correlation with early school leaving makes it a primary concern for many schools (Smyth and McCoy, 2009). Awareness of the need to increase their students' desire to attend school by providing opportunities for learning through different mediums that nourish the development of all forms of intelligence (Gardner, 1999) is identified by participants as their primary motivation in organising lunchtime and after school extra-curricular activities. The positive impact Barbara's school garden initiative had on a deeply disaffected boy in her class, clearly illustrates the importance she attaches to providing opportunities for students to find their niche. Barbara states:

There is a child in fifth class.... No interest in school, hopping off the walls most of time.... He started into the gardening club right. Give him a spade he will dig for hours, he cannot spell anything, he can barely read. He can name every single plant in the garden.... This boy brought them around the garden, talked them through every plant, was able to tell them everything about how he was actually looking after the plant.

The upturn in confidence and self-belief generated by this student's involvement with the gardening project is reflected in his new found ambition to now progress to third level.

Developing students' critical thinking skills

Although there is widespread agreement among the participants that the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills is essential, there is less discussion on the nature of these skills and the context in which they should be developed. This is reflected in the relatively low level of participant engagement with the theme with 7/18 participants outlining the need for teachers to develop their students' 'thinking skills' through the implementation of a 'problematisation' process. According to Donna and Moira, the ability of students to make well considered personal decisions about their futures not only empowers them to take control of their own lives, but it also plays a key role in helping students to visualise a route out of the cycle of poverty that many of them find themselves consumed by. In

order to develop critical thinking skills, these seven participants advocate the importance of teachers creating a dialogical classroom culture which affords students time and space to develop opinion and argument. Resisting the temptation to provide ready-made answers, an approach that Kozol (1968) refers to as teachers “looking for their own reflection” (p. 149), which inevitably has the net effect of stifling and suppressing debate, is a challenge that Conor feels they need to address:

I think if they are able to question what you have presented to them and they are able to make it their own and draw their own conclusions from it.... I think it gives them more command over it, more control over it, it gives them more interest in it rather than if you are literally just presenting facts as gospel.

Leona refers to becoming “less teacher driven” with experience, as critical reflection has assisted her in realising the futility of “just stand(ing) up there and teach(ing) them because they won’t listen to me”.

The increasing specification of classroom practice

In relation to participants’ commitment to ‘liberating pedagogies’ that are defined by their level of intellectual quality and connectedness, the findings across the entire sample demonstrate a moderate degree of participant engagement with such pedagogies. Evidence described in this section indicates that the increasing specification of curricula and classroom practices that the roll-out of the DEIS programme (DES, 2005) and the *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* (DES, 2011) entails, has reached into the pedagogic core of teachers’ work. Although all three schools are participating in these DEIS literacy and numeracy initiatives, there appears to be a greater intensity of focus on these initiatives in the DEIS 1 setting. This heightened concern is reflected in the fact that 6/7 participants comment on the reductive impact the increased focus on literacy and numeracy is having on the successful implementation of the primary school curriculum, are teaching in DEIS 1 schools. Hannah sums up the sense of professional anxiety that she feels as a result of her participation in these intervention programmes and the impact they have on curriculum coverage. Hannah states:

Do you know what is the biggest pressure now is at the moment in our school, it is DEIS itself. Being a DEIS school right, being designated a DEIS school and getting all the funds from being a DEIS school has brought so many extra pressures. *First Steps Reading, First Steps Writing, First Steps Oral* (literacy programmes), like how do you fit everything into a day?

The inevitable tension that is created between the pressure to produce results and the parallel pressure to implement a curriculum that is ideologically at odds with the aforementioned performativity culture is palpable in Ciara’s following account:

It's a contradiction because like you just said, now the testing is coming and everyone is up to ninety trying to get results and you're focused on that, and then on the other hand you are meant to be doing this whole holistic education.

Prioritising the development of their students' literacy and numeracy skills at the expense of other subjects, such as SESE (social, environmental and scientific education) is perceived by Ciara and Marta as a legitimate and justifiable trade off. Marta states:

There are the subjects that do get pushed to the back. Like definitely drama, and music, and SESE really does get shortened through the day. You see like, a half an hour in maths you can't (get 'core' subjects such as maths covered in such a short time span)... I know they are important subjects but you do have to have priorities.

The number of participants who welcome the structured nature of the DEIS literacy and numeracy programmes are exclusively concentrated in the two DEIS 1 schools, with 7/13 DEIS 1 cohort feeling that the defined nature of the programmes' content and pedagogical approaches assure them of the efficacy of their practice in this area. The professional confidence and pedagogical clarity that such structured, prescriptive programmes bring to teachers, many of whom may be unsure about the most effective way of teaching literacy and numeracy, is highlighted by Fiona:

Before then I think teachers were totally at sea and we were constantly being told that literacy was so important and yet we thought what are we supposed to be doing? How do we do it on a day-to-day basis? Whereas now we have this literacy hour going in the morning and everyone does their literacy hour and it timetabled, broken down into 15, 20 minute little chunks.

Implementing the relevant programmes by sticking rigidly to the defined structures is something that Fiona references: "I mean there is a very strict approach to them so like *Jolly Phonics* (phonics programme)... we would implement that to the letter, and it's really important in junior infants to get that going". Whether professional autonomy and judgment is sacrificed at the altar of conformity and consistency of approach is a legitimate question to raise at this juncture. Linda's desire for "ideally of course for someone to come in and say, 'this is what you'll do' and what you cover, within reason, in your class" hints at a willingness to surrender her right to professional autonomy and pedagogical freedom in order to feel assured that she is following the appropriate course, something that Claire and Marta also reference. Grace and Donna also welcome this objective driven, focused approach which is seen as the antidote to the previously discussed curriculum overload that so many teachers find a challenge. Donna states:

I think that focused approach is necessary to cope with all that overload, because if you don't you could just end up feeling like you are doing bits of everything like, bits of these huge schemes.

Rather than feeling that the programmes restrict their sense of professional autonomy and agency, the reported pedagogical clarity and structure that these programmes provide to participants' practice affirms their efficacy as teachers.

A devolved, power sharing approach to classroom management

Eleven of the 18 participants expressed a willingness to incorporate elements of a democratic approach into their classroom management style. The importance of forming a positive, trusting relationship with students is seen by this cohort of participants as crucial in fostering a co-operative, respectful learning environment. Teacher modelling of the skills required in order to encourage such positive interaction among their students is central to this cohort's inclusive approach. Explicitly modelling the skills of negotiation and compromise lies at the heart of Linda's approach in this area:

Well just teach them the skill... how to ignore bad behaviour. You know... that they're sharing, that it is fair. Like lowering their voices, how you would communicate with the regular person on a day to day basis, negotiate with each other.

Many participants reference the issue of 'tolerance of classroom noise' when discussing their classroom management styles, and associate it with the use of more democratic, inclusive pedagogies. In line with their commitment to a devolved, power sharing approach to classroom management, these participants consider student participation in dialogue to be indicative of a true learning environment. The need to show tolerance towards noise in light of the accrued benefits from student participation in a democratic, dialogical environment is stressed by Frank: "If you are generating discussion the whole time... and asking them for their opinion the whole time, you have to have tolerance for them talking out of turn and you have to have tolerance for noise in the class."

While an analysis of the practice of these 11 participants demonstrates a level of commitment to the creation of a democratic classroom environment, there is also a parallel concern among this cohort that some boundaries between teacher and student still need to exist. The parallel concern with maintaining control, and the pervasiveness of its influence, is reflected in the proportion of participants (15/18) who express some level of reliance on an authoritative disposition. While the majority of this cohort do not rely exclusively on such a *modus operandi*, 4/15 articulate an approach that is predominantly based on the principle of control. Establishing and maintaining clear boundaries between teacher and students forms a central tenet of this emphasis on control, an approach which is clearly explained by Grace: "There is a really clear line. They know that it is there and it's not to be crossed." While the firm approach to discipline enforcement that Grace describes is representative of these four participants' classroom management philosophy; the 11 participants that articulate a belief in the value of both democratic and control ideologies are not reticent in articulating the authoritative dimension to their classroom management style, with Linda particularly demonstrative in expressing her commitment to a 'teacher as enforcer' role: "They should know, I suppose putting it bluntly who is boss." With such a premium being placed on the

importance of maintaining control, there are undoubted ramifications for the power dynamic between teacher and students.

Fear that classroom control will be eroded if they rely exclusively on a democratic approach is a persistent concern cited by the 11/18 participants whose ideas about classroom management are influenced by both democratic and autocratic ideologies. Not wanting to be considered a soft touch by students, and in some cases by colleagues, is a recurring theme running through the contributions of this cohort. Barbara states: "Particularly if you do get into the active stuff, they do start hopping off the walls... to bring it back is awful hard after that." In total 13/18 participants admit to sacrificing elements of their democratic beliefs in favour of tighter classroom control. Perceiving themselves to be "too liberal" (Donna) and "a bit idealistic" (Conor) in their approach, both Donna and Conor admit to having to "rein in" (Donna) their democratic approach in light of what they perceived to be the erosion of their authority that a democratic approach precipitated. Claire's expressed fear that active learning will descend "into messing here in particular" is indicative of the increasing concern among teachers about their capacity to maintain discipline, concerns that are felt particularly among those working in schools serving marginalised communities (EDC, 2004).

Limefield is the least experienced cohort in terms of teaching experience. It is, therefore, significant that they are also the cohort that feels most under pressure to maintain firm control of their respective classes. A significant situated school factor that helps to reinforce this concern is the high value the principal of Limefield places on teachers' willingness and ability to enforce a strict discipline regime in their respective classes. Some teachers felt that their ability to maintain control was used by their principal as an evaluative tool to assess their 'performance', a view expressed by Moira, Ciara and Fiona. Recounting a direct quote from her principal, Moira believes that her principal has formed the view that teachers are "not cut out for teaching.... if you (teachers) are having a problem with a challenging child". These findings are consistent with recent Irish-based research that points to a high degree of concern amongst NQTs in relation to managing classroom discipline (Inspectorate of DES, 2005a; Killeavy and Murphy, 2006), and thus making them more likely to be influenced by a school culture that values authoritative classroom management.

In contrast, the DEIS 2 (Tupper) cohort appears not to be consumed by such concerns with maintaining discipline. In light of the relatively high concentration of relatively experienced teachers among the Tupper cohort, the findings point to the role professional experience plays in assuaging such anxieties. There is also a marked contrast in reported styles of leadership, with Anna outlining her principal's commitment to a distributive style of leadership that encourages his teaching staff to adopt an agentic disposition towards their interactions with students and parents. Anna states: "He doesn't see any barriers. He just says right this is what you would like to do, this is what is available."

An ethic of care

Intensified and exacerbated by students' experiences of living in communities that are coping with inter-generational poverty, a consistent feature of the majority of participants' (15/18) accounts of their daily practice is the primacy they afford to the care dimension of their professional role. Being available to listen to their students' concerns is referenced by many

participants as forming a key part of their professional role. Sarah is conscious of ensuring students are comfortable approaching them with their concerns:

I think it is important for them to feel that they can come to you and tell you things that maybe they wouldn't want to tell anybody else so I think it is important that you do have that friendly aspect.

Creating opportunities for their students to experience happiness in order to distract them from the sadness that permeates some of their lives outside the confines of school, was a theme expanded upon by many participants, with Leona stating:

They shouldn't be coming in here crying because they don't want to come in to this place.... because there are some of those kids and they go home to horrible things, so that's what I want my classroom to be ultimately. I want it to be a happy place.

Becoming an advocate for children that don't have a voice is an aspect of their professional role that many teachers spoke passionately about, a passion which is evident in Anna's account of the close relationship she developed with a girl whom she describes as having "very low self-esteem and whose family are very disadvantaged". Anna attributes the success of her advocacy to the level of encouragement and support she gave the pupil:

I think my relationship with her was very strong.... I said to her 'you can be anything you want to be' and I took an interest in her daily news, in her activities, and how she was getting on with her classmates; and I tried to stand up for her.

The differentiated value placed upon these care practices by the prevailing individual school cultures is identified as a central determining factor in explaining differences in emphasis and practices across the three sites. The emphasis the principal of Limefield put on test scores, basic skills, and 'control', and the narrow definition of 'success' that it promotes has, according to Fiona, meant that a low value has been attached to the importance of care work in Limefield. The lowly value that teachers' care work is given is reflected in the level of recognition Fiona receives for her class's performance in standardised tests: "If they do really well in the MIST (middle infant screening test), that's acknowledged... Well, in our school, it is", and in the absence of recognition for the care dimension to her role: "I mean nobody is going to acknowledge that fact that your children are so happy and you're so kind to them."

While participants' strong commitment to their caring role should indeed be recognised, such articulations of care, while necessary, are not sufficient in terms of the holistic development of the child (Lingard and Keddie, 2013). The shared consensus among the Millplace (DEIS 1) cohort that the academic development of their students is a secondary concern in light of the acuteness of their students' care needs lessens the focus on the implementation of 'intellectually demanding pedagogies' which require higher order thinking and substantive connections to the world beyond the classroom (Newmann and Associates,

1996). Frances's contribution reflects a shared clarity in relation to what the majority of the Millplace cohort perceive to be their students' primary needs, as she states that she would be satisfied if her students were "happy enough here and that they see school as a safe place, as a positive place". This concern with creating a safe and caring educational environment has an inverse correlation with many of the ECTs' concerns about developing their students academically, a pursuit that Frances considers to be a peripheral priority, articulated in her reference to considering it "a bonus if they learned something".

In contrast, the more experienced DEIS 2 cohort was less consumed by the school and policy discourses around raising the standard of literacy and numeracy. The DEIS 2 cohort felt less disadvantaged by the setting they worked in, in terms of meeting the care and academic needs of their students. As a consequence, they experienced less pressure to choose between their academic and care roles, which allowed them to maintain a greater level of connectedness in their teaching with the constructivist, holistic, and child-centred ideals that underpin the primary curriculum.

Working with and valuing of diversity

In relation to the question of student 'diversity', results of an analysis of participants' practice indicates that 18/18 participants detail practices that indicate some level of preference to assimilate minority ethnic students into the prevailing cultural norms of the school. Acknowledging difference exclusively through the celebration of the "the small things" (Sarah), such as special cultural events or reference points, is an approach pursued by 8/18 participants. While the literature outlines some of the limitations of a celebratory approach to interculturalism in terms of furthering the hierarchical position between the advantaged and the culturally dominant group (Bryan, 2009), it should be acknowledged that this cohort's approach to intercultural education was in line with best practice (NCCA, 2005).

Unsurprisingly, in light of such a conservative, non-interventionist approach to student diversity, this cohort of eight participants express a preference to assimilate their students into the prevailing cultural norms of the school. While the strength of belief in assimilation varies among the cohort, what all these contributions have in common is their shared desire to strike a balance between acknowledging cultural and ethnic diversity, and pursuing a policy of assimilation. Frances's contribution is reflective of the middle ground: "I suppose it is trying to keep a balance between.... obviously there are differences in maybe customs or you know background, but at the same time.... we are all part of the same community."

Two participants (Donna and Moira) adopt an open, explicit approach to celebrating student diversity. According to Moira, overcoming the temptation to ignore student diversity: "One of the biggest things about diversity is that first I was tempted to ignore it and be like 'oh everyone is the same' and, consequently, acknowledging the presence of diversity, is one of the first steps towards developing a liberating pedagogy. Encouraging debate and discussion on social justice issues is in synchronicity with a culture of openness and transparency, as Moira believes that no issue in school "should be a no go area. I think everything is open for discussion.... because I think they'll figure it out when they are older and when they figure it out when they are on their own, they will have no one to discuss it with."

An exploration of the factors contributing to participants' lack of engagement with the theme of 'diversity' crystallises the influence of the policy, professional and institutional terrain on reinforcing a culture of consensualism around 'pedagogies of the same'. The fear of aggravating an already potentially sensitive situation for students from diverse social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds that may be subjected to racially motivated abuse is highlighted by 5/18 of participants as one of the primary reasons for their reluctance to discuss racial differences with students. Conor states:

What I would think of most of all in that situation is the actual kids themselves from say, be it from Africa that come to Ireland. I think if you start making a big thing of you know, 'oh imagine what they had to come through to be here' and the impoverishment and all this... you would be making them feel very self-conscious.

Instead Donna and Conor favour an approach that focuses on the positive aspects of diversity rather than highlighting issues of injustice perpetrated against the African community. While the willingness to highlight the positive aspects of children's historical and cultural background is to be commended, such an uneven treatment of a people's social history contributes significantly to the further depoliticisation of the classroom by denying local and global histories of oppression which ultimately serves to perpetuate existing inequalities (Apple, 2004).

The need to prioritise their students' "learning" (Linda), and the associated time demands that this academic emphasis places on participants; is cited by Linda and Sarah as the primary reason behind their reluctance to engage too deeply with themes of 'difference' in their daily practice. Despite being aware of the importance of working with and valuing social and cultural difference, they feel the practicalities of the teaching day, and the range of demands it places on teachers' time, contributes to the peripheralisation of 'difference':

We're aware of the different cultures and you know every teacher knows the countries where their children are from and it is probably marked on a map somewhere.... but I'd say then, without going into that too much, that it is probably just focused back more on to learning (Linda).

Not only does this focus on academic achievement reiterate the pervasiveness of the influence of the performativity agenda and the pedagogical reductionism that it promotes, the low incidence of working with and valuing diversity as evident in this study, also may have quite profound social justice implications for students, particularly "in a globalised age of diasporic flows (and) multiculturalism: (Lingard and Keddle, 2013, p.441).

Conclusions

In conclusion, an underlying assumption on which this study is based was that pedagogies that make implicit cultural assumptions instantiate an approach that largely ignores students' social and cultural reality, and treats all students as the same. This approach most benefits

those with the requisite cultural capital that is bestowed upon them by their socialisation within the home and acts to further disadvantage the already disadvantaged in terms of such capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). While the findings reveal a high degree of support and care for students, there is not enough connectedness in participants' teaching methodologies to their students' worlds, or to a commitment to a democratic classroom management approach, or engagement with and a valuing of diversity. Cumulatively, these findings conclusively point to the dominance of 'pedagogies of the same' that treat students in the same way, and a subsequent denial of identity constructions of difference (Lingard and Keddie, 2013).

This research raises questions about the difficult terrain that ECTs working in DEIS schools are asked to navigate. These teachers are being rewarded by a value system, that on one hand, mirrors "broader social discourses of fast capitalism and self-preservation" (Ryan, 2007), whilst, on the other hand, the profoundly moral and political activity of teaching in a community experiencing intense social challenge obligates them to make "value-laden choices, in the attempt to do justice to the pupil that has been entrusted to one's care and therefore one's responsibility" (Kelchtermans, 2011, p.118).

In light of the balancing act that is required to satisfy all elements of these conflicting and competing ideologies and responsibilities, I am drawn back to the question of whether it is reasonable to expect already over-stretched teachers "to go the extra mile, to be professionally responsible rather than play by the rules" (Sugrue, 2011, p.182). The demands the system places on teachers working in areas of poverty and social exclusion highlight the importance of teachers taking due consideration of their own personal, professional, and situated circumstances in terms of mapping out the boundaries of their professional responsibilities. However, the parallel moral, ethical, emotional, and political dimension to these considerations (Kelchtermans, 2011) (that may conflict with their own personal and professional (self) interests) means that there is an inherent uncertainty and risk associated with the way in which they make sense of, and consequently address these demands. Finally, it is hoped that this study's findings can help stimulate much needed debate toward assisting teachers to plot a route away from the professional marginalisation that a commitment to a holistic, child-centered teaching philosophy currently exposes them to, towards a path of resistance to the consensual 'deficit' understandings of working class communities that dominate the political and policy discourse.

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Mindfulness towards wellbeing for teachers and pupils

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Abstract

A prominent feature of current educational discourse is concern for teacher and pupil wellbeing. Alongside this there is growing interest in, and evidence of, the use of mindfulness to aid stress reduction and to enhance self-awareness and self-regulation of thoughts and emotions. This paper focuses on the implication of mindfulness towards wellbeing. It engages with the international debate on mindfulness in education and some of the findings of a study carried out with primary school teachers who have a regular mindfulness practise. It considers the challenges to both teachers and pupils and the potential for mindfulness for both. It also considers the place of mindfulness in the social, personal and health education (SPHE) curriculum.



Introduction

Positive mental health is a significant societal issue in many cultures today and schools are no exception. Many pupils and staff members live busy lives and daily present in the school community with stress and anxiety. A new trend globally is to provide and practise mindfulness as an effective response and as a means of enhancing both teacher and pupil wellbeing (Greenberg and Harris, 2012). This paper focuses on the use of mindfulness by teachers and pupils. It draws upon the international debate on mindfulness in education and the findings of a qualitative study on occupational stress and mindfulness with Irish primary school teachers (Caulfield, 2015). It argues that although many initiatives are valuable in the promotion of positive mental health, mindfulness specifically has a place in occupational stress reduction and the development of coping strategies, resilience and wellbeing for both teachers and pupils. It also considers the integration of mindfulness into the curriculum through the social, personal and health education (SPHE) programme as a means towards wellbeing.

Wellbeing

In the current decade, governments internationally are recognising the value of exploring human wellbeing with the intention of measuring progress effectively, incorporating policy decisions and increasing citizens' wellbeing and flourishing (Huppert and So, 2013). In the Irish context, the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Health, the Health Services Executive and the National Educational Psychological Service have collaborated to

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promote a whole-school approach to wellbeing in primary schools (Department of Education, 2015). It is suggested that the concept of wellbeing is “ill defined” (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2014). However, in the context of the primary school system wellbeing is defined as:

the presence of a culture, ethos and environment which promotes dynamic, optimal development and flourishing for all in the school community. It encompasses the domains of relationship, meaning, emotion, motivation, purpose, and achievement. It includes quality teaching and learning for the development of all elements related to healthy living whether cultural, academic, social, emotional, physical or technological with particular focus on resilience and coping (Department of Education and Skills, 2015, 9).

Another definition, which draws together many aspects of previous definitions on the subject identifies wellbeing as “the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced” (Dodge et al, 2012).

Figure 1: Definition of wellbeing. (Dodge, 2012, 230)



In short, this definition suggests that wellbeing is having the resources to respond effectively to life’s challenges, which is important in the classroom considering the demands on a typical school day. Mindfulness has been widely used in the pursuit of wellbeing (Hoyt, 2016).

Mindfulness

An increased interest in mindfulness and its practise is apparent over the past four decades (Black, 2010). This is evidenced by the growing number of publications and empirical research in medicine, psychology, business and, more recently, in education. Despite its roots in the Buddhist tradition over 2,600 years ago, it has, in recent decades, been secularised and introduced into Western culture (Richards et al, 2010), where today it is associated with psychological wellbeing (Bishop et al, 2004; Richards et al, 2010; Schoormans and Nyklíček, 2011). A recurring theme in relation to mindfulness is that of stress reduction and living in the present (Kabat-Zinn, 2001) and taking charge of internal personal thinking patterns (Farb et al, 2007). The focus of mindfulness on thoughts, emotions and body sensations parallels the humanistic psychology perspective that argues that emotions, intellect and body

collaborate towards self-actualisation (Radu, 2010), one of the keystones of the humanistic approach (Ryback, 2006).

Though some consider mindfulness to be an innate and inherent human quality that can be practised in daily life without formal training (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Brown and Ryan, 2003; Albrecht et al, 2012), others consider it as a 'skill' (Bishop et al, 2004: 234) learned through prescribed training methods (Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Gold et al, 2010; Chaskleson, 2011). Mindfulness is variously referred to as an attribute of consciousness (Brown and Ryan, 2003), compassionate awareness (Williams et al, 2007) and "a path of observing ourselves to find ourselves" (Rosenbaum, 2009). It is described as a practise that entails "a dynamic process of learning how to cultivate attention that is discerning and non-reactive, sustained and concentrated" (Shapiro, 2009: 10). Hanh offers a somewhat broader description that incorporates attending to the present moment in a way that is "inclusive and loving" and which "accepts everything without judging or reacting" (Hanh, 1999: 64). However, there is much dialogue about its definition.

Broadly there is agreement that mindfulness encompasses presence, attention and non-judgmental attitude and acceptance (Grabovac et al, 2011; Siegel, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2012). It is suggested that researchers have a "consensus understanding" that mindfulness denotes "maintaining awareness of an attention on one's surroundings" (Richards et al, 2010: 251). Despite this, some authors pointed to the absence of an operational definition (Bishop et al, 2004; Shapiro, 2009; Richards et al, 2010) and to the challenge of conceptualising it in a way that is compatible with its multi-dimensional nature, philosophical roots and scientific method (Shapiro, 2009). Considering the lack of clarity, a consultative group of 11 Canadians participated in a series of meetings in 2004 to establish a consensus on the different components of mindfulness and to collaboratively develop a testable, operational definition. The resulting definition suggested mindfulness as the:

non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is (Bishop et al, 2004).

This comprises elements of the most commonly used definition by Jon Kabat-Zinn who, since the 70s, has focussed his professional life on bringing mindfulness into mainstream medicine and psychology and is acknowledged as bringing mindfulness to the secular world. He defines mindfulness as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In essence it is being awake and aware, acknowledging and accepting one's thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations (Kabat-Zinn, 2001).

"Paying attention" implies bringing or focussing one's full attention or mind. "On purpose" is understood as having the intention to pay attention, while "in the present moment" is simply now, in this moment. The final and important aspect of the definition "non-judgmentally" involves becoming a neutral witness or observer of the current experience. It encourages abstaining from making positive or negative assessments but rather observing the experience (Kabat-Zinn, 2001).

Although its historical roots are embedded in the Buddhist tradition, it is evident that mindfulness practise has changed in recent years. Whilst gaining credibility within the psychological sciences and western institutional contexts like schools, there is concern that the original potential of Buddhism for “social change and collective wellbeing” is lost when mindfulness is used as “an isolated technique” (Arthington, 2016, p.99). Aligned with this is the concern that mindfulness becomes too individual, resulting in the abdication of ethico-politically based actions (Arthington, 2016). Despite this, it is being used increasingly in the school settings due to its potential towards stress reduction and positive mental health (Jennings et al, 2011; Roeser et al, 2013).

Many who practise mindfulness in the West do so as a secular practise on account of its psychological and wellbeing benefits (Meiklejohn et al, 2012). Alongside the secularisation of mindfulness another reason for its status in Western culture is neuroscience, or the science of the brain (Chaskleson, 2011). In recent decades, the most notable findings in neuroscience indicate that the brain is constantly “reorganising its function and redeploying available resources to meet life’s demands” (Hirshberg, 2011, p.6). Referred to as neuroplasticity (Hirshberg, 2011; Hanson, 2013) or neural plasticity (Cozolino and Sprokay, 2006; Siegel, 2007), this reflects the ability of neurons to change their structure and relationships to one another in an experience-dependent manner and according to environmental demands (Buonomano and Merzenich, 1998; Cozolino and Sprokay, 2006). Thus, “new connections among neurons are formed, new patterns or networks of neural firing develop, and in some areas of the brain, new neurons are even developing” (Hirshberg, 2011, p.5). These findings suggest that with the brain’s neuroplastic ability, people can consciously change the brain design as a means of promoting brain health and life quality (Meiklejohn et al, 2012), thus using the brain to change the brain (Wehrenberg, 2010).

With the advancement of neuroscience, mindfulness practise is confirmed to develop awareness and self-regulation and a capacity to change the architecture of the brain in the creation of a calm, focused mind (Siegel, 2007). This, alongside the ability to be present and to be emotionally and cognitively responsive, can equip teachers with a resource to address occupational stress. Being cognisant of their internal responses can be pivotal in the creation of classroom and student outcomes.

Teacher challenges

The experience of occupational stress is not a new concept with countless stressors impacting on workers. It points to an increasing need in many occupations to manage stress, both to reduce illness and to improve health and occupational effectiveness. Teaching is no exception with extensive international literature identifying the prevalence of teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001; Darmody and Smyth, 2010; Kalyva, 2013). This paper is written in the context of primary and elementary teachers globally experiencing stress, governments and agencies aware of its existence and consequences, and children’s learning being impacted by their teachers’ competencies and wellbeing (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009).

It is evident that primary school teachers and principals in Ireland experience a significant level of stress (Darmody and Smyth, 2010; Nic An Fhailghigh, 2014; Morgan and NicCraith,

2015). Indeed, there is concern that stress is one of the biggest occupational hazards facing teachers today, accounting for almost 40% of work illnesses and absenteeism (Condon, 2011). Two studies within the past decade reveal something of the Irish situation. A mixed method study on job satisfaction and occupational stress was conducted with 1,916 primary school teachers and 898 primary school principals. It concluded that 98% of participants were fairly or very satisfied with their jobs and at the same time, 45% of primary teachers and 70% of principals experienced daily occupational stress. Despite this, a majority of teachers and principals reported job satisfaction and were satisfied with teaching. Interestingly, the study also indicated that 18% of male teachers and 8% of female teachers pointed out that they were not at all stressed (Darmody and Smyth, 2010).

Five years later, Morgan and NicCraith (2015) produced an interim report for the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) Congress 2015. The terms of reference were to research and survey INTO members on all aspects of workload, expectations and work related stress. A nine-section questionnaire focused on the teacher, school and class profile; recent changes in teaching that were specifically related to stress; issues related to teaching climate; the impact of reports on morale and ways to enhance job satisfaction. The 332 respondents, 82% female and 18% male, comprised a good representation of INTO membership. The report identified that almost 90% of participants considered that their jobs, in the past five years, had become more or much more challenging, stressful, demanding and hectic. Some of the main challenges identified in both studies related to curriculum and work demands; teaching multi-abilities within a class; child misbehaviour; inspection and additional paperwork. Despite this, almost half of the teachers considered that their work provided job satisfaction and was worthwhile and rewarding (Morgan and NicCraith, 2015).

Stress among teachers, however, cannot be identified as an individual problem. The current teaching climate is impacted upon by global unrest, national economic downturn and a performativity upturn (Lynch et al, 2012; Hyland, 2013) that prioritises literacy, numeracy and accountability. Consequential changes in schools and curricula include alterations in teachers' working conditions, increased workloads and reduced resources triggered by cutbacks (Nunan, 2013) and significant pay inequality for entrants into the profession post 2011 (Nunan, 2016). In relation to teacher supports, government cut-backs have culminated in a reduction in classroom supports for example, special needs assistants (SNAs) and English as additional language teachers (EALs) (Caulfield, 2015).

Whilst these issues cannot be resolved individually, over 85% of teachers have suggested the development of specific policies to increase teacher wellbeing and recognise the importance of teacher wellbeing in enhancing pupil success and wellbeing (Morgan and NicCraith, 2015). A clear indication, therefore, is the need for a focus on professional wellbeing, resilience and self-regulatory coping tools whilst also remaining conscious of the impact of social issues on teacher and pupil wellbeing. In this it is important that a response like mindfulness with its individual stress reduction potential, is not used to "draw attention away from the possibility of addressing" hardship and injustices that emanate from a capitalist framework (Arthington, 2016, p.95) or "to attempt to overcome social constraints through

personal endeavour and thereby conform to the requirements of the competitive society” (Arthington, 2016:96) or culture of performativity (Lynch, 2012).

That said, Freud identified teaching as an impossible profession (cited in (Felman, 1982). It has commonly been referred to as a vocation, a calling, an altruistic service. Higgins assesses the traditional dominant view of teaching as an altruistic career and suggests that such selfless service is untenable and unsustainable having the potential for burnout or drop out (Higgins, 2010). Drawing on the philosophies of both Aristotle and Socrates, who promote the need for spiritual flourishing, he argues that teachers must hold an identity of teaching as a source of human flourishing, wellbeing and happiness and, at an ethical level, as a profession that is “self-ful” rather than “self-less” (Higgins, 2010, p.171). He challenges teachers to pay attention to their needs and to “learn better the geography of their own souls” as a means towards teacher wellbeing. (Higgins, 2010, p.72).

In an occupation that has great potential for human flourishing and self-fulness (Higgins, 2010) the connection between mindfulness, stress reduction and wellbeing in primary teaching is gaining credibility (Gold et al, 2010; Meiklejohn et al, 2012; Roeser et al, 2013; Caulfield, 2014b; Csaszar and Buchanan, 2015). Being a helping profession, caring teachers are well placed to encourage the development of wellbeing and self-fulness in their pupils.

Pupil wellbeing

Social, emotional and behavioural wellbeing are considered vital aspects of child development. The *Growing Up in Ireland* study, which tracks approximately 8,500 children nationally, aims to “examine the factors which contribute to or undermine the wellbeing of children in contemporary Irish families” (Williams et al, 2009, p.5). It reports that, overall, the participants in the study were functioning well across many indicators. It also identifies that children experience stress for various reasons and as a result of various life events and transitions, many of which are part of growing up, and that children living in more disadvantaged families, and those who have faced multiple stressful events, are additionally challenged (Williams et al, 2009).

Children, therefore, experience stress for diverse reasons. It can result in anxiety, anger, violent behaviour and misbehaviour which sometimes can be out of their control (Napoli et al, 2005). Effective responses to such challenges determine a child’s resilience and emotional regulation (Greenberg, 2006). While it is acknowledged that home and family provide the foundation for children’s support and nurturing, schools play an important role in the promotion of children’s positive mental health and wellbeing (Department of Education and Skills, 2015). Schools, and particularly teachers, are in a unique position to identify excessive stress and anxiety in children. They are often the first contact outside the family to notice and often are the particular supportive adult in a child’s life that is critical to the development of wellbeing, confidence and coping strategies (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2012). School leaders and teachers, therefore, are well placed to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

In 1999, the introduction of social, personal and health education (SPHE) was considered to be the “bedrock of the revised primary school curriculum” with its focus on the development of self-worth, self-confidence and an ability to take responsibility for

one's actions and behaviours (INTO, 2015, p.41). It encompasses the development of emotional literacy which is the ability to understand emotions, listen to others and empathise (Department of Education and Skills, 2015, p.19). With its focus on the strands of 'myself'; 'myself and others'; and 'myself and the wider world' it is well placed to promote opportunities for personal health and wellbeing, supportive relationships and active citizenship (NCCA, 1999b).

With stress as a catalyst, schools globally are acknowledging children's experience of stress and the value of using mindfulness to enhance their social, emotional, mental, spiritual and cognitive wellbeing (Albrecht et al, 2012). Well conducted mindfulness interventions with children indicate a concentration on focussed attention, self-esteem, cognitive and emotional understanding, body-awareness and co-ordination. They have revealed a negative association with a stress, anxiety, worries and hostility and a positive association with wellbeing, resilience and healthy relationships (Hanh, 2011; Weare, 2013). The SPHE programme, therefore, may be a promising location for mindfulness within mainstream education. Mindfulness in the classroom will be discussed later in the article. Firstly, an insight into mindfulness for teachers.

Mindfulness in teaching

While in the initial stages in Ireland, mindfulness is practised increasingly in schools and by educators internationally as a means of stress reduction and enhancing both teacher and pupil wellbeing (Albrecht et al, 2012; Greenberg and Harris, 2012). Its practise can lead to self-regulation of thoughts and emotions (Roeser et al, 2013), increased self-compassion and psychological wellbeing, impacting on increased self-esteem (Neff, 2009) and the building of strong supportive relationships that embody trust and closeness (Shapiro, 2011). Thus the practise of mindfulness points to the capacity to manage oneself (Caulfield, 2014a), build qualities that enhance healthy social interactions (Shapiro, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1994), and to approach interpersonal differences as challenges rather than threats (Kabat-Zinn, 1996).

The development of self-regulatory skills to respond to the cognitive, emotional and social demands of teaching may help teachers to "conserve precious motivational and self-regulatory resources" (Roeser et al, 2013, p.16) for use in teaching and building relationships rather than coping and defensive responses, thus reducing stress over time (Roeser et al, 2013). This capacity to be with pupils and improve the "felt sense" (Meiklejohn et al, 2012, p.7) in the classroom is a key outcome of teachers' mindfulness practise.

Self-regulation of thoughts and emotions are at the heart of mindfulness practise. These self-regulatory resources may also help teachers to develop greater awareness, presence, compassion and listening skills that promote greater wellbeing (Meiklejohn et al, 2012, p.7). The development of a daily practise like the sitting meditation practise or meditation before or during class is considered a way of becoming mindful while teaching (Kernochan et al, 2007). Becoming aware of the breath can be a reminder of the present moment in the classroom (Kernochan et al, 2007; Albrecht et al, 2012).

Few studies have been conducted in Ireland on the impact of mindfulness on teachers' lives. However, in recent years, some post-graduate students have engaged in research

focused on mindfulness in education. Some findings from one doctoral study are indicated in the section below.

An Irish study

A recent study explored the consequences for teachers who practise mindfulness. A qualitative approach was used to explore the occupational stressors experienced by primary school teachers and the contribution that mindfulness makes toward stress reduction. The research involved interviews with 20 primary school teachers in urban and rural schools throughout the country during 2013. It served to illuminate, for the first time, how the practise of mindfulness affects the effectiveness and professionalism of primary school teachers in Ireland. Participants in the study had practised mindfulness for a minimum of six months and had become mindfulness practitioners through a range of routes. Some participated in prescribed programmes, including the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) programme. Others learned through online training, books and selected guided practises. It is interesting that, in the absence of common training, solid mindful outcomes were identified and applied to personal, professional, stress reduction and classroom outcomes.

The findings reported that participants had an ability to respond to occupational stress by internally regulating thoughts and emotions. The consequences of such internal self-regulation culminated in findings relative to teacher outcomes, a contribution to professional practice and classroom outcomes. The contribution to professional practice reported greater time and workload management; classroom management; relationships with others and self-care. Findings corresponding to classroom outcomes related to teacher-pupil relationships and the introduction of mindfulness with pupils (Caulfield, 2015). The teacher outcomes that culminated in certain teacher qualities or attributes are discussed below. Other findings are not the focus of this article.

A significant finding in the study was that teachers practising mindfulness identified attributes of calm, focus and an open attitude as characteristics that emanated from their practise. Interviewees recognised that effective listening to oneself with acceptance, interest and curiosity created awareness of personal thoughts, feelings and body sensations. Noticing and accepting that a teacher felt kindness or compassion towards her/himself, or conversely frustration or rejection, in a particular moment enabled a teacher to be who s/he was in the moment. Consequently, with greater self-awareness the tendency among interviewees was generally to extend that listening to others also.

In accepting her/himself, the capacity emerged for the teacher to accept the feelings, thoughts, attitudes and beliefs of children and adults in the school, assisting them in becoming themselves. Rather than dashing in to solve problems and 'fix' things, to set targets and shape people, the inclination for most was to pause and consider the situation and the most suitable response, in other words to pause and to respond rather than to react. This was exemplified by the attitude of concern of one teacher toward the children on a Monday morning. She wondered about their low energy and considered how they were, how their weekend was, and their present needs, rather than moving straight into the curriculum.

Participants in the study suggested that mindfulness gave them the capacity to be more reflective. They believed that truth and meaning were important. They considered that it was unhelpful to pretend to be calm when, in fact, they were stressed. Equally, they considered it unhelpful to act as if they were loving and kind towards others when, in fact, they felt frustrated and overburdened.

Many indicated that, since practicing mindfulness, they developed an inner self-confidence that enabled positive participation in collegial relationships and staff meetings. Many acknowledged a newfound capacity to give an opinion and to interact in discussions within staff meetings, acknowledging it as being true to themselves. This developed more effective relationships with colleagues. A newly developed confidence promoted relationships that were more truthful and real with little need to maintain a mask or facade or to communicate one way on the surface while experiencing something different underneath. In a practical manner, a number of interviewees reported the ability to say no and not to take on certain tasks at a staff meeting when they were already feeling strained (Caulfield, 2015).

Akin to the underpinning humanistic perspective of the study, many teachers identified an understanding and awareness of their own difficulties and challenges and came to accept the accompanying thoughts and feelings. This concurs with Roeser et al. (2013) who describe mindfulness for teachers as delivering the capacity to “monitor their internal reactions to emotionally evocative situations” thereby creating awareness of potential emotional reactivity and need for calm prior to response (Roeser et al, 2013, p.1). This person-centred approach resulted in the capacity to be self-aware and self-ful and to move toward growth and self-actualisation.

All interviewees reported that the practise of mindfulness increased their ability to empathise. Subsequently, it gave them the capacity to dig deep and try to understand a particular pupil or parent with empathy, using that capacity to understand the emotional state and to share in their feelings (Singer, 2006). Thus, interviewees reported additional aptitude to understand, enrich or create change in relation to a pupil or to empower a child to create personal change and growth. It permitted teachers to accept their own emotions of concern alongside feelings of delight, courage or compassion in being understood. The consequence of teachers’ awareness and acceptance of their own feelings was shown to enable them to open up opportunities whereby pupils might acknowledge and share their feelings, thus possibly creating communication channels in the classroom where feelings are articulated and where differences were acknowledged and appreciated. This indicated an expansion of empathy in an effort to understand the little girl who lived in circumstances of material or intellectual poverty; to try to comprehend the young boy who was labelled disabled or special needs; to appreciate the child who is very bright or the one who feels useless because s/he cannot read or write, or those whose first language is not English. The need to be in tune with such a variety of needs underlines the value of socially and emotionally competent teachers and adherence to the highest possible standards of self-awareness in order to flourish and be self-full as a teacher. It also points to the potential of having the resources to respond to the challenges in the maintenance of balance and wellbeing as identified by the earlier definition (Dodge et al, 2012).

A clear outcome of the study was teachers' interest in bringing mindfulness to the classroom with the hope that it would have similar positive qualities and outcomes for the children in their care. It is imperative that teachers delivering mindfulness to children have their own regular mindfulness practise. Such personal practise presents teachers with a capacity to be more aware of their own emotions and actions (Whitehead, 2011) and to transform communication and relationship skills resulting in greater comfort and effectiveness for both pupils and teachers (Albrecht et al, 2012). It also offers the capacity to model and embody the qualities developed by their practise, for example, presence, curiosity, acceptance, focussing, empathy and compassion. Many teachers, who embody such a mindful attitude and way of being, are interested in training and bringing mindfulness to their pupils.

Mindfulness in the classroom

The new 3Rs for today's curriculum towards the development of social and emotional learning are denoted as resilience, healthy relationships and reflection which can be developed through the integration of mindfulness in education (Siegel et al, 2016). These complement the traditional 3Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic which were considered the foundations of a basic skills-oriented education in schools. Sometimes the focus in the classroom is on competitive learning with little emphasis on social and emotional learning. However, it is essential today that schools teach the basic academic skills alongside a focus on developing emotional stability and social tolerance which is also critical.

The experience of stress by children is a catalyst for schools to acknowledge the value of enhancing children's social, emotional, mental, spiritual and cognitive wellbeing (Albrecht et al, 2012). Mindfulness with children is a newly evolving approach with current research suggesting that it is acceptable and feasible (Haight, 2010; Albrecht et al, 2012; Meiklejohn et al, 2012). Evidence suggests that its introduction into the classroom is likely to be acceptable by staff and pupils, to offer a fairly quick impact and to deliver positive results with sustained value (Whitehead, 2011; Albrecht et al, 2012). Mindfulness for children is defined as "a mirror of what's happening in the present moment.... seeing life experience clearly, as it happens, without an emotional charge" (Kaiser Greenland, 2010, p.5). This involves quieting the mind, the thoughts, emotions and responses and noticing without analysis in order to observe information from the inner and outer worlds (Kaiser Greenland, 2010). It is considered a "powerful tool" for children to develop inner peace and peace in the world about them (Hanh, 2011, p.11).

The core practise common to many mindfulness programmes with children is establishing the habit of conscious breathing and focused attention, indicating that when we breathe in mindfully we are aware of the in-breath, when we breathe out mindfully we are aware of the out-breath. It is evident, however, that not every child in a class will enjoy the same activities. Some will prefer meditation and others activities that lead to mindfulness (Arthurson, 2015). Occasionally, teachers introduce a mindful moment in the class for his or her benefit, in order to bring attention back to the present moment. This is achieved using a guided practise on CD, for example, from *The Zone* or *Still Space* (Duignan, 2013).

The outcomes of mindfulness practised with children can have an impact on the teacher. Equally, the outcomes of a teacher's mindfulness practise can impact on the pupils. It is accepted that aspects of the SPHE curriculum are adopted through the ethos and day-to-day relationships and interactions within the school and that the behaviour modelled by teachers sends a clear message to pupils about expected pupil behaviour (INTO, 2015). Although little research has been carried out on non-verbal communication, the idea that "compassionate communication is the cornerstone of clinical care" suggests that people who are calm may trigger a sense of calm, relaxation and peace in others and in their surroundings (Kemper and Shaltout, 2011:1). Additionally, teachers who develop greater mindful awareness, self-regulatory skills and strategies pertinent to self-care and classroom management can become role models for their students (Roeser et al, 2013).

Proponents of mindfulness-based programmes for children such as the *MindUp* programmes and Garrison Institute in the US, the *Mindfulness in Schools* programme in the UK, *Plum Village* in France and *Mindfulness Matters* in Ireland claim many potential benefits for students and teachers. These include greater self-awareness, skilful ways to respond to difficult thoughts and emotions, improved concentration; improved impulse control, increased self-confidence and calm, an ability to pause before reacting, and an understanding and empathy towards others (Hanh, 2011; Hawn Foundation, 2011; Mindfulness Matters, 2015). Many of these outcomes reflect the strand units of the SPHE curriculum, for example self-awareness, developing self-confidence, feelings and emotions, relating to others (NCCA, 1999b). It also reflects the wider curriculum that focuses on "the full and harmonious development of the child" (NCCA, 1999a, p.8).

Wellbeing for children is becoming a clear focus among planners. The Department of Education and Skills' (DES) recent strategy statement, *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019*; their *Quality Framework for Primary Schools: Looking At Our School 2016*; their *Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion: Well-being in Primary Schools* in collaboration with the Health Services Executive, Department of Health and National Educational Psychological Services are each good examples. Such planning concurs with the ambition of the new partnership Government and 32nd Dáil in the aim to ensure that children have "a more thorough understanding of (their) own emotional wellbeing" and "to introduce and teach resilience, coping mechanisms, greater awareness to children" as a means of bringing mental health and wellbeing to the fore through our education system (Partnership Government, 2016, p.67). In each of these documents there is a clear strategy for children's wellbeing, there is scope for a greater focus on teacher and principal wellbeing. Whilst this focus on wellbeing may indicate an educational policy and practise away from the dominance of the neo-liberal influence of performativity, the question still remains regarding the 'prevailing instrumental and economic function' attributed to learning that remains in government policy (Hyland, 2013. p.1). Clearly education has a role to play in personal growth and wellbeing.

This article argues that mindfulness has a valuable place in the curriculum as a means of equipping each child with coping skills and strategies that promote resilience, healthy relationships and reflection; in essence it has a place in the promotion of the wellbeing for our children. A whole-school approach to mindfulness within the SPHE curriculum, which is currently being implemented in many schools in Ireland, at classroom and whole-school

levels, supports effective wellbeing. This approach also supports the critics of capitalism who “point to the need to return to collective values and more caring, less materialistic communities characterised by trust, compassion, and empathy” (Hyland, 2013, p.4).

Conclusion

There is a growing concern regarding stress among professional and pupil populations in our primary schools. Keeping this in mind there is a need to shift from a stress focus to one of flourishing and wellbeing. Mindfulness has links to such concerns with growing evidence pointing to its capacity to increase self-awareness, build resilience and develop social and emotional capacity. The practise of mindfulness in schools is gaining popularity with both staff and pupils. With a government that prides itself with a vision for change and that is committed to effective responses, the practise of mindfulness may well be a preventative and low cost contribution to the promotion of wellbeing and flourishing for all in the school community.

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