

Marino Institute of Education

An investigation into the role of a Childrens' Rights Education program in a diverse, urban, DEIS school, focusing on an Intercultural perspective. Is it a good fit? An action-research and self-reflective study.

Thesis

By

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly. This work has not been submitted previously at this or any other educational institution. The work was done under the guidance of (insert Supervisor's name) at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. I agree that the Library may lend or copy this dissertation upon request.

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Abstract

This study investigates the 'fit' of a Childrens' Rights Education program, in a diverse, urban, designated disadvantaged (DEIS) school. The program in this study is 'Making Rights Real' which was distributed to all schools in Ireland at the beginning of 2019. I ran the program in my First class of 22 children and is a diverse, multicultural group aged between 6-7.

An action-research and self-study approach was undertaken for this study as these often work together. The action-research was teaching the program 'Making Rights Real' and I engaged in deeply-reflective journaling pre, during and post teaching the program.

As the focus of this study is the 'self', I learned a lot about my own teaching pedagogies and the benefit reflective practice has on my overall teaching. The Making Rights Real program worked well in the context of the class and the children engaged enthusiastically with it. The program is a very good introduction to Childrens Rights, however Human Rights Education would need to be developed to further extend the learning in the future.

Table of Contents

<u>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</u>	7
<u>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</u>	9
Introduction	9
Inclusion	9
Dysconscious Racism	17
What is the role of Human Rights Education	18
Minority students first language	25
EAL	29
Teacher as a reflective practitioner	30
<u>CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY</u>	34
Introduction	34
Research Design	34
School context	39
Making Rights Real	40
Ethics	44
Limitations	46

Recommendations	47
<u>CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS</u>	49
Introduction	49
Excerpt Analysis 1-7	49
Conclusion	64
<u>CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION</u>	66
Inclusion	66
Identity and unconscious bias	67
EAL	67
Role of home and HRE	67
Impact of MRR	68
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	70

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to conduct an enquiry into the teaching of children's rights education in a very diverse, urban and disadvantaged school context. It is a study on the effect and fit of human rights education (HRE) within this school setting, viewed from the perspective of the class teacher and with a specific focus on the theory of critical multiculturalism and a focus on anti-racism. Through the process of daily journaling, I aim to develop a deeply reflective insight into my own teacher identity through the personal questions which arise pre, during and post teaching the Children's Rights Program 'Making Rights Real'. Finally, I will discuss the impact this reflective process has had on me as a teacher and its potential future effect on the school and wider community.

I learned of the Making Rights Real program via a course module on Human Rights Education, with a specific focus on Children's Rights. I found myself hugely interested in the potential application of this program within my school community. The 'Making Rights Real' program was requested by the Ombudsman for children following a consultation with young people in 2016, called 'Tune In' which sought young peoples and children's views about children's rights. Teachers, together with parents/guardians, were most frequently identified as the people children and young people trust and are happy to receive information about children's rights from. In the 25th year of the ratification of the UNCRC in 1992, the Ombudsman requested a human rights program to assist in exploring children's rights and the materials have been developed by an experienced team of educationalists at the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, Dublin City University. My aim is to teach the program and observe the impact teaching this course may have on the children, the dynamic of the

class, on my own sense of self and understanding of ‘rights-based education’ and any influences which may occur in the school context. This program was rolled out in a very diverse, urban school, in a disadvantaged area with evidence of substance abuse and anti-social issues. The study aims to offer a thick description of daily life in this context and how and if this program teaching CRE fits into this particular context.

During the period of research, I will partake in daily journaling and make observations about the school, the children, and my experiences. I will be doing this visibly in the school having agreed with my principal to run the program and to make daily observations. I will then take my own journals and analyse the data and then discuss themes which emerge from the data. In chapter 2, I will describe the literature and theories which are linked to HRE and some of the themes I expect will emerge during the data analysis. I will then describe in chapter 3 the methodology of my research including action-research and self-study and give a thick description of the program ‘Making Rights Real. Finally, chapter 4 is the data analysis chapter where I will take sections of the data and analyse these to extract themes and look at any recurrent issues which I identify. I will also include a limitations and recommendations section as part of this chapter and finally, in chapter 5, I will discuss some conclusions of the overall study. All of the names have been changed to protect anonymity in this study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter explores some of the literature on the subject of Children's Rights Education; nationally and internationally through a number of different themes. Firstly, we will examine the theme of inclusion and the different perspectives on what is the suggested optimal inclusion of diverse populations in an educational context. I have also included a section on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and its suggested benefits for children in minority groups. We will also discuss the relatively recent population changes in Irish society, which have led to this diversification and explore the existence of our historical biases, many of which are unconscious. Following that, we will explore Children's Rights Education and discuss what it tries to achieve in the school context from a critical multicultural perspective with a focus on anti-racism. We will then explore the EAL issues as pertain to this specific study and discuss the language needs and challenges that exist for the child and the teacher and discuss what systems are required to enable optimal learning and participation. Finally, we will then explore some of the teacher identity issues; the teacher as a reflective practitioner, the teacher's role in this research and the link of reflective practitioner with conducting 'action research'.

Inclusion

Broadly, between 1995-2007, there were unprecedented social, economic, demographic and geographical changes in the State (Ferriter, 2001; Fahey, 2007). These developments are commonly referred to as the 'Celtic Tiger' (Kirby, Gibbons, Cronin, 2002) and changed Ireland from a traditional country of emigration to a country

of mass immigration. The migrant population in the ROI now stands at 11.6%; there are currently 200 nationalities in the country with approximately 182 different languages (Central Statistics Office, [CSO] 2017). There are 612,000 people who speak a language other than English at home, with Polish, Romanian and Lithuanian being the most represented in Census figures (CSO, 2017).

The European Forum for Migration Studies, 2008 states “Schools are the main agents for cultural integration of immigrant populations.” Key cultural foundations of the receiving country’s culture, including its language, are learned in the school. This is a huge responsibility and also a huge challenge and it is argued that this relationship can have the biggest influence on educational success for minority language students (Cummins 1995). It is argued that a teacher who values the cultural identity of their students can pave the way for successful learning outcomes and the overall responsibility for EAL is a whole-school approach, as without the involvement of all members of the school staff it cannot work effectively.

Perry (2002) argues that “Critical Multiculturalism is committed to taking cultural competence out of the classroom and into an antiracist practice.” In the text ‘Race and History’ written in 1952 for UNESCO, the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss claimed that the wellbeing of cultural diversity should not be restricted to defense of the status quo: it is ‘diversity itself which must be saved, not the outward and visible form in which each period has clothed that diversity’. Cultural diversity, if protected will enable diversity to survive. (UNESCO World Report, Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue 2009). Research has indicated the important role Human Rights Education plays in this context and how it’s aims are to develop the idea of equality where all members of the human race are born as equals. Banks (2008) agrees that HRE is not solely the provision of information about rights, as it develops the

concept of 'cosmopolitan citizenship' and he argues that schools should be required to develop the view of multicultural citizenship within their communities utilising HRE.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1995) worked with students who became activists in their own community, took ownership and became involved in the world they live in. 'The students' artistry, power and confidence helped reorient audiences toward the idea that learners can be sources and resources of knowledge and skills – a critical component of culturally relevant pedagogy' (Ladson-Billings, 2009). This approach explores some of the influences of our society on the learning process. From a Vygotskian perspective, the teacher's role is facilitating the child's learning activity as they share knowledge through social interaction (Dixon – Krauss, 1996, p.18). This type of learning can vary between different cultures but one of the main points is that children learn from more experienced people; these can be parents, siblings, peers or teachers and there are three main methods of learning in this way; imitative learning, instructed learning and collaborative learning. One key part of Vygotsky's sociocultural approach to learning is called the 'Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD. Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) introduced the concept of 'scaffolding' and the ways in which a more experienced person can teach the child. This represents how children learn about culture from their parents and peers through e.g. story, games and songs. The theory helps to explain the natural acquisition of culture and formation of identity in a child's development which ultimately influences their language acquisition and re-iterates the importance of cultural awareness and teaching to enable a strong sense of self.

Dewey (1859-1952) also argued that the most effective way to educate children is to build on their existing knowledge and to engage and develop their innate

inquisitiveness. He argues of the importance in education of enabling the child to discover and learn through their own interests and with this learning becomes more 'child-centred'. However, Dewey (1938) does indicate the importance of a good balance between the role of the teacher and role of the child in educational development. Within Childrens Rights Education, there are lots of opportunities to facilitate 'child-centredness' which encourages education for independence and choice.

Criticisms of CRP

However, not everyone agrees with culturally responsive pedagogy theory and there are some critical arguments against this. Martin, Pirbhai-Ilich, Pete (2017) argues that CRP focuses on the "other" when taken upon by white teachers and educators. Although it focuses on the "other" in a positive way, the educator cannot really understand the culture and experience of the student. They argue that the issue of 'white privilege' is ingrained in the educational system, in schools and in the curriculum overall. There is a focus on the individual teacher changing their ways but it needs to be a whole-school and whole-system overhaul. Kabir (2011) discusses the areas of concern that Interculturalism is about securing future economic development and advantage in an increasingly globalized world and with the example of Finland, where students being encouraged to 'fit in' i.e. to take on Finnish ways of being (Dervin and Layne 2013). The idea of "innocent racism" is argued to be happening in classrooms all over the world and this innocence is authorised by the current education systems. It is interesting to consider the term 'epistemic blindness' (Adnreotti 2016, p.104) in relation to the term 'culturally responsive' where the teacher is seen as responding to the cultures of others whilst not being aware of the existence of their own culture and how it is linked to white privilege. Lund and Carr (2013) recognise a number of issues

associated with whiteness, one of which is that it is racist, as it carries a certain superiority about the right way things should be and it gives unwarranted rights. Gay (2002, 2013) asks if it is ever possible to know the ‘other’. I think this is a very interesting question and that we as educators should ask ourselves the question if we really doing all we can to teach in a manner that respects the ‘other’ and acknowledges people’s value and complexity. Ladson-Billings has revised aspects of the original theory (2014) to reflect the way society has changed since the theory was originally developed. Ladson-Billings promotes,

‘helping prospective teachers understand culture (their own and others) and the way it functions in education. Rather than add on a version of multicultural education or human relations courses (Zeichner,1992) that serve to exoticise diverse students as “other”, a culturally relevant pedagogy is designed to problematise teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationships, the curriculum, schooling and society.’ (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

In my own reflective research, I hope to investigate my attitudes and approaches to CRP and observe if there is evidence of CRP being used as just an add-on. If so, I aim to explore how it can it be developed, with an emphasis on HRE to develop student-teacher relationships and teachers attitudes to the pupils in their class and their families in a diverse setting.

Government promotion of inclusion

In an effort to promote and develop a more inclusive society, the government has developed a number of programmes such as the Programme for Government 2007-

2012 and appointing a Minister of State to deal with the policy and the National Development Plan 2007-2013. The Revised Curriculum in 1999 signified a change in the way children were taught and education became much more 'child-centred'. From an Intercultural perspective, The Intercultural Guidelines (NCCA 2005) were published in 2005 in response to this growing diversification in population with the relatively recent increase in immigration. Every town has experienced immigration and is a phenomenon all areas share according to (ESRI 2009 report, Adapting to Diversity p.XIV). Overall, approximately 10 per cent of the children in primary schools and 6 per cent of pupils in secondary schools are newcomer children. However, according to this research, the distribution of these newcomer children has identified that four in ten schools do not have any newcomer children attending, so while newcomer children are attending in significantly high numbers in certain schools, these are particularly schools in urban areas and in schools which have underprivileged students. Thus, it is evident not all schools have the same level and experience of diversity and according to the research, immigration has been very challenging for schools with no previous involvement with immigrants and their needs.

If we are to be an inclusive, intercultural society, which celebrate all cultures and embraces diversity, this study emphasises the importance all schools must take responsibility for intercultural education as a "whole-school approach" (Adapting to Diversity, ESRI 2009). Being a country with a markedly 'monocultural' society (Irwin 2009), educators face many challenges. Strong leadership is vital for intercultural development according to the Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-2015 (Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Integration, 2010). This research is the first and most extensive survey undertaken on school experiences for newcomer children and gives a very good insight into the current situation and the areas

which need development and support. The IES is about thoughtful preparation and teaching approaches, whilst having an awareness of diversity with the aim of developing intercultural environments for learning and sharing ideas. While societies are rapidly changing and becoming more 'global', it is evident that educational institutions have been quite slow in reacting to these new changes (Gardner 2004), however the government is required to ensure schools are given adequate training and information to improve upon their teaching practices.

The Irish Perspective and Policies for Inclusion

With the increase in immigration and the development of a more diverse society, migrants as well as members of other ethnic minority groups, have reported a rise in the number of racist events in the framework of economic recession (Lentin 2009) (Bryan 2010). The government launched a number of initiatives to attempt to ease any tensions growing from this shift in diversity. In 2005 the NCCA published the 'Intercultural Guidelines' for Primary schools which offered some suggestions for schools on approaching diversity and the changing needs of schools and pupils. These guidelines did not include any reference to religious diversity and as 96% of primary schools are denominational, there are issues which still need to be addressed regarding religious inclusion and diversity. There has been a lot of discussion on this topic in recent years (McDonald 2007; Daly 2009; Coolahan et al. 2012). In 2007, the Minister for Integration was appointed and in 2008, 'Migration Nation' was launched, which was a statement on integration strategy and diversity management and was the first document of its kind to be published in Ireland. The recent agreement on the removal of the 'Baptism Barrier' is a step towards a more inclusive and open education system in Ireland.

School is often the first point of contact for new minority students and it is important that teachers give a positive message and indicate that 'diversity is good'. Dewey (2002) argues that all children learn through their own interests and natural curiosity and from an intercultural perspective, it is important that learning for minority language students is interesting, accepting, culturally open and relevant. The recent increase in diversity continues as does the pressure on schools to perform and supply the growing service of English language teaching but teachers need adequate training for these changes in society and in the educational needs arising. Cummins (2000) suggests a whole-school approach is required to make this integration a success, it cannot be assumed to be the responsibility of the EAL teacher and if we are to look at teaching minority students using CRP, we must be very culturally aware.

Educational policies should reflect the conceptual underpinnings of being socioculturally, linguistically, and cognitively meaningful for the learner (Garcia, 1995; Moll, 1994) and this is difficult to do well unless the teachers are educated on these matters. According to an OECD study (2007), there are a small number of non-Irish nationals working in education. It has been noted that particularly at the primary school level, "it is less culturally and ethnically diverse than is in the case in other OECD countries" (DES, 2007, P.7). With this, we must truly reflect on our own biases, assumptions and thoughts about diversity before we can sincerely promote and embrace an intercultural society. It is to be mindful of our communication with others and in our assumptions as according to Neulip 'culture is learned' (2005). In 'The Politics of Recognition', (Charles Taylor p.25) discusses how a person's identity is integral to them and the need for recognition by others is within us all. It shapes who we are as a person and if we are misrepresented by someone else, it can badly damage our sense of self. It is vital that we are unbiased in our teaching and we treat everyone equally.

‘The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own’; (‘The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) (2010).

Dysconscious racism

"Dysconsciousness is an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given.... Dysconscious racism is a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges." (King in Ladson-Billings and Gillborn, eds, 2005: p.73).

Critical Race Theory can be used alongside anti-racism education to inform our schools and enable them to have an open dialogue and open discussion about diversity (McGinnity et al, 2006). In 2005, the Government launched the National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR 2005-2008), a four-year programme planned to deliver a tactical route to combat racism and develop a more inclusive and intercultural society in Ireland. As Berlak and Moyenda (2001) argue, “central to critical multiculturalism is naming and actively challenging racism and other forms of injustice, not simply recognizing and celebrating differences and reducing prejudice” (p.92). These strategies and initiatives have been implemented in schools and they have helped open up the debate on racism and its existence in our society. Anti-racist education programs such as ‘Be Fair’ and ‘Show Racism the Red Card’ in sport are programs which encourage communication and dialogue. However, it can be quite difficult for teachers

to initially discuss the issue with children without sufficient training. LeRoux (2001) states that the teacher is central to a positive environment in the classroom and in addition to the presence of a whole-school approach to anti-racism, the attitude of the teacher is key in nurturing an anti-racist mindset in the classroom situation. Teachers can become aware of the use of language used in the classroom and in turn, intercultural training is recommended to eliminate bias, adverse stereotyping and unconscious discrimination in teaching practices.

According to Devine (2005;2011), there is a huge pressure placed on teachers and principals to identify and consciously think about difference and students' cultural identity and to acknowledge the growing diversity in our schools. With this, a zero-tolerance policy of racism can help to ensure it is not tolerated in our society and it is critical that anti-racism is given the importance it requires. A critical multiculturalism approach to diversity ensures that anti-racism is a main focus and this is included in the aims and goals of HRE. In the context of this study, I have referred mainly to intercultural education which of course includes discrimination of any groups. A mutual respect for all cultures and people must be encouraged and this is going to take a huge effort on the part of schools, management and the education system. (Intercultural Education Strategy 2010).

What is the role of Human Rights Education?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises 'the inherent dignity' and 'the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family' (United Nations, 1948). The human rights foundation leads values of equality and non-discrimination and affords for equal title to a range of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights (Osler, 2015; Osler and Starkey, 2010). Article 29b of the

Convention on the Rights of the Child also creates the right to education which widens 'respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms' (UN,1989). The UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011), defines HRE as education about, through and for human rights (UN, 2011). Struthers (2017) explains these further as HRE is education about learner's knowledge and understanding, it is through human rights because it 'humanises' learners and it is for human rights because it empowers learners to claim and promote rights and to take action locally and globally. With this in mind, HRE can help to change people's perception of their own lives. By learning about, through and for HRE, you are empowering a person by informing them of their rights; that no-one can hurt them, they are entitled to a home, an education, an opinion and they have the right to change aspects in their personal environment. In the context of a DEIS urban school, educating young children can be a powerful tool and as previously mentioned, can help develop in them a strong sense of self. HRE aims to 'humanise' everyone as human beings, who are equal and deserve the same respect as all others. It aims to develop a sense of pride in one's local environment and help communities develop pride and a sense of ownership and responsibility for others as well as oneself.

There have been some criticisms that HRE attempts to pigeon-hole all culture into the Western culture (Baxi, 2007; Spivak, 2004) but others argue this is not possible as human rights are so variable but a rational argument that 'human rights are useful to lessening human suffering' (Zembylas, 2016). For HRE to be 'transformational' and make changes happen within a person, it needs to be involved with the 'reality' of 'learner's lives, with power struggles and with human rights as an ongoing rather than a finished project' (Osler, 2015; Zembylas, 2016; Waldron and Oberman, 2016). This is where the level of engagement is critical to make it relevant to one's own situation. In a

study by Waldron et al (2011), it was suggested that the understanding of HRE most prevalent in Irish schools placed human rights and human rights issues principally in remote places, nurturing a ‘charity-oriented approach’ to understanding ‘less fortunate others’. Bryan and Bracken (2011), e.g. found a variety of limits and impediments to the genuine growth of development education. The spectacle of celebrity campaigners and individualized feel-good thoughts of action, serves to disguise rather than expose the forms, practices and interactions of power that support global inequalities. This too can be evident in primary schools with a ‘tokenistic’ type of charity collection without an acknowledgement or dialogue about the root of the actual issues. There is also the challenge of giving children a ‘voice’ and allowing them to participate and actually have a say rather than put the right on them, they are individuals who are the ‘bearer of rights’.

Dewey ([1916] 2002) believes in a ‘cosmopolitan democracy’ which requires ‘the breaking down of barriers, class, race, and national territory’. There is a prime opportunity to develop this cosmopolitan democracy in schools today. However, there may be challenges convincing teachers to engage fully with the approach. Flowers (2004) argues that HRE is a relatively new concept for teachers in Ireland today and some argue there is a deficiency of clearness in its definition. Some argue that its importance is not as apparent as other types of education such as citizenship education, development education and human rights education and often it is seen as of lesser importance than these named above (Tibbits, 2002).

There are also many difficult topics which are necessary to discuss and teachers can feel ill-prepared to deal with them. In a comprehensive study, ‘Growing up in Ireland – The Lives of 9-Year Olds’ (ESRI, 2009), statistics indicate that 40% of this

age cohort reported being a victim of bullying in the past year. Bullying appeared to be “rife” in a study of young people from marginalized communities (Rose and Shevlin, 2004, p.159). Studies have also attempted to hear the voices of minority ethnic and minority language children (Fanning et al. 2001; Vekic, 2003; Devine, Kenny and McNeela, 2004; Ward, 2004; McGorman and Sugure, 2007). In the context of an urban DEIS school, the teaching of HRE can potentially present some uncomfortable topics and the teacher needs to be prepared for this situation. Arendt (1998), argues we must deal with discomfort and do it anyway, regardless of the outcome; we must take a risk. However, this takes commitment on a whole-school level and all staff need to engage with it. In the Aristotelian philosophy of practice, the positive changes we wish to make, ‘occur through cycles of action, dialogue, critical-reflection and further actions, this setting off a consequent cycle’, (Dunne, 1997, 2005a). It is necessary to fully commit to becoming a Human Rights School and in order to consider Human Rights Education in a specific school environment, it is necessary to look at the school in its context.

Human Rights Education in the Context of a DEIS school¹

Freire (1972, p.72) considers deeply the process of dialogue and he argues if schools are to indeed ‘change’, then open dialogue is vital. For Freire the importance of dialogue is paramount to implementing change. He argues that dialogue can be both freeing and can transform the oppressed when it is done with consideration and love. When considering Human Rights Education, it is important to look at the context and, in our school; we have a high number of immigrant students, some of whom are asylum seekers and refugees. In our approach to HRE, Rutter (2001) asks how a school might be aware and sensitive to the different needs experienced by immigrants who possibly

have been separated from their families. They may have suffered trauma or possibly experienced racism (Gillborn, 1995). A number of researchers have detailed the experiences of asylum seekers and immigrants in Ireland such as The Immigration Council of Ireland (2004) who detailed societal segregation experienced by immigrant children related to second language provision. As suggested by McCutcheon, (2010), teachers can review the context, select which rights they want to focus on and then relate this to the experiences of the pupils, thereby encouraging development and understanding of these issues experienced by newcomer children and families. Some examples of these issues are diversity, racism, equality, inclusion, cultural and religious rights. This development of an awareness of rights such as the right to speak your own language, the right to your own religion, the right to your own opinion can encourage children to develop a strong sense of identity and they can bring this back to their parents and families with support from the whole school teaching staff and management (McCutcheon, 2010). Similarly, a number of children in our school are experiencing homelessness, family members with substance abuse and drug addiction, poverty, hunger, neglect, mental and physical abuse. HRE can give them a space to discuss some of these issues and also give them an awareness of their rights, some of which are the right to be protected, the right to be safe, the right to an opinion and the right to a home.

Becoming a Human Rights School.

The question is, how when looking at the context of our urban school, do we become a Human Rights School? What methods must we abide by to ensure we are fair, inclusive, accepting of all, encourage dialogue, give people space to reflect and open up dialogue and how do we take Action? The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) gives us a basis to refer to and it can answer the main questions

about what is expected of the primary participants in the school environment, namely teachers and pupils. Children historically were seen as ‘not-yets’ (Verhellen, 2000), as they were seen to have ‘not yet’ developed as a human with rights. However, children are now recognised as individuals entitled to human dignity and seen as ‘bearers of human rights’ like all human beings. The CRC contains civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights and all rights contained in the CRC are of equal importance, thus none can stand alone. When viewing the CRC, it is useful to consider the 3 Ps: provision, protection and participation rights (Helio et al, 1993). Under protection, children have the right to life, survival and development (Article 6). The right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation (Article 19). The right of access to provisions include information (Article 17) social security (Article 26) and education (Article 29). The third is participation rights which include the right to express an opinion, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association and protection of privacy (Articles 12-16) (Verhellen, 2000). The CRC is a Convention and so is legally binding, however according to Verhellen (2000), ‘implementation and monitoring’ are the next step.

The challenge here can often be that historically children were not viewed as having the same rights as adults such as in the theoretical ‘privative’ phase of development (Dunne, 2006). Adulthood is defined as a rational, logical end state towards which children evolve (Devine, 1999). In education, the role of educator was the absolute power of the teacher and Devine (1999) argues that the dominant/subordinate relationship between adults and children remains fundamentally intact. Thus, it may be difficult to alter people’s perspectives in this regard and could pose a number of challenges, depending on the school environment and also on the cultural relations between children and their families. Through ratification of the CRC,

three tasks are imposed on schools: namely, the right to education; rights in education and rights through education (Verhellen, 1993). McCutcheon (2018) argues that in order to work towards enabling this HRE, the Human Rights and Children Rights Education programmes should be the philosophical basis for a school's Mission Statement or Ethos declaration. HRE should also be the practical gauge for a school's Code of Discipline and Anti-Bullying policy. The language of 'rights' should be apparent in the school's code of Professional Conduct, Safety Statement and in Grievance Procedures. Parents should also experience 'rights' in the school's strategies of inclusion around Enrolment Policies, Parental Involvement Strategies, Complaints Procedure and Home School Liaison and Communication. In order to engage children in HRE, Hart (1992, p3) suggests 'only through direct participation can children develop a genuine appreciation of democracy'. It has been argued however, 'that children's rights generally, and in particular their right to participation, have not been recognised in Ireland' (Kilkelly, 2007).

Hicks (2006, pp16-17), discusses how outdoor activities in their local environment present children 'engaging opportunities to learn about the past, present and future of localities'. These types of activities have been connected to children's growth of spatial skills (Wiegand, 2006), their social skills (Chawla, 2002) and their citizenship development (Valentine, 1996). Children should have their voices heard in education and they have a lot to offer about their own personal thoughts, suggestions and experiences (Ladston-Billings,1995). If children are included in decision making and allowed to participate, there is evidence according to McLoughlin (2004), that the results are positive. Percy-Smith (2010, p.110) argues that it is not enough to have a say, processes should be in place to encourage active involvement and participation. In looking at a democratic education, John Dewey ([1916] 2002) distinguished two

criteria for a democratic society which he then related to education. Dewey argues that a democratic society has ‘a large number of values in common’. He argued that ‘the bond of union is not merely one coercive force’ ([1916] 2002:97) and also that relationships and communication within and between communities should be allowed freely. This allows for similarities to be explored and encourage intercultural appreciation and understanding. He argues we should ‘give and receive’ to others and create meaningful connections and relationships. In the school it should be visible that HRE is an integral part of the ethos and the school should work as a place where HRE is part of the everyday life in the school.

It is argued that allowing children a ‘voice’ encourages this democratic development. Audrey Osler (2003) argues that children are citizens and not ‘citizens-in-waiting’. Also Dewey (1938) states that in order to practice democracy, children must experience it and can then internalize it and by allowing children to participate in active learning, to go out and explore their locality gives them a greater sense of identity and pride in their locality, thus building the interest, responsibility and opportunities to change situations for the better now and in the future. There are many positives to teaching HRE in an urban disadvantaged school which will help to curb racism and promote understanding of all ‘humankind’. These are some of the aims of the programme ‘Making Rights Real’ and it informs children of their rights, gives many opportunities for discussion and encourages children to explore their immediate environment and community and learn to appreciate being part of this community.

Minority students first language.

Pagett (2006, p.143): describes the minority language as “not just a collection of words disembodied in culture but is saturated in ideological meaning”. Language is

intrinsically linked to both culture and identity and the significance of language cannot be underestimated. Minority students are often perceived at a disadvantage due to the lack of primary language knowledge while the value of their own existing language and culture is often denied. According to Lazenby-Simpson, (2002), he describes how “dismissal of the child’s first language and existing knowledge will result in diminished self-esteem and lowered expectations with corresponding demotivation to learn”.

Ladson-Billings (1995) message is not to focus on the perceived ‘lacking’ in disadvantaged students’ abilities but to work with the existing knowledge, language and culture they have and utilise these in their education. Bourdieu’s (2009) theory of ‘cultural capital’ points to the concept of language being ‘power’ and if you speak the primary language of the country, then you have ‘cultural capital’. Often, the first language of the minority language student is not acknowledged or encouraged within the school environment. Some international reports give examples of this ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu 2009). In an Irish context, the primary language spoken in the country is English which is recognised as a global language (Crystal, 1997), and so it carries great ‘cultural capital’ weight. The result of this is that in Irish schools, the main emphasis is on teaching the language of instruction and communication as quickly and effectively as possible without any real reference to the students’ home languages.

Whilst the learning of English is paramount for the successful integration and future academic and social success of immigrants, there is in a way a denial of the students’ existing language and thus their own existing culture and identity. The Education Act (1998) in Ireland states that the ‘language and cultural needs of students, having regards to the choices of their parents, should be catered for’, (Government of Ireland, 1998: 118) but this is not the case. This partly has to do with the time the Act was passed, which was before the substantial immigration increase into Ireland over the past 15 to

20 years and the statement may in fact refer to the teaching of the Irish language, rather than another language (Wallen, Matthew and Kelly-Holmes, Helen) (2006).

Gee (1999) states, nearly all children have notable language capabilities irrespective of the household income and enroll into school with “large vocabularies, complex grammar, and deep understandings of experiences and stories” (p.367). A number of researchers reason that schools should support students in developing language and literacy skills in their primary language in addition to the primarily taught language in school (e.g., Bartlett & Garcia, 2011; Cummins, 1986; May, 2011) and teachers should be communicating the ‘value’ of bilingualism. Baker and Prys Jones (1998) describe it as where the second language “adds to, rather than replaces the first language. (p.698). Cummins describes additive language as “translanguaging” which is that both languages become fused into a single combined scheme and believes that schools teaching developing bilingual students should interact with their personal lives to enable greater transfer and connection across the languages. There has been a lot of research related to the role of migrant students first language as both a cognitive tool and a reflection of student identity (Norton & Toohey, 2011). This indicates that all cultures and languages should be acknowledged and included in school life. There are efforts required in ensuring this occurs in schools and in some ways the cultural inclusion is a very new phenomenon in Ireland.

However, it has been noticed that often the students themselves “identified ambivalence towards mother tongue: ‘related not only to the children’s desire to improve their English, but also an awareness of the lack of currency and recognition’ of first languages in school” Devine (2009). This ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu) occurs globally and Ladson-Billings based her research when dealing with African-American

students. To deny a language is to deny an identity which can lead to low self-esteem. While it is so important to learn the language of instruction, it is also hugely important to acknowledge the students' mother tongue, the language of their home country and family.

According to the NCCA, 2006, "It is important for the child to continue to develop his/her language and literacy skills in the home language." However, in Ireland, help is not provided by the government in this regard and the main responsibility of mother tongue development and maintenance is with the family. This support is often provided by complementary schools which are established to preserve and promote the home languages of these cultures of these families and are often run by volunteers from the home country. Baker and Prys Jones (1998) describe "submersion education", where the minority language students receive all instruction through the main school language, which in most cases in Irish schools is English. However, if we are promoting an inclusive school environment using culturally responsive pedagogy, the primary language development can be acknowledged and encouraged in school, both conversationally and academically, along with efforts to develop a deeper understanding of the culture and identity of these minority students. According to Cummins "Even within a monolingual school context, powerful messages can be communicated to students regarding the validity and advantages of language development" (1986, p26).

The importance of first language for the family is hugely important as students often learn the language of the new country far more quickly than their parents and this can become an issue if the children begin to speak this language than language spoken in the home. This can cause tension in families because the parents may not understand everything happening in their children's lives. Culturally relevant pedagogy aids the

learning of language is related to the family and the home and can encourage communication between the two. Anzaldúa (1990) states ‘Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself’. (Cummins,1996) argues the inclusion of the home language can reduce the degree of language and culture shock and strengthen students’ self-esteem and identity. The school is the main connection to the students’ in the new society and (Cummins,2000, p.47) states ‘the extent to which students’ language and cultural background are affirmed and promoted within the school actually empowers or disables the learning and achievement of culturally diverse students.’

EAL Issues in this specific study

According to World Bank, fifty per cent of the world’s out of school children live in communities where the language of school is rarely, if ever, used at home (ESPASI, 2005). Some of the issues which minority language students face are; functional literacy levels in language assessment, social exclusion in the form of lack of voice, problems of identity and self-esteem and discriminatory attitudes are some and can lead to further issues with early school leaving and low employment rates (ESPASI) (2009). In Ireland, there is a steady rate of poverty among non-EU nationals which is higher than EU nationals and this level has been rising since 2010 (McGinnity, 2012). In order to make changes to these statistical results, Cummins (2011) states literacy engagement should be considered a “primary determinant of literacy achievement” for minority language students. There has been substantial evidence conducted on this subject over recent years and it is stated that reading motivation is linked to reading achievement (e.g., Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) (Protacio 2012). Reading becomes a channel for learning and Gambrell (2011) states that motivation is the difference

between “learning that is superficial and shallow and learning that is deep and internalized”. There is evidence that motivating factors which encourage students to read are; access to interesting books, self-efficacy about reading, social interactions around books or opportunities for self-selection (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). If improvements are to be made, teachers must be educated about the correct instruction for minority language students and given a better understanding of CRP.

Teacher as reflective practitioner

The methodology in this study is an action-research with deeply reflective journaling. Johnston discusses how reflection is at the core of a reflective study and Schon (1987) states, ‘results from doing teacher research leads to better action’ and in agreement with this (Grant & Zeichner, 1984) state that ‘reflective teachers are more effective teachers’. Dewey (1933) states that reflection occurs throughout all stages of the research. Dewey (ibid) also states that having completed a deep reflection, the results of this are what informs our future teaching and it improves our teaching methodologies and approaches. Schon’s (1983, 1987, 1991) idea of ‘the reflective practitioner’ is an idea which many researchers also agree with across many different professions. Schon also believed that people understood their methods and approaches more sincerely by studying them and also learned how to improve their practices more by reflecting deeply on them. He argues that through the process of reflection, one can create a kind of dialogue between their knowledge and action and according to Kemmis (2005), also their theories and practices. With all of this reflection and deep consideration, there can be changes in the thinking and the reflection enables this and it is the purpose of reflection, to consider one’s actions and approaches and re-think the process if necessary.

It is also argued that a critical social lens has been central to action research (e.g., Kemmis, 1985; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) and it is imperative that we pay attention to and observe the ‘social norms and practices’ which we use in our daily teaching and having this awareness, we must ensure these social norms do not impede the way we educate for cosmopolitan citizenship. There are many factors which influence our perspectives and reflective practice so we must always look critically at all factors. As Kemmis (2005, p.407) argues, ‘wise practitioners stay open-eyed’ to the changing conditions that are happening at all times which include; ‘objective conditions, subjective conditions’ and can think of ‘knowing practice’ in two ways; knowing the type of practice and being ‘knowing’, meaning being aware and self-aware of how things are. Polanyi’s (1962) concept of ‘tacit knowledge’ also relates to ‘insider knowledge’ and is a ‘subsidiary awareness of particulars’ that experts in an area have which enables them to see things that others not familiar with the context would necessarily notice. Marilyn-Cochran Smith (2005) argues that practitioners who are deeply engaged in teaching know something about that work and can enhance the students’ learning by sharing their knowledge of the context of that particular education setting. It is suggested this work can be done in collaboration with parents and the wider community to enhance students’ life chances. Schon similarly describes this as ‘knowing-in-action’ and from this he has developed a concept of ‘reflection-in-action’ which is also based on Dewey’s notion of inquiry as ‘thought intertwined with action’. Schon describes this as learning from experience and he argues that this is at the core learning of knowledge about practice.

Criticisms of action research and reflective practice

Not all researchers are in agreement with this type of action research/reflective practice and some researchers have been critical in it not being ‘scientific’ enough, particularly positivist researchers who try to ‘keep the researcher out of the research’ (Johnston, 2005). This is an understandable criticism if one is not familiar or possibly comfortable with this type of research. However, Donmoyer (1990) argues that the experience and rich description of the situation by the researcher can transport the reader to ‘vicariously experience complex situations’ and we can learn from the experiences of others which is often in a situation we may never experience ourselves. We can also attempt to apply what we learn from these situations to our own teaching in our own contexts. We do however, as educators need to ensure we are aware of our own perspectives and ‘historicity’ Habermas (1929). We cannot ignore that we have our own history and biography (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001) and it is imperative we are aware of these influences on our perspectives. In order to ensure our self-study is of a high standard, we must always be critically reflective in our approach (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998) and Dunne (2005a) states it is necessary for critical reflection to avoid what he calls ‘subjectivism’ or a possibility for ‘narcissism or self-indulgence’ (Whitehead, 1989; Whitehead and McNiff, 2006). We aim to be conscious of this approach prior to teaching during planning, during the action itself and post action reflection.

Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed the teaching of a Children’s Rights program; ‘Making Rights Real’ and addressed it from an intercultural research and teaching perspective. We discussed some of the literature related to inclusion and the optimal approach for

diverse populations globally and in Ireland. Next, we discussed Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in relation to Children's Rights and HRE and what this education tries to achieve. We discussed various researchers' perspectives on these theories and also the importance of addressing racism in Irish society. We then discussed EAL issues pertaining to education and identified issues within this study specifically. Finally, we discussed some teacher identity issues, the teacher's role in action-research and their role in self-study. In the following chapter I will discuss the methodologies I undertook to complete my research and why I chose these methods to research teaching the Children's Rights program 'Making Rights Real'.

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to conduct an enquiry into the teaching of children's rights education in a very diverse, urban and disadvantaged school context. It is a deeply reflective self-study on the effect and fit of Human Rights Education within this school setting, viewed from the perspective of the class teacher and with a specific focus on the theory of critical multiculturalism. Through the process of daily journaling, I aim to develop a deeply reflective insight into my own teacher identity through the personal questions which arise pre, during and post teaching the Children's Rights Program 'Making Rights Real', and teaching the program will be viewed as an 'action-research'. Finally, I will discuss the impact this reflective process and action-research has had on the class and on me as a teacher.

Research Design

This research is of a qualitative design as defined by Creswell (2003). I have identified a Human Rights Education program called 'Making Rights Real' designed for primary school children which teaches specifically about children's rights. I will plan for the program within the context of my class as an 'action research' and implement this over a number of weeks. I will use a daily journal as my research tool and will begin this journaling process before the implementation of the program in class. There will be a pre, during and post action phase of journaling. The content of the journal will reflect a thick description of my school context, along with my daily observations, interesting conversations and other reflections I have during the day. I will make a conscious effort to be open and observe as much as possible, adding to the thick

description of the daily happenings and then engage in critical reflection (Hubbs and Brand, 2005). I will then complete more intensive daily journaling once the program begins and write a detailed analysis of each of the lessons and develop my thoughts on any observations which happen during or after the lessons. I also aim to keep my focus through the lens of critical multiculturalism and I will reflect on any observations noticed that day in the school context and become more aware of my questions about critical multiculturalism. I will be conscious of Dewey's (1933) theory of reconstruction throughout the 'reflective practice' process where he argues practice leads to enquiry which then facilitates heightened and improved future practice.

Research Method

The research method undertaken for this project was journaling and a deeply reflective journal argues Donmoyer (1990) is an opportunity to visualise the experience through someone else's eyes. Dewey (1933) states that reflection occurs through all stages of research and this also supports Schon's (1983, 1987, 1991) idea of 'reflective practitioner'. The pre-action journaling was a time from when the research was approved and I began to reflect and keep a daily journal. There were some specific criteria that I spent time considering from this point onwards; the Making Right's Real program, the school context, the children I would teach, my own teacher identity, the current Human Right's Education evident in the school pre-teaching the program. I also considered the conversations I had with the parents, teachers, management, outside agencies and the children themselves during this time. Grant and Zeichner, (1984) argue that 'reflective teachers are more effective teachers and the purpose of this research method, was to observe how my own personal journaling and subsequent critical reflection would impact me and my approaches to teaching. From a critical

multicultural perspective, I focused on EAL language needs, cultural difference and the acknowledgement of language and culture within the school environment. I was also very familiar with the context of our specific school in a busy urban area which has DEIS status where social issues are endemic in the area, which Polanyi (1962) refers to as 'insider knowledge'. In this respect, Kemmis, 1985; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) argue that we must be conscious of a critical social lens when partaking in action research and states, 'wise practitioners stay open-eyed' (Kemmis, 2005, p.407).

Journaling method

Johnson (2006) lists many of the reasons action research may be selected as an appropriate methodology in a research project; for example 'to change teaching practice' (Burnaford, Fisher, & Hobson, 2001), 'reform teacher education' (Clift, Veal, Johnson, & Holland, 1990), 'promote school reform' (Hursh, 1995), 'create social change and justice' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), 'create a body of knowledge on teaching' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993), 'make schools and society more democratic' (Noffke & Stevenson, 1995), 'view teaching itself as a form of inquiry' (Elliott, 1985), 'support collaborative conversations using feminist models' (Hollingsworth & Sockett, 1994), 'and promote professional development' (Oja & Smulyan, 1989). These varied purposes indicate the flexibility of action research and its application across a broad area of social science research. Johnson (2006) indicates that action research and self-study have not been considered in social studies education and have been more widely used across other areas of research including nursing and other medical professions. (Billet, 2004; Billings and Kowalski, 2006; Boud, 2001) agree with this and state this type of research is common outside of educational environments. Ellitoo (1985, 1991) identifies action-research as a compelling form of inquiry for

teachers and Dunne (2005a) reminds of the necessity for critical reflection to avoid what he terms 'subjectivism'.

The role of the teacher in this process is a deeply reflective one and the method used to gather data will be a reflective practice as 'action research' typically consists of a cycle of activities focussed on a question emerging from one's teaching practice.'

(Johnston, 2006). By implementing the 'Making Right's Real' program, I will teach the program and observe the children's responses to it and specifically reflect on my responses to the program and its fit in this particular classroom context. I will plan the program and as it is rolled out, 'data collection, analysis, and interpretation of data occur simultaneously and interactively.' (Johnston, 2006). According to Johnston, the research 'action' is intended to create change for the better and the study is intended to find out if we think it does. In my study, I will focus on the children's responses and on my own reflections on these responses and then study how I have taught the topic and how effective my approach was. However, when doing this type of research, it is imperative the voice of the 'outsider' is also heard, which will that of my supervisor to ensure the study does not become overly self-indulgent. Noffke and Stevenson (1995) identify action research as a means for the practitioner to become 'practically critical'.

According to Cole and Knowles (1998) there are two primary functions of self-study, which are "self-understanding and professional development." They suggest that self-study is "essentially being thoughtful (in a Deweyan sense) about one's work. It is reflective inquiry" (p.225).

I approached the journal in three phases; the first was the pre-action phase, then the action itself; teaching 'Making Rights's Real' and post- action detailed journaling and reflection. In the pre-action phase, I made quick notes whilst in school or jotted

down anything I noticed during the day. Later that evening, I spent some time developing my thoughts and reflections from that day's observations and notes. I tried to honestly reflect on my own experience, my own thoughts and my own historicity (Habermas,1954). I began the second stage and taught the program which was a period of more intense journaling. I made daily observations whilst teaching the program but also ensured I was fully prepared in advance so that I would not be distracted during the teaching of the program and could make full observations. I then developed these daily observations at home and spent some quality time doing this each evening during this action phase and reflected more upon my teaching of the Making Rights Real program.

Once I began teaching the Making Rights Real program, I then journaled extensively during this time and in particular on the days I taught it. These were the days where I hoped to observe the actual responses of the children were, how they seemed to enjoy the materials and how they interacted with and responded to the program. I found this extensive reflection gave me good insight into how the children did respond to the program at the time and I found it gave excellent opportunities for oral discourse. The children were pushed a little out of their comfort zone to discuss new topics with their classmates and agree on what was important and also to apply the concept of a right to a place which can be quite difficult in first class.

Finally, I went into the post-teaching reflective phase and for a week after teaching the program, I made observations about what I felt the effect of the program had been. It also gave me a chance to reflect on my own teaching even more and my attitudes towards the program, the children in my class and any observations I made or interesting conversations I had with other staff members. I found this invaluable as it gave me a bit of time to reflect post teaching as teaching time is focused on the program.

Freire (1972) understands the emancipation of the self through teaching and learning to be the goal of education. It is something one must persist with and thus a school becomes more of a human rights school where we all truly reflect on our behaviours and actions and thoughts and really think about the gift of rights for everyone and consider what that means as a whole school. I was amazed at the wonderful teaching staff and their interest in the topic of research and the vibrant and very observant conversations I have had with people about the cultural differences we have found their experiences in a deeply changing context.

School Context

The school is a very diverse school which is designated disadvantaged and is located in an urban setting. It has qualified for DEIS status (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) and with this comes extra resources, smaller classes and the supports of external agencies thus enhancing the school experience for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, whose families may have had a difficult history in school and to enable school completion for all children. The area in which the school is based is one which struggles with high unemployment and a history of addiction and antisocial issues. Some of the children in the school are homeless, some are refugees, some families have addiction issues, there are issues with long-term unemployment and domestic violence.

The population of EAL children is currently 77% and the school has been assigned additional EAL teachers. There are four SNAs in the school, each assigned to a child with autism. As a part of the DEIS scheme, the school has a Home School Community Liaison teacher (HSCL) and this teacher's role is divided between a number of schools in close vicinity to each other. With the ELS teachers in the school, we use a

lot of their time for in-class support and with DEIS status, there are literacy and maths targets so these are always a very important focus for the school. We have four qualified Reading Recovery teachers currently on staff, a RR trainer on our staff and two teachers are currently employed as full-time RR teachers.

The oral language support for children is exceptional and we are hugely focused on language development and acquisition. The Junior Infant and Senior Infant classes all have Aistear sessions in class and a number of teachers are trained specifically in this pedagogy. Reading groups usually begin after Christmas in Junior Infants where there is in class support during this time to develop phonetic and language development. These reading groups continue to the end of the year and each year group has continued support in class during this time. We also have Maths groups and support teachers work in class during this time with a great focus on Maths language and concepts. This support continues throughout the school until the end of First Class and we continually focus on explicitly teaching and developing the language of Maths.

Making Rights Real program

The development of the Making Rights Real program was described in the introduction chapter and gave information on how it was developed via the Ombudsman for Children, Dr. Niall Muldoon. I will now describe the process of teaching the program and what was involved in this. Firstly, I spoke to my principal and discussed the 'Making Right's Real' program and asked for his support in researching this in class which was gladly given. The program is divided into sections; Junior & Senior Infants, First, Second & Third Class and Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Class. I selected the section for First, Second & Third class and although I did have some reservations about its appropriateness for my First class from a language perspective, I decided to do this as I

wanted to use the program at the appropriate class level. I then studied the materials which are divided into three activities and I then sub-divided these lessons so there were six lessons in total and prepared these lessons as six 40-minute lessons over a 6-week period. I then described the program to the children and introduced Childrens Rights Education to the class. I began the lessons with a basic introduction to rights and discussed with the class that a right is something people should have and gave them an example of food. This led to further interesting discussion and I prompted the children with ‘We have a right to....’ which led to many varied responses from the children and some great thoughts on what we need, which we wrote together as a full list of all ideas. I then divided the children into groups of five for discussion which was hugely successful. Each group had a nominated person in the roles of scribe and reporter and we then listened to each group feedback their thoughts to the class as a whole. We then listed all of the rights these children decided were the most important to them and then highlighted the most popular, which then became our agreed class list. There were plentiful opportunities for discussion and oral language development and stimulation. Following this, I introduced the children to the UNCRC and we discussed the rights of children and the importance of knowing their rights and what they mean.

I began lesson two with a re-cap of the list of class rights we agreed upon previously. I then re-introduced the children to the UNCRC and we spent some time discussing these rights and further discussing what they mean. I then explained we would go on a Children’s Rights Treasure Hunt and had a printed copy of all the rights. As a group we discussed where we find these rights represented in our school and I let the children decide as a group where they felt these rights were. We visited various places in the school such as the yard, classroom, hall, principal’s office and staff picture. This exercise was child-led and the children were able to apply what they had learned

and clearly showed how much they had learned and how capable they are in identifying these rights.

In the third lesson, we began by looking at the UNCRC and discussing the various rights included on this. We then discussed the various organisations who have a role in helping to realise children's rights and the children made suggestions such as hospitals, parks, libraries, schools and police stations. The children were then asked in their groups to identify these places on their maps and label these. We then discussed the various organisations or places the children identified and the children were then asked in their groups to identify the right associated with each place and discuss why.

The focal point of the fourth lesson was an invitation extended to an adult who is connected with children's rights and as we have an existing relationship with the community guards in our local area, we decided to invite the guards to our class to discuss their role and responsibilities and specifically their role in protecting children's rights. We prepared questions in advance of the visit and each child had something they wanted to ask and the guards were very informative and gave a presentation on their role in the local community and the role of the guards in Irish society and described the various departments involved. It brought the application of rights back to the class and helped them to understand the role of the guards in the right to be 'safe' and also to be treated fairly by the police. They described their own experience of crime in their lives and were eager to learn from the visitors and also to share with them too.

The fifth lesson related to developing a 'vision' for Children's Rights, the aim of which is to share our knowledge of rights with others and begin to use it in our day to day lives. We discussed how we could communicate this message with others in our school community and the children decided to create posters of their vision for children

and children's rights in the future. Having created the posters, we displayed these posters on the wall in the classroom next to a photograph of the child who designed it and we created a further poster wall in the corridor to spread the message. As part of the sixth lesson, we invited all school members and parents to come and view our displays and allow us to explain our posters to them. We created a short video where the children's explained their vision for the future as we wished to share our ideas with those in our local community.

My positionality

I am a class teacher whose goal before all of this was to improve my understanding of the very diverse nature and demographic of people sitting in my classroom, both the children and their families. I wanted to be a teacher who could at least try to understand and improve my communication with the children and parents in my class. I come from Cork city where there was very little diversity when I was growing up. I was raised in a Catholic, working-class family and I now have 3 young children attending Catholic school. As a child I was always interested in social justice and studied social Geography and English in UCC. I always felt the world was bigger than my home in Cork city and I travelled a lot and saw the world but having had this exposure to such diversity, when I returned home to the same type of life, I still didn't have the deeper skills to appreciate and understand diversity. Since working in such an ethnically diverse school, I felt the need to understand diversity more and to acknowledge my unconscious biases. I think if we are honest, we can all work towards overcoming the biases we may not be aware of. My position is one of educator trying to educate myself to open my eyes, look at myself and be open to other perspectives and experiences.

Ethical Considerations

The methodology of reflective journaling in this research project meant that I did not need to seek permission from children and parents to do the research. The data is not based on the words and responses, it is my journaling about personal observations I made which is the focus of the research thus, in this research, it is the researcher (myself) who is subject to scrutiny; ‘the content, context, and nature of a teacher’s activity (Loughran & Northfield, 1998) and not the responses of the research participants’. However, I did inform parents of the research and asked them to sign a consent form to share any video footage of the class explaining their ‘vision for the future’ with other members of the school community. They have already signed a standard form for sharing videos in the school so this was a courtesy to them in case they had any questions or feedback.

A number of researchers including Johnston (2006) argue that power relationships are always a factor of self-studies, because the self exists in a space with other people. Zeni (2000) shows how often ethical guidelines can fail to address important aspects of insider research issues. Zeni discusses the issues of representation here as the researcher has the power to represent another and can decide to portray what that person thinks and feels. Action-researchers must be wary of “othering” students or sustaining stereotypes and enabling prejudices to exist. As researchers, we need to ensure we are critical at all times and critically question ourselves to address any of these issues and be aware. A number of post-colonial theorists such as Said (1979) and Spivak (1999) warn of our view of the ‘other’ and ‘exoticising’ the participants. Johnson (2006) claims that power issues can be difficult when researchers are involved in a study with people who are already in a power relationship, for example teacher and

student. Johnson argues that issues become particularly acute when researchers study persons who are already ostracised due to 'social difference' that differentiates them from the researcher. She gives the example of researchers whose cultures are different from the students. Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Noffke & Stevenson, 1995, all argue that researchers must ask critical questions during all the phases of action-research in order to keep oneself aware of perspective.

How data was analysed

I began by printing out my data and then familiarising myself with the data by re-reading it a number of times. I had chosen not to edit any of my notes once I had written them and developed them that evening as I felt this was my initial reaction and observation to an experience so it was more honest to let it be and then return to the data for analysis. Once I had read the data, I then highlighted the 'codes' and found some common themes going through the data and began to write about these. However, I found that this method was more descriptive and I struggled to write anything of true value and did not extract the themes as easily as I had hoped, which did not reflect the true depth of the research. Following a discussion with my supervisor, I reviewed my data again and selected whole excerpts of the data and analysed these. Next, I analysed the excerpt to extract recurrent themes I noted throughout the data analysis. I found often there was more than one theme in each excerpt and I have indicated this in the data analysis. I found this stage quite challenging as I did tend to interpret the data using a descriptive approach, so it took a number of times for me to step back and view the data from a distance, separate from myself, rather than myself as the participant. I referred to myself as 'the teacher' which gave me this distance and allowed me to interpret the experience through a more critical lens. Hubbs and Brand (2005, p.62)

draw on the work of Rogers (1982) and Vygotsky (1986) when they conclude that journaling as a methodology can evoke “an inner-dialogue that connects thoughts, feelings and actions.” It is then the interpretation of this dialogue which took time to extract themes from in a critical way and these are discussed in detail in the data analysis chapter.

Limitations of the study

Initially, I was somewhat nervous about rolling out the program due to some of the issues that could potentially arise. The program was very effective in giving the message about rights, presenting opportunities to learn and think about rights and discuss the people who help us, which was very appropriate for the age group. I think the concept of naming a right and then applying it to a place was a little difficult for some of the students which may be related to lack of language and the understanding of these sometimes challenging concepts. However, once it was explained to children, they understood more easily and could apply their knowledge. I spoke to a member of the ombudsman for children’s office (OCO) who explores the program with older classes and she was very interested to find out how it was received by students in first class and in particular EAL students. This initial worry for me was allayed, however I feel we did use the program effectively and the next step is not to just leave it as an information sharing routine. The key now is to move forward to a more action-based enquiry and ensure that rights become a part of the general conversation in the school and in education in general. Since the program there have been times in the class when I have used the language of ‘rights’ to discuss difficulties or resolve issues and the children are identifying with the concept.

One observation I made is that time is one of the limiting factors in this study. I was able to do an action-research and give my feedback on how the program went and my observations on the effect of HRE at that particular time. However, I feel it is a much longer process that could take years to instigate change. It is like the beginning of the process with HRE, that now the program has begun, it needs to continue to be a success. It is a mindset which would need to be part of each school year and each school group and then become integrated into the ethos of the school.

Recommendations

Within this short study, I had a great opportunity to engage with the children in my first class and deeply reflect on their responses to Human Rights Education program Making Rights Real. It gave me the chance to learn about the program and the children but also it was my opportunity to pause and look deeply at myself, my approach, my attitude and my response which is the data this thesis is based upon. I think the opportunity it gave me to be honest about my feelings and to be critical of myself and the methods I used to teach this program. Mezirow (2000,p.7) suggests that “transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken for granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change and reflective.” Leitch and Day (2000) describe action-research as ‘emancipating’ and I think the program has been beneficial in the class and we have carried through so it has become part of our language used in the class. I have found it has enabled me to be more confident in discussing difficult issues. The empowering of children by teaching them their rights when they think they have none, this is a powerful message and is an empowering lesson to learn for children living in a disadvantaged area. The linkage to SPHE and the Walk Tall program, this HRE has carried through and can be applied easily, when we discuss any of the SPHE programs

in school. By opening up the discussion about rights and responsibilities, it has moved us towards the language of rights and possibly the movement towards a more visibly rights- based school which means being mindful of the rights of all. The program was distributed to all schools in Ireland in January 2019 and it is seen as an important program but will it be taught and do teachers consider it worthwhile? Do teachers themselves have the information and confidence to teach the program and lead a discussion on rights? This would need to be reviewed further – there is evidence that teachers are not confident in this topic unless they have had specific rights- based education.

I feel this research is very timely and reflects the appropriateness and the benefit of this type of HRE for children from a young age. I would recommend that this program is taught in all schools, it can be edited to suit the needs of the class and it is certainly suitable to be taught to EAL students who have all managed very well in the context of my study. It is an appropriate level of concept knowledge for first class, and due to the insider knowledge and relationships I have with the class, I was able to support any child with language needs they had during the program and they were comfortable asking for help.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Introduction

In this analysis of data, I will analyse some of the reflections in detail, relating it to the theoretical data in the review of literature. The themes extracted from the data will be analysed using a detailed discursive method and the observer/participant is referred to as 'the teacher.' I will then conclude the outcomes from the analysis at the end of the chapter.

Excerpt 1 – Pre Making Rights Real thoughts

I've been thinking about the Making Rights Real program and how I imagine it will be received by the children in class. I'm a little concerned about the program from a cultural, language and social perspective and I am concerned about any child protection issues which may arise or any details about a child's home that the parent does not wish the school to know. I am a mother of three children and I realise that family life can be difficult but there are cultural differences such as the use of physical violence or other issues which may arise and I will need to be prepared for this revelation and will need to be prepared to deal with any issues in a respectful and calm manner. I don't want to be seen to be fishing for details about people's lives either and want to remain respectful of people's home lives. This discomfort is making me a little worried but I think spending time thinking is preparing me for dealing with issues which may arise. I'm also apprehensive about the English language need in this class and the number of emerging English language speakers in the class who have a limited vocabulary and often concepts are misunderstood. I need to be aware of my assumptions in thinking the children understand what I am saying when often they are missing basic vocabulary. A little girl asked me what a tracksuit was when she was wearing one and another time when I suggested people will work in pairs, another little boy did not know what it meant. These instances reminded me of the importance of explicitly teaching language and how when teaching the Making Rights Real program I need to ensure the children understand what each right means. I do wonder how some children with EAL will comprehend the program from a language perspective and will I be able to explain it clearly enough to them that they do understand the contents? Is it going to make sense to them and is it a good enough fit for them with their language need? Are they going to enjoy it and will they benefit from it? I wonder about their language need and how some of the children have just begun to speak this year. A number of them have really found their 'voice' this year and are full of chat but they still have huge gaps in their language so I must be sure I pace the program correctly and differentiate when required to ensure all children in class can access the materials of the program and they have an equal opportunity to learn from it.

Analysis of excerpt 1

We can see here the teacher is worried and apprehensive about some of the topics which may arise during the teaching of Making Rights Real in the context of HRE. In order for it to be effective, children are required to learn what these rights are and use this knowledge to empower people to change the perception of their own lives locally and globally (Struthers 2017). The teacher is aware of the school context and the life of the children having insider knowledge (Polanyi, 1962) and may be able to select specific rights to focus on some of the issues being experienced by these children and families (McCutcheon, 2010). It will be interesting to see if difficult issues do arise during the program and observe if the children in fact disclose any personal details. Research shows that teachers are often worried about talking about HRE issues due to this fact that issues may arise from it and the teacher may be uncomfortable with the information. With the recent updates to Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, teachers as mandated people have a duty of care and must report anything they consider possible child abuse or neglect. It can be viewed that by openly encouraging this discussion about rights, uncomfortable issues could be disclosed by the children and teachers often do not feel equipped to deal with these issues. The teacher here is struggling with this yet in order to teach the program, the teacher must be willing to take a risk in this regard. In order to further the conversation and have open and honest discussion and dialogue, the teacher must step out of her comfort zone and initiate the conversations and address her own discomfort in order to complete the ‘action’ of the Making Rights Real program. Arendt’s (1958) view of ‘action’ doing something that has a creative or learning component in it, without knowing what it may develop into but doing it anyway. This leads to a deep

reflection on the role of the teacher and how she comes to recognise the value of the program and the importance in doing the program for the benefit of the children in her class. The teacher is also conscious of some cultural differences which may affect how the children view the program and the possibility some parents may have a different attitude to children's rights or may not acknowledge them at all. The children in this class live in a diverse, heavily populated area of the city and often witness human rights violations in their own lives and community. Teaching a human rights program aims to educate about their rights and give a strong sense of self in order to cope with these difficulties ((1896-1934). The teacher is very aware of the language need in this class and the fact that 77% of the children in the class have EAL, the teacher is thinking about how to ensure the children are given every opportunity to engage with and understand the concepts in the program and the message it is trying to convey. With some of the children in their third year of learning English and they were in Junior and Senior Infants prior to this, the teacher is worried about their language comprehension and ability to discuss the relevant or extended issues that develop from the program. The language need is something which is very apparent to the teacher and she wants to acknowledge that this may be a difficulty while challenging the children and providing them with this opportunity to learn HRE. The teacher gives examples of very simple gaps in vocabulary and is concerned that some concepts may be too complex but decides she can manage this difficulty by differentiating the teaching materials and is preparing herself to do this.

Excerpt 2 - First 'Making Rights Real lesson'

I started work on the 'Making Rights Real' program today. I was initially quite excited but also nervous as to how the children would respond and how the program would be received by them. I introduced the concept of a 'right' and discussed this with the

children in detail eliciting responses from them and their existing knowledge of rights, if any. It is interesting to see what the children view as a right versus a need or want and I was very conscious of not trying to shape their answers by welcoming all ideas and responses equally. I found the childrens' engagement really enlightening and it is amazing to learn about how much some of the children know already. One of the children in my class, whose father works in politics and is very much dedicated to the promotion of human rights, equality and fairness. The boy who had just turned seven, made the suggestion "the right of an adopted child to know who their real parents are". He also informed me that "with rights come responsibilities" and was able to explain this as "when you have rights, you must also be responsible for yourself and for other people". This is a child earlier in the year seemed to have difficulty concentrating but has matured so much over the past few months and is very engaged with this topic and many others. He thinks about things deeply and this led me to think about how this child is obviously being exposed to interesting and thoughtful conversations at home and with this knowledge comes great understanding and openness. If he is learning about children's rights at this young age and able to discuss it so easily, isn't this a great example of the importance of introducing these concepts to young children so it is the 'norm'? Children of this age are mature enough to have these conversations and not be surprised by the idea that everyone is equal and has the same rights.

Analysis of excerpt 2

This excerpt can be viewed as an 'action' as the programme Making Rights Real is an 'action-research'. At the start of the lesson, the teacher was quite nervous and did not know what to expect to happen in the class. This is evidence of reflection in the pre-action phase and the teacher was able to honestly think about the issues which may have arisen in the teaching of the program. In an Aristotelian sense, where there is deep reflection and engagement with HRE and the teacher has engaged in deeply 'reflective practice' once the lesson is complete. The teacher has introduced and discussed the subject of rights in detail and has been quite surprised by some of the knowledge which the children already have. This scaffolding of learning by Vygotsky (1896-1934) is very obvious here and great learning can be facilitated by firstly taking the time to discover what the children already know, discussing it fully and then moving forward and building from this. Dewey focuses on the 'child-centredness' of education and how encouraging curiosity and child-led learning can enable great reflective learning.

Dewey ([1916] 2002) also describes how school can be viewed as a ‘microcosm of the world’ and HRE education can be a key in developing the message of equality and the view of humankind as a ‘brotherhood and sisterhood’. This child emphasised for the teacher the value of HRE at a young age and how it can develop our understanding of cosmopolitan citizenship (Starkey,2010), where we are all equal and have responsibility towards each other. It also clarified Osler’s (2003) argument of the ‘child as citizen’ rather than a ‘citizen-in-waiting’, meaning someone who is not yet developed and must acquire a certain amount of information before truly becoming a citizen. Verhellen (2000) talks of how historically children were seen as ‘not yet’ as they were seen to have ‘not yet’ developed as a full human being with full rights. With this in mind, the teacher feels enlightened by this child’s existing knowledge and positive attitude towards the program.

The teacher also acknowledges the importance of the home and difference that this can make in HRE. As is evident in the excerpt, a supportive home can enable people to engage in these interesting and lively discussions to embed HRE further into the daily lives of children. However, a family who may not consider HRE important and who do not have any value on HRE, may dismiss or be at odds with the message being given in school. Research shows that HRE from a critical multicultural perspective with a focus on anti-racism aims to develop a dialogue about these issues, raise awareness and develop the child’s inner strength (Berlak and Moyenda, 2001). Magendo (2005) believes that HRE when explored as a process and when it is integrated into the practice of education can empower individuals and groups. In a disadvantaged school context, often this can be applied to children’s attitudes about themselves and others and may help to cope with difficult situations and attitudes they may face in the future (LeRoux, 2001).

Excerpt 3 – New boy from Somalia

A little boy named Kwame has joined Senior Infants in our school from an East African country and has no knowledge of the English language. The other children and teachers in the school have been very kind to him and while I was walking on yard duty, I noticed him and felt so sorry for him in this situation. I spoke to him and smiled and he kept repeating “No English, no English” and I realised it might be causing him some anxiety to have people come up to him speaking a completely different language and almost expecting a response or that it may seem like that to him. The family are refugees and are living in temporary accommodation. It made me think about the context of our school which has a number of refugee families and homeless families and overall a very diverse population with 77% EAL but it also made me think about how I can never truly understand the difficulties people are facing emotionally, financially and psychologically, as refugees in another country. I can never know what trauma this family has been through; war, exploitation, threat or how they got here and I thought about my own history and the lack of diversity I have in my life. This then prompted me to think about this boy’s situation and compare it with a child coming to Ireland under difficult circumstances and being ‘placed’ somewhere there is very little diversity and where the child could very much be the ‘other’ in the school, which could be very alienating. A colleague of mine pointed out to me that the White Irish children are in fact one of the minority groups in our school which is very interesting to think about, thus the child may find it much easier to ‘fit in’ as there is such diversity in the school. However, if he chose to go to a school two kilometres away, there could be very little diversity. I think about my own lack of exposure to any diversity as a child in Cork city but this lack of diversity is still apparent in so many schools today, both urban and rural. My own children attend a school not very far from the school where I teach and the difference in school population to the school in which I teach is vast. I thought also of the various aggressive incidents which have occurred this year including the burning down of a hotel meant for refugees and asylum seekers in rural Ireland is indicative of the racism and fear which exists in Ireland. In order to remove fear, we must get to know each other and appreciate our differences which is the aim of Human Rights Education. We need to treat each other as human beings who are equal and this reiterates to me the importance of inclusive education for all with a focus on anti-racism.

Analysis of excerpt 3

The teacher in this excerpt has noticed a new boy in the yard, who is a refugee from an East African country and the teacher is making efforts to communicate and make him feel welcome. You can see the teacher is aware of the child’s ‘newness’ in the school and is trying to connect in a small way. The teacher tries to see the situation from the

perspective of the child but then acknowledges that she cannot as she is not living in the boy's situation, nor has the teacher had any experience like this (Martin, Pirbhai-Ilich, Pete, 2017). However, the teacher is aware and is making an effort to understand some of the discomfort the child may be feeling and is also trying to welcome the child as he may have been through a traumatic experience (Gillborn, 1995). The teacher reflects on her own childhood and growing up with very little exposure to any diversity and that as educators we must be aware of our 'historicity' (Habermas, 1956) and acknowledge the role our history plays in our perspectives. Johnson (2006) states how we must be wary of "othering" pupils as this viewpoint can mean having your identity constructed by outsiders, instead of being able to speak for yourself. The goal of this type of self-study research is to study the self and your response rather than to study the 'other' and it is important to be mindful of this in this research process. Cole and Knowles (1998) suggest that self-study is "essentially being thoughtful (in a Deweyan sense) about one's work. It is reflective inquiry" (p.225).

The teacher also has been made aware of the fact that the white Irish population are a minority group in the school which when reflected upon is quite a change in an urban Irish school. The teacher then considers what a different experience it may be for this child if he were placed in a rural school as the distribution of these newcomer children is concentrated in disadvantaged schools in urban areas (ESRI 2009 report, Adapting to Diversity p.XIV) and then compares it with her own children's school not far away.

The teacher does seem to question how there has been an increase in migrant populations, this is not experienced equally in all areas of the country and believes the need for Human Rights Education is evident in the ways some refugees are being treated in Ireland, to encourage dialogue and help to allay the potential fear people have in communities.

Excerpt 4 - Visit from Children's Rights Champions

Two local Gardaí who agreed to be our children's rights champions came today for a visit. They gave a presentation and explained their jobs to the class and it was a great success. I was looking forward to the presentation but I also had some reservations as I didn't know how the children would respond to the guards and if they would actively engage with the visitors. I had also considered that in other cultures the police can be seen as very authoritarian and I was conscious of any children feeling fear when they met the Gardaí. The children prepared for the visit in advance and we had a brainstorming session about questions they might like to ask the guards which I wrote on the whiteboard and the children wrote out questions individually. The children were very engaged during the presentation and discussion and asked lots of interesting questions. What surprised me was the honesty of the Gardaí on the level of crime in the area and the statistics on high number of thefts and the importance of minding your personal items and not putting them in your outside pocket etc. These children are too young to have a personal phone but the children then proceeded to describe numerous situations where their family members had been robbed in their local community and it led me to think about the context of their lives and being so aware of this threat at all times. One of the children described a violent situation he had witnessed between two people queueing for public transport, lots of others mentioned many personal items being stolen from their families and witnessing thieves being arrested in shops and people being handcuffed by the police. One girl in particular mentioned a dangerous man who 'steals children' who she sees a lot and that she had passed him on the street when we went on a walk in the local area previously. The Making Rights Real program focuses on informing children about their rights and their roles and responsibilities as citizens. It also promotes an awareness of our local and wider communities and emphasises our responsibilities to be involved in our communities and aims to bring children out into their communities to have pride. As a mother however, I felt quite sad that this can be these children's reality. I too live in an urban area and have some fears in certain situations but to walk out of the door and see a man you are very afraid of sitting there or witness some violence while walking home on a regular basis, I think this is a difficult way to live. The number of thefts in the local area and the antisocial behaviour due to substance abuse is often witnessed near the school can be a cause of concern and I imagine can lead one to be fearful in your local environment at times. I have witnessed plenty of this on my trips to and from school and wonder how it must feel for the children to live in such a volatile environment. I think you need to have a strong sense of self and to be supported in school with opportunities to talk about these issues and concerns, particularly in a DEIS school where many families live in disadvantage circumstances. These links to the SPHE curriculum can to be able to cope in this environment at times.

Analysis of excerpt 4

This excerpt describes a visit from the local Community police which was part of the Making Rights Real program. Initially, the teacher describes her anxiety at inviting police into the classroom and the discussion that would ensue. The teacher is aware of

the environment in which these children live and is conscious of the topics of conversation it may raise. There is a certain element of fear on the teacher's part pre-action as she is not sure what issues the discussion may bring and she can't control how the children respond. There are third party people involved and the teacher may be wondering if it is safe to discuss these issues with them? Also, the teacher is aware that children or their parents may have had experience of a very authoritarian police force and may have been taught to fear the police. This is difficult to tell from conversations pre-visit but are questions the teacher must acknowledge and possibly hope to answer beforehand or wait and see what happens after the 'action' (Arendt, 1958). The response from the children was very interesting and it seems they were happy to get involved and had no apparent fear of the guards and were happy to ask questions. The fact that the children listened to the information given by the guards and then described their own negative experiences, which were many, indicated how much anti-social behaviour they witness. The context of where they are living is so important in this study, it is an urban, inner-city, disadvantaged area with a difficult history of antisocial behaviours and substance abuse. Within this context, many of the families rent apartments or houses, some are living in social housing, some are homeless and some are living in Direct Provision. The teacher expresses her own sadness at the fact that children witness these negative behaviours on the walk to school or to the shop and how these antisocial behaviours can be a daily reality for them. The teacher herself witnesses these behaviours daily and it can be shocking at times so how do we protect these vulnerable children and help them? How can we prepare these children for the difficulties they may face each day and how can we help them to become a part of the solution for change? Kilkelly, (2007) argues that children's right to participation has not been recognised in Ireland. Some of the practical safety advice given by the guards

relates to keeping personal items safe and avoiding theft. There is also an argument here for educating about personal safety from a rights perspective and the importance of knowing one's rights. From a Deweyan perspective (1859-1952) the interaction between the children and guards is the most effective way to educate children; by building on existing knowledge and encouraging their curiosity. Strong links can be made with the SPHE programs; Stay Safe and Walk Tall. With this linkage and integration, the positive messages such as the right to be safe will help to embed the learning here. According to Dunne (1997, 2005a), from an Aristotlian philosophy of practice, these children have the opportunity to be engaged with making positive changes and we can start the cycle of positive change within our classroom environment and move further out to the local environment (Hicks, 2006, pp 16-17). The critical multicultural approach can be very effective in initiating dialogue and encouraging people to respect, listen to and learn from one another and also respect the values and beliefs of all, with a specific focus on anti-racism issues and education. Freire (1972, p.72) believes in the process of dialogue and he argues if schools are to 'change', then a respectful, open dialogue is essential.

Excerpt 5 - As Billy Idol sang ---“It’s a nice day for a white wedding”

I currently have a teaching practice student in my class who gave a lesson on the clothes people wear now compared to the clothes people wore long ago. It was a lesson from an Irish history teaching website and he did a great job of showing the differences between clothes worn then and now. He showed a PowerPoint slideshow with pictures of families from rural and urban areas and as they were pictures of Ireland over fifty years ago, it was not surprising that all the people were White. As I sat there observing the lesson, it made me think of the 77% of the children in my class who do not necessarily identify with this history and its cultural significance to them. I thought about how I can identify with the people in the pictures and the student teacher can identify with them as the people remind me of my family and my history. But these children do not see themselves in this history discussion. Ladson Billings theory of culturally relevant pedagogy in teaching children from different cultures and searching for something relevant to them, it is also making it more interesting and relevant. I

imagine if we think more about these types of lessons, it is more culturally relevant and also in the education and promotion of 'rights-based education', these children have a right to be acknowledged. I am not in any way suggesting that we move from teaching specific Irish history but what we can do is broaden our horizon to include other cultures in these lessons also and look at changing our approach slightly and seeing where it may lead. This was an example of my 'reflective practice' where I see how I can change my teaching to improve inclusion and celebrate difference.

Thinking about this lesson today, it reminds me of a day I was searching for pictures of weddings as one of the members of staff was getting married and we wanted to make wedding cards for her. As I searched online, I realised I was looking at the standard White persons 'white' dress and not considering the other cultures in my class. By acknowledging this as I searched online and then looked back at the faces in my class, I then searched for other wedding dresses and did not just focus on what my experience of the 'norm' is. This changed the dynamic of the lesson into a really interesting look at how weddings are celebrated all over the world and how people have many different traditions. Many of the children in my class were born in Ireland but they may not necessarily identify with the images of people on the screen in front of them who look nothing like them. It made me think about my own lack of cultural awareness at times in my teaching and how for these young children who often have very little language when they join the school, an acknowledgement of culture and language has been shown to mean a lot. With a little tweaking, these lessons could be much more culturally relevant for the pupils. It is so important to see oneself in the popular images displayed in the classroom to ensure that children don't feel like they are in the minority or if they are, they are important. There are efforts being made to acknowledge cultural identities but I think we as teachers need to be aware of our own cultural biases and our own historicity and the way we refer to others. Teachers can feel awkward about diversity as they often have not had proper diversity training and we are unsure of how to ask questions and broach the subject openly. I spoke to the student about diversity training in her college and asked him about how in-depth it was but he felt there was a lack of training on this issue. He thought there may have been mentions of teaching members of the Traveller community but did not recall any specific diversity training. I too identify with this and feel there was an almost complete lack of EAL or cultural diversity training when I studied for my undergraduate degree in college. As Ireland's population has diversified so much over the past twenty years, it is imperative that inclusion education is promoted and also focuses on diversity and cultural awareness training.

Analysis of excerpt 5

The teacher here is observing a lesson by a student teacher notices as a critical 'outside observer' there is a gap in diversity awareness in the lesson materials. This is not a criticism of the student teacher but an observation by the class teacher's 'insider knowledge'. The teacher knows this class and knows these children and has made

efforts to acknowledge the cultural differences in the classroom, e.g. to acknowledge all languages and cultures within the daily life of the class while taking the roll. The teacher by observing this student possibly sees what she would have done in the past or still may have easily done, without realising that the audience has changed. The population change in Ireland and particularly in urban areas has meant the audience in this context is no longer 22 White Irish Catholic children sitting in a classroom. The population has changed and now the white Irish person is in the minority and our teaching in our school context should reflect this. I think this observation has given the teacher space to see her own approach and to reflect on how she has learned about cultural difference and change in the classroom. The teacher here is almost seeing her own 'phronesis' from an Aristotelean perspective. In this action as with reflective thoughts on her practice, she is seeing how her possible unconscious bias or historicity had and still can limit her thinking about the wider cultural presence in her classroom. However, with deep reflection, the teacher is making more efforts to be inclusive from an intercultural perspective and treat all cultures as equally important. Cummins (2000) states 'the extent to which student' language and cultural background are affirmed and promoted within the school actually empowers or disables the learning and achievement of culturally diverse students.' You can see the changes in the teacher with these practices where often a tokenistic type of cultural celebration can be considered ample in the past and often a charity based cultural outlook is enough but here. the teacher sees her own thinking and moments of clarity are happening during the teaching day. We can see the teachers change happening and the teachers own identity is being questioned here; what way is the teacher to teach? Can the teacher be more inclusive? What type of message does this send out? One of equality and a celebration of difference. Again, as referred to in excerpt 3, the teacher is becoming very aware of her

thoughts and unconscious biases and really attempting to deal with these through a reflective process and question her thoughts and consider how to change and improve her methodology, the materials she uses and the assumptions she often makes. Dewey (1933) argues that having completed a deep reflection, the results of this then inform our future teaching and improves our teaching methodologies and approaches. Schon's (1983,1987,1991) idea of the 'reflective practitioner' believed people understood their methods better by studying them. This overall process is affecting her teaching in the moment and she is reflecting as she is doing her work and can actualise the change in her by altering her methods mid-lesson and instigate a change in herself.

Excerpt 6 – Right to a name

I was speaking to a friend recently who is also a teacher in another school and she asked me if a boy from China had been transferred to my school at the beginning of the year? We realised that the boy was moved into my class from this friend's school and had spent two years in this other teacher's school. The teacher informed me that when this child arrived to the school in Junior Infants, the principal advised the parent to change the boy's name as it sounded very like an Irish greeting and she wanted to spare him any hassle from other children. I did see her point in a way if she meant it to be kind but I am not sure it should be recommended to change your name, whatever it is, surely this is a choice? This is the year 2019 and the population has changed hugely in the country and we now live in a global society. This is looking at assimilation and certainly not looking at someone and seeing that the boy is entitled to his name. It is really the responsibility of his school and the Irish society to start appreciating people's names and ensuring we do pronounce Chinese names correctly. I do notice that a lot of the children in my class have chosen different names and I understand why but some do keep their names and our school make every effort to learn to say the name correctly in Chinese. We as a school work very hard to ensure it is learned by all and we do acknowledge Chinese names can be more difficult but with persistence we learn them. I wonder if I was in this same situation, how would I react? Would I be happy with changing my child's name to something that sounds nothing like it? How would I feel? Is it the right thing to do? To not acknowledge someone's right to a name is to deny them their identity. I looked at this child during the time I was teaching about the right to a name and I thought about how his right to a name has been denied. In Ireland we are making great strides in inclusion but there are plenty of people who do not see their own bias in trying to help or exert their power over people who may have EAL and need help with the cultural understanding of Irish society. Is it right to recommend someone changes their name without the parents instigating the change? Is that somewhat extreme? Is it an abuse of power or good advice? I think we need to really be reflective

about these issues and consider them from the other person's perspective to gain some insight into what it really means for them?

Analysis of Excerpt 6

The teacher here has identified the issues of identity and inclusion. The child is entitled to a name, which is a right everyone holds in UNCRC (1989), yet the parents were advised to change the name to a more common one so that people would find it easier to pronounce. In one way the teacher understands the principal may be doing their best to make this child's transition to school in Ireland easier and may actually want to help the child to settle in more easily. However, it is a denial of the child and family's right to keep his Chinese name to instead immediately suggest something they change.

Cummins (1995) argues how a teacher who values their student's identity, can create a positive path ahead for the student. The teacher here is struggling with a person in power strongly advising someone to change their name possibly without understanding the importance of one's name and the teacher is finding it difficult to understand how someone could so easily advise this. The teacher raises questions about how she would feel if the same thing were suggested to her in this type of instance. Would she do the same thing? How would it feel? Kemmis, 1985; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1998 reiterate we must be aware of ourselves and 'social norms.' Possibly asking why a situation is acceptable for someone else and also asking if the same situation is acceptable for us, would help us to reflect on our own identity and perspective (Schon, 1983, 1987, 1991). It is not possible to answer these questions at this point but it does highlight on some interesting issues and arguments, such as educators being well informed about cultural diversity, equality, inclusion and human rights education and anti-racist education.

Excerpt 7 – Yard Supervision

We have a rota of yard supervision duty for the 15 minutes before school every morning and this lasts for a week. As I am teaching first class the children and parents line up at my door each morning so I don't see the other classes in the school. I went out to do my yard duty in the main school yard and I was struck by the camaraderie of the pupils and the parents. There were lots of big 'hi's' and 'hellos', there were high 5s to children and parents, big smiles, hugs, and it felt like such a friendly, safe environment. We have a small football area where some children play ball before school, a garden where they can go and admire the flowers we planted or the bug hotel. I actually commented on this atmosphere to my deputy principal and commented that I was surprised at the joy and the way people communicated so much with each other. I wonder why that is though? Is it my unconscious bias making me think that all these people from very different backgrounds with very different languages could never get along? Or had I just never thought about it that deeply? I had been on career break for nearly four years so possibly I'm more observant now than I was before I left? What this points out to me is that I can never quite feel what others experience, I can only learn and question and try to understand but I am really coming from a different perspective and this is where my own historicity is important. I will never experience this but I can try to understand it. I'm trying not to sound patronising but if I feel this way then I think that it is a very common thing. It is that deeper understanding and looking at my own identity. It is acknowledging that everyone is an individual and everyone is entitled to be themselves and by learning more about each other and seeing each other as 'brothers and sisters' in the world and a global community, it can help to build this dialogue and learn from each other. I found this fascinating that I felt this way and it really made me think about myself and how I think and question myself as to why I was so surprised? Did I expect everyone to stand by themselves? I know parents have great relationships in the school but I was surprised that these fifteen minutes of supervision gave me such great insight. It also reminded me that while I've been at my children's school gate where there is very little diversity, this school in an urban area continues to grow and develop its diversity and possibly I was surprised because I didn't see it for a while? I was glad to have the opportunity to make this observation and feel this has given me a greater insight into myself...

Analysis of excerpt 7

In this extract, the teacher acknowledges her own thoughts on the communication between parents and children in the school and views it as a lesson on an Intercultural society as a success. The teacher is observing the interactions between families who come from all over the world and who speak many different languages. The microcosm of society in this particular area is apparent here where 77% of children speak a different language than English what has been referred to as a 'monocultural society'

(Irwin 2009) which is predominantly white, Irish and Gaelic society (Census 2017). Because the teacher does not often have the opportunity to observe in this way, she finds it is a great insight into the willingness of people to communicate and build friendships across all cultures and language barriers. According to the European Forum for Migration Studies, (2008) states; “Schools are the main agents for cultural integration of immigrant populations” and this observation shows how much the school population has embraced the change where the atmosphere is one of respect and communication. It is a reflection of our global society and the changes which have taken place over the past twenty years in this urban context. More obviously, it is the teacher’s own reflection of herself and her observation skills show how she is surprised at her initial reaction and wonders why? I imagine the teacher previously may not have noticed this as she may not have engaged in the observation as deeply. She now is more actively engaged due to this focus on practice. She is ‘staying open-eyed’ (Kemmis, 2005, p.407). This ‘reflective practice’ can be applied to all areas of education and according to Schon (1987) leads to ‘better action’ in future teaching. Hubbs and Brand (2005, p.63) claim that reflecting deeply can provide ways to “illuminate our automatic thinking” and help to free us from our old standard thought processes and this is something which the teacher seems to have realised also.

Conclusion

In conclusion to this chapter, a number of recurrent themes arose from the data analysis. These are; inclusion (excerpts 3,5,6). Often inclusion is considered to apply to children with special needs but the focus of this research is intercultural education where the focus is on culture and language inclusivity. This also links with identity and the acknowledgement of the identity of the children and families we work with in such a diverse setting, (excerpts 3, 5, 6). The teacher questions her own acknowledgement of

identity and what can be done to improve this. A second theme which is evident is the language need which exists when teaching new concepts to young children with EAL (excerpts 1,3,6). Teacher identity is another theme which has arisen from the data and specifically my identity and my historicity as researcher. I found as researcher that I was surprised by some of the issues that I considered and it gave me a chance to deeply reflect on these. Identity links with unconscious bias which is something everyone has but to be so aware of it is somewhat surprising in my own personal reflection (excerpts 5,6,7). Finally, the power and value of home (excerpts 1,2,3,4). Home is key to continuing the message of children's rights and ensuring that children can see their value and their rights. The children in my school live in very varied circumstances, the culture of home may be very different from our culture in school. Article 42.1 of the Irish Constitution states, "The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educators of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children." (Bunreacht na hEireann, 1937). Waldron et al (2010) discuss how education and its relationship with human rights is 'complex and multi-dimensional'. By acknowledging this complexity, the basic aims of HRE remain the same, as Heater (1984) states it aims 'to develop respect for equality, for the environment and for the child's own and other cultural identities. These deeply reflective practices and data analysis will help the teacher to become a better educator and achieve these go

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I outlined purpose of this research, which was to conduct an enquiry into the teaching of children's rights education in a very diverse, urban and disadvantaged school context. It is a deeply reflective self-study on the effect and fit of HRE within this school setting, viewed from the perspective of the class teacher and with a specific focus on the theory of critical multiculturalism. Having completed the data analysis, I identified four main themes where are; inclusion, identity, EAL and teacher identity.

Inclusion

In my school context I am referring to inclusion from an intercultural perspective and the inclusion of cultures and languages in the daily life of the school. From my observations, it is often the role of the teacher to make diversity good, particularly in children so young. They will learn prejudice and racism at such a young age, it is important that we make an effort to acknowledge all cultures and languages in our school. Within our school the population has changed hugely over the past twenty years and we have very much responded to that change with a current population of 77% EAL speakers. With this change we have become a school that is very aware of cultural and language identity, however it is important that we ensure these appreciations become part of our day and it is not selected moments of the curricular year. Certain aspects of the curriculum can be linked with culture and CRP (Ladstone-Billings, 1995) can enhance feelings of mutual respect, interest in work and a positive identity. I can conclude that this is a very timely and important point to be implemented in our schools.

Identity and unconscious bias

Many researchers have stated the importance of acknowledging one's identity. Schools are often the first point of contact for immigrants, thus plays a hugely important role in supporting children and families in the transition to a new society. Making small efforts to acknowledge identity has been shown to develop a strong sense of self and pride in one's culture and (Taylor, 1992) discusses how 'the need for recognition is within us all.' As teachers we are in a position of power and it is important we acknowledge our unconscious bias and we question our views on equality and diversity.

EAL

Prior to this study, I was worried at the ability of some students to access the program due to having EAL but I was proven incorrect. Although there were some difficulties with concepts of 'rights' and further discussions, all the children were able to participate and express themselves and did show their understanding of the concepts, which I felt was a success.

Role of home and HRE

Throughout the study, the role and importance of home has been a recurring theme. I have witnessed through the conversations with the children, the absolute importance of their homes and their families. Family is central to their lives and they all live in different family circumstances yet the importance of family is equally as important to them all. This reiterates the importance of working closely with parents and sharing these messages of human rights, anti-racism and equality with them and sending this positive message home.

Impact of MRR

Finally, I wish to briefly discuss the impact of this action ‘MRR’ program within this short period of time on the class, on me and its potential impact in the future. I have found that since the implementation of this program, some issues have arisen and I have been able to cope and deal with them in a clearer way than perhaps would have been the case prior to teaching the course. We have now become a more ‘rights’ based class as the concept of rights is becoming more familiar as we apply it to different situations. I have also found the impact on me has been substantial. The extent of my reflections on the importance of rights -based education and viewing the children in my class as ‘bearers of rights’ has great value and its potential for further development in the school is very promising. Within the school, the conversations happening with other staff members have been so meaningful and deep and there is a real and interest in rights-based education and a deeper understanding of diversity. I had a display on the wall in my room and one of the rights was the right to a home. A teacher asked if any of the children brought up homelessness during this lesson, which they did and we discussed the difficulty with raising issues that parents may not necessarily want you to know about or discuss in school. I found this conversation reiterated the thoughts I already had pre-teaching the course and it validated for me the need for this type of education, so that we as teachers are better equipped to deal with these serious issues in school. The level of support and interest shown for the program benefitted the children but the impact on the school staff has been significant too. The rich and valuable conversations I have had on a daily basis with members of staff has been of huge benefit. I have found that in this diverse school, the teachers strive out for the best for their children and also have concerns about their own knowledge of diversity. What I have really noticed is the interest to learn and develop which carries throughout the

whole school. I now feel more empowered to deal with human rights issues but to also deal with subjects linked with this such as the SPHE programs and many of the difficult issues which arise. I personally felt I benefitted as I viewed these lessons as a gift to the children to help them in difficult circumstances and by having a dialogue, remove the stigma of whatever issue is being discussed. As a school having taught the program, the issue of children's rights is very timely with the new NCCA curriculum being devised which has a focus on human rights education. The reviewed Children First Protection guidelines give an even greater responsibility to teachers and with this, teachers need to be encouraged to learn about the issues raised in this research. In order to progress, teachers need to be educated too. I feel that by doing this research, my knowledge, belief and courage in this topic has developed so I can aid this move towards a more rights-based educational approach.

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