TEACHING FROM THEORY LEARNING FROM PRACTICE

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION FOR THE PRIMARY SECTOR

An E-Book of
Development Education
and
Intercultural Education Research
for Teacher Educators

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DICE
Development
& InterCultural
Education

Irish Aid
Department of Foreign Affairs
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

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INTRODUCTION

TEACHING FROM THEORY, LEARNING FROM PRACTICE: DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION FOR THE PRIMARY SECTOR

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THE debate on the relationship between theory and practice has a long heritage because it relates to the question: How do we know what we know? As early as the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon argued:

> There are and can be only two ways of searching into and discovering truth. The one flies from the senses and particulars to the most general axioms, and from these principles, the truth of which it takes for settled and immovable, proceeds to judgment and middle axioms. And this way is now in fashion. The other derives axioms from the senses and particulars, rising by a gradual and unbroken ascent, so that it arrives at the most general axioms last of all. This is the true way, but as yet untried.

Bacon shows the two ways in which knowledge can be generated. In the first, knowledge emerges inductively, or what we would identify as normative theory. This relates to how things 'should' be: for example, why do we engage in development education? In the second, knowledge emerges deductively, or what we would identify as empirical theory. This relates to how things 'are': for example, what does engaging in development education do for the students?

The debates on the relationship between theory and practice in development education comprise both of these types of knowledge. Development education starts from a normative perspective: it is good to teach about global and development issues, but then quickly moves to the practicalities of doing so. Vanessa Andreotti argues that the demands of fundraising and project management have meant that 'DE [development education] has focused on "practice" – a "how to" approach – at the expense of DE thinking – or theory' (Andreotti, 2006: 7). Therefore, when development education is concerned with theory, it is with teacher

education theory rather than development theory. This edited e-book seeks to facilitate a dialogue between these different types of knowledge in relation to development education in the primary sector in Ireland. Some chapters address the question 'Why do we teach development and global citizenship?' Some chapters ask: 'How can teaching theory improve the teaching of development and global issues?' Finally, some chapters address the question: 'How do educators learn about global and development issues and how do they integrate them into their pedagogical understandings?'

NORMATIVE DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

There are many different definitions of development education, which is also called global education and education for global citizenship, among others. Pike identifies a continuum from global education as a 'broader geographical perspective' to 'a fundamental revaluation of the content, organization, and purpose of schooling' (Pike, 2000: 64). The definition most familiar to those working in Ireland is that proposed by Irish Aid. It argues development education

> is an educational response to issues of development, human rights, justice and world citizenship; presents an international development and human rights perspective within education here in Ireland and elsewhere; promotes the voices and viewpoints of those who are excluded from an equal share in the benefits of human development internationally; is an opportunity to link and compare development issues and challenges in Ireland with those elsewhere throughout the world; provides a chance for Irish people to reflect on our international roles and responsibilities with regard to issues of equality and justice in human development; is an opportunity to be active in writing a new story for human development. (Irish Aid, nd: 6)

This definition, however, is primarily 'knowledge' focused rather than 'skills' or 'values' focused and therefore differs from, for example, the definition proposed by the Development Education Association (DEA). Its definition also included understanding the global forces shaping our lives and enabling people to make links between their own lives and those of people throughout the world. However, it also included the following two principles:

> Developing the skills, attitudes and values which enable people to work together to bring about change and take control of their own

lives; working towards achieving a more just and sustainable world in which power and resources are more equitably shared.[1]

Thus, definitions of development education contain three main aspects: key skills, key values, and key knowledge. However, the DEA definition also includes a social and political activist element. Unsurprisingly then, Doug Bourne has argued that development education is a 'distinct approach towards learning which directly relates to educational and social change' (Bourne, 2003: 5). In a similar vein, Stephen McCloskey argues: 'Development education encompasses an active, participative approach to learning that is intended to effect action toward social change' (McCloskey, 2003: 179).

We can identify normative aspects of these elements of the definition of development education. First, it is argued that development education gives students specific and desirable skills; it allows students to access higher cognitive functions; and equips them better for finding a role in an increasing globalised world. This is perhaps because development education has been heavily influenced by radical and critical theories of education. Paulo Freire, in particular, is an important figure (Regan and Sinclair, 2006: 111), while the Through Other Eyes Project has recently advanced a critical understanding of education. The chapter in this e-book by Nancy Serrano discusses another branch of methods, situated cognition, by which development education could be taught in Irish classrooms. She outlines three situated cognition methodologies and shows how they can be used to teach development education and education for sustainable development.

Second, the theory of development education argues that it is normatively important that we, as a society, have knowledge of global issues. In an increasingly globalised world, goes the theory, we need to educate our children to act as 'global citizens'. Oxfam argue: 'In a fast changing and inter-dependent world, education can, and should, help young people to meet the challenges they will confront now and in the future. Oxfam believes that education for Global Citizenship is essential in helping young people rise to those challenges' (Oxfam, 2006: 1). In order to equip students with this knowledge, teachers 'must develop reflective cultural, national, and global identifications themselves if they are to help students become thoughtful, caring, and reflective citizens in a multicultural world society' (Banks, 2001: 5). The manner in which we do this and the methods that we use to do this are therefore crucial questions in the relationship between development education theory and practice. This is the theme addressed in the chapter by Fallon and

Duke. They discuss how both the theory and practice of early childhood education and global citizenship have commonalities and seek to nurture the same skills and dispositions.

Third, it is the values dimension of development education which perhaps distinguishes it clearly from other forms of education. The Irish Aid definition of development education stresses that '[development education] is values-driven and encourages children to engage with issues concerning human rights, social justice and a sustainable world'. Margaret Calder argues 'a commitment to global education makes sense for teachers since the values inherent in it are the core values for life in a democratic society. These include acceptance of and respect for others, openmindedness, respect for human rights, concern for justice, commitment to democracy, and a willingness to be involved' (Calder, 2000: 86). The chapter by Audrey Bryan addresses concerns related to the types of values and attitudes which global citizenship and education may inculcate. She argues that attitudes towards development are frequently informed by an 'imperialistic logic' which needs to be interrogated and questioned.

This is 'theory' as we traditionally understand the term. These three aspects constitute a coherent approach to education and a purpose to pursuing and teaching the specific subjects which constitute the core elements of development education.

EMPIRICAL DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

While there is therefore a clear need for connections between education theory and development education theory, there is an alternative reading of global education which is 'derived in part from its practice, not just from theoretical understanding alone' (Pike, 2000: 64). Given this normative commitment to creating global citizens and educators, many of the empirical discussions centre on the question of how to do this most effectively. It is in this dimension that we can learn how to most effectively communicate the normative aspects of development education.

The primary sector in Ireland is just one of a number of sectors that has been actively trying to find the most effective method by which these aspects can be mainstreamed into the educational process. Understandably, most of the resources have been focused on the teacher training process: if we can teach our educators to think globally and to hold development education values, then they in turn will educate our children to do the same. It is at this level that the DICE Project is

focused, integrating development and intercultural education into the training of primary school teachers. We have commissioned several pieces of research to examine the extent to which primary school teachers have been integrating development education into their classes. However, it will be some time before we will be able to assess the full impact of the development of the project on both teachers and pupils.

Research from other countries indicates that pre-service teachers' knowledge of global issues is obtained from the media and that their commitment to teaching global issues increases with personal experience of other cultures and countries (Holden and Hicks, 2007). Wilson argues that 'there is clear evidence that international experience impacts both substantive knowledge and perceptual understanding aspects of a global perspective and both personal growth and development of meaningful interpersonal relationships' (Wilson, 1993: 21). One of the difficulties of the Irish educational system in relation to inculcating global and development perspectives is the privileged power and class background of almost all Irish teachers. Merryfield's research on teacher educators in America found that 'the teacher educators in this study recognize that it is the interaction of identity, power, and lived experience that has let [sic] to their work in multicultural and global education' (Merryfield, 2000: 441). It is difficult to address this interaction in an Irish context and that is why professional and voluntary placements for teachers and student teachers in the Global South can become important in promoting development and intercultural education in Irish primary schools.

The chapters by Paula Harte, Lorna Mulvaney, Fiona O'Dwyer, and Deirdre O'Rourke, Fiona Bailey and Anne Dolan all discuss the role of volunteer placements in the Global South and their impact upon the commitment of students towards development education. Three of these papers report the results of qualitative research on students participating in three different volunteering schemes – one with the A–Z Children's Charity, one with the Developing World Immersion Programme organised by the Edmund Rice/Christian Brothers Network, and one with Mary Immaculate College's Alternative Education Experience placement in Africa. These schemes provide student teachers and primary teachers with placements in the developing world with the aim of providing a cross-cultural experience, which these teachers can then bring to their Irish classrooms. The research presented goes a long way to confirming some of the theory that practical, personal involvement in development issues creates a commitment among teachers to development education.

CONCLUSION

This volume is concerned primarily with how to educate the educators. In other words, how do we develop the theory and practice of development education in relation to teacher training? And, in particular, primary teacher training. The volume points to some issues on how we think about what development education is, how it can be mainstreamed into other types of teaching, and how we can learn how to embed and mainstream development education through current practices.

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[1] This definition was contained in every issue of the DEA journal, *The Development Education Journal*, from 1994 to 2007.

PART 1

THEORY AND METHODOLOGIES

POSTCOLONIAL APPROACHES TO GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

RETHINKING THEORY, RETHINKING PEDAGOGY

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I am going to base my initial comments largely on some of the challenges that the construction of postcolonial learning spaces poses for those involved in initial teacher education. As postcolonial thinkers have argued, one of the prevailing assumptions within mainstream development thinking, including mainstream educational practices often characterised as development education, is the perception that the 'problem' of developing countries is based primarily on a 'lack' of attributes that the North possesses (e.g. education, modern values, attitudes, and so on) and an associated belief that the North is responsible for the South in the same way that it was believed that the white men had the burden of civilising non-white peoples in colonial times. This development-as-civility trope is closely aligned with various strains of modernisation theory which continue to influence much of the development policies and programmes of mainstream development institutions like the World Bank. These theories attribute the prevalence of poverty in poorer countries to internal or endogenous factors, and as postcolonial critics of this perspective like Slater maintain 'far from being an innocent or neutral or objective discourse of how a society might become modern, modernisation theory was part of the conceptual architecture of a diffusing imperialistic logic' which provided theoretical legitimisation for geopolitical intervention in Third World societies' (Slater, 2008; 85). Typically lacking within such accounts is a more structuralist approach to understanding global inequality, which would include the nature of the international area and power structure in which newly developing nations are forced to operate (Greig et al., 2007). Yet, despite the difficulties that have been identified with this approach, modernisation theory continues to retain powerful ideational and ideological weight,

within both popular as well as educational understandings of development. Some of my other work, which focuses on curricular representations of development, conveys the extent to which modernisationist frameworks feature in instructional resources designed for use with students in an Irish context (Bryan, 2008). I argue that precisely because these curricular ideas have authoritative legitimacy, and are portrayed as a model for sound 'development' thinking, the problematic assumptions upon which they are predicated are all the less likely to be contested.

Some of the development education research I've been involved in with fellow colleagues in schools of education on the island of Ireland on understandings of social justice and development education suggests that that student teachers' understandings of development are often consistent with 'soft' (as opposed to more critical) versions of development or global citizenship (Andreotti, 2006), wherein poverty is constructed as a lack of development, education, resources, skills, technology, etc. Forty per cent of respondents, for example, identified a lack of education and training as one of the most important reasons for poverty in developing world countries, whereas only 7 per cent saw a relationship between poverty and these countries' colonial pasts, and only 21 per cent viewed the nature of international trade and economic policies as one of the most important reasons for poverty. Respondents were more likely to attribute poverty to factors like overpopulation (28%) and to natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes and droughts (30%). Moreover, less than 4 per cent viewed the lifestyles of those in the West as being one of the most important reasons for poverty in developing countries (Bryan et al., 2009). The difficulty with those perspectives which attribute poverty primarily to a lack of skills and resources, including education, rather than to a lack of control over the production of these resources, places the burden of responsibility for poverty on the poor themselves, thereby failing to consider the role of the West in constructing this poverty in the first instance (Biccum, 2005: 1017).

RETHINKING THEORY

I therefore want to consider some of the challenges that findings of this nature pose for the construction of postcolonial learning spaces; in particular I want to argue that these spaces, while critically important, are, in my experience, often extremely hard won, particularly within the context of initial teacher education where topics like development

education often take a back seat to classroom management and planning, assessment techniques, mastery of subject area, and so on. The reality for many development educators such as myself working within initial teacher education programmes is that opportunities to engage with development issues in a sustained and meaningful way are limited. Furthermore, teacher education has a tendency to maintain existing educational and social structures by teaching prospective teachers to assimilate and accommodate to existing ways of thinking and acting – dominant discourses – that are prevalent within a given context during a particular period in time (Phelan, 2001: 584). This poses very real dilemmas for those of us who want to cultivate postcolonial learning spaces, and indeed, pre-service teachers who will resist rather than fit in 'to existing patterns and structures of teaching, schooling and society' (Phelan, 2001: 584).

We also know from prior research that student teachers tend to experience high levels of discomfort when discussions of oppression, marginalisation, colonisation, racism and alternative ideologies, etc. are initiated (Solomon et al., 2005). Such discomfort typically stems from the fact that student teachers typically belong to historically privileged groups, and this information presents an inevitable challenge to their reality system and knowledge base, thereby resulting in feelings of vulnerability, guilt, uncertainty and anger. Here, the work of Solomon and colleagues on anti-racist teacher education is useful as a means of helping us to think about how we might go about addressing some of these challenges in our classrooms. They identify a range of areas that teacher educators should address in preparing student teachers to address issues of citizenship, racism, inequality and discrimination, including: the importance of prior knowledge of teacher candidates, providing spaces within the programme wherein they can address their questions and concerns, preparing them for the range of emotions they may experience, and providing concrete strategies for including anti-discrimination practices in their classrooms.

But there's another challenge or tension that I'd also like to highlight for teacher educators who wish to create postcolonial learning spaces which will enable us to 'unlearn' culturally and historically adapted perceptions and beliefs, such as modernisationist assumptions. Here, I'll draw on some of the recent work of James Ferguson who talks about some of the unintended consequences or what he terms 'unappreciated dangers' of calling into question developmental narratives that have long dominated our understanding of contexts like Africa and its place in the world. Ferguson talks about how 'Africa's lack of modernity

seems, to many people there, all too palpable in the conditions that surround them – in the bad roads, poor health care, crumbling buildings and precariously improvised livelihoods that one cannot avoid encountering in the continent's "less developed" countries' (Ferguson, 2007: 33). He goes on to argue that 'where anthropologists proclaim Africa was already modern, local discourses on modernity more often insist on seeing a continuing lack – a lack that is understood not of a cultural inferiority but of a political-economic inequality'. In fact, these ideas about 'lacking' or of being somehow behind the West is something that many of my own students from sub-Saharan Africa often articulate in class, and experience as real within the context of their own lives, even though they are by all accounts among the more privileged sectors of Zambian or Tanzanian society. In other words, what I am suggesting is that the construction of postcolonial learning spaces that challenge dominant narratives and assumptions is complicated by an ideological incongruence, if you will, between a recognisable need to debunk modernisationist theories that service neo-imperialist agendas and the lived realities of those whose lives are characterised by a lack of infrastructure, schools, textbooks, pencils, chairs, access to essential medicines, and so on. The unappreciated danger that Ferguson emphasises therefore is that in challenging dominant narratives like modernisation, or in stressing concepts like 'alternative modernity', as some postmodern theorists do, that the material and social inequalities which have long been at the heart of African aspirations to modernity drop out of the picture (Ferguson, 2007: 33–34). What is perhaps most crucial for me as we go about trying to forge postcolonial learning spaces is the need to continue to privilege perspectives that position questions of political economic inequality and crisis in front and centre of the debate. My paper, to which I now turn, is a reflection piece based on my experiences as a lecturer in development education, in which I suggest some pedagogical tools we might use to try to make this a reality.

RETHINKING PEDAGOGY

For the past two years or so, I have been teaching a module on 'Issues and Institutions in International Educational Development' as a part of a professional development specialism in development education at University College Dublin. This module is largely an attempt to examine education within this broader political economic context, and to consider the effects of international development institutions on

educational access and provision. At its core, it seeks to critically engage students with – as well as challenge – taken-for-granted assumptions and dominant frameworks that are often ingrained in mainstream development discourse, such as the view that education is the fulcrum of economic, social and political development. It begins by introducing students to the underlying theoretical foundations and frameworks of international development, with the aim of helping students to see the ideological underpinnings of internationally derived educational policies and practices. In so doing, the module raises current issues in today's discussion of education and development by drawing on readings which challenge us to stop and reconsider how we think about them. It invites students to explore major issues and themes in education in the developing world and to examine the role of external aid agencies within such contexts.

I also teach a module on development education which further seeks to introduce students to the 'discursive repertoire' of multilateral development agencies and development – including a deconstruction of the term 'development' itself as a principal organising concept (Tikly, 2004). It seeks to address the following questions: Why do we live in a world characterised by persistent inequality, between and within nations? Is another, more egalitarian world possible? What alternative progressive political, economic, and social arrangements exist? What role can schooling play in transforming social inequalities? As educators, how do we best prepare students to engage in meaningful dialogue about injustices that occur on a daily basis, on a local and global scale? What are some of the challenges we face in teaching about issues affecting those living in places very far away? How can we best promote dialogue about feasible alternatives to those visions, policies and practices that are implicated in creating and exacerbating major threats to human and planetary sustainability? It examines development themes and issues in relation to the concept of the 'new imperialism' (Tikly, 2004), and emphasises the growing inequalities associated with contemporary globalisation both within and between countries and the identification of clear 'winners' and 'losers' in the process (Tikly, 2004).

The remainder of this paper focuses on one particular stimulus or tool I have used in my development education classes that I feel offers a powerful counter-narrative to 'soft' versions of development education which place the onus for poverty upon the poor themselves by constructing poverty as a lack of access to resources, services and markets, or to the requisite skills to enable them to participate in the global market. The documentary film, *Darwin's Nightmare*, illuminates

some of economic globalisation's most devastating effects, profiling the extreme poverty, hardship, exploitation, engendered dependency, war, AIDS and environmental degradation that have plagued the Great Lakes region of East Africa since the introduction of the Nile Perch into the lake in the 1960s. It offers a useful illustration of some of the ways in which broader global occurrences and international decisions impact local lives (Vavrus, 2003).

To my mind, films like *Darwin's Nightmare* graphically encapsulate the Swahili expression, *maisha magumu*, or 'difficult life', a term used by Tanzanians to describe how life has become harder than it used to be: environmental degradation, unemployment, the prevalence of HIV and AIDS, the falling value of agricultural products, including coffee, diminishing prospects of making a living off the land, and the decline in real wages have all taken their toll, such that *maisha magumu* has become the norm for most who live there.

I use *Darwin's Nightmare* in my development education modules as a case study of the complex ways in which political economy, structural inequality, environmental exploitation, and degradation and militarism coalesce to produce devastating consequences for human and social life. I also use the screening of *Darwin's Nightmare* as a basis from which to consider the use of film and related media as tools or stimuli for teaching development education. In addition to examining some of the cinematic strategies used to depict poverty and 'development', we consider the extent to which films of this nature serve as a vehicle, or indeed hindrance, to social action and transformation.

As the director of *Darwin's Nightmare*, Hubert Sauper, points out, the Nile Perch is a broader metaphor for resource extraction and neocolonial exploitation: 'I could make the same kind of observation in Sierra Leone, only the perch would be a diamond, in Honduras, a banana, and in Libya, Nigeria or Angola – the fish would be crude oil.' Since the introduction of the Nile Perch into Lake Victoria, which is exported and consumed as a delicacy in Europe, the local Mwanzan economy has been brought to its knees and the region's ancient and diverse ecosystem has been all but destroyed.

On one level, *Darwin's Nightmare* presents a thoroughly pessimistic analysis of the nature of the injustices to which local inhabitants are subjected. It depicts a catastrophic landscape of disease and desperation. HIV is rampant among the fishermen and prostitutes who have migrated from famine-stricken inland areas. Orphaned street children burn discarded scraps of Styrofoam packing material so they can inhale the fumes, and fight with one another over tiny scraps of food.

It conveys in an emotionally and visually compelling way the irony of a situation whereby starving locals, unable to afford the thick white perch fillets that are consumed by millions of Europeans daily, are forced to survive on the rotting remains prepared in open air factories, where ammonia-emitting, maggot-swarmed perch carcasses are repackaged as a local subsistence food. So gripped by poverty are local people that Raphael, a night watchman who guards the fisheries institute for a salary of one dollar a night, prays for war so that he could earn a soldier's wage. So desperate are people's conditions that a female employee at the open air factory, who has been blinded by the ammonia, maintains that her life is better now that she actually has a job.

The power of *Darwin's Nightmare* as a development education tool lies in its ability not to make us merely pity those that are left to starve on the shores of Lake Victoria while giant frozen fish fillets are exported daily in cargo planes to be enjoyed as a delicacy by wealthy Europeans. Rather, its power lies in forcing us to interrogate ourselves as we experience the misery and devastation of others at second hand, and ultimately in forcing us to question the political-economic reality and ideology that has created this poverty, misery and injustice in the first instance. It forces us to ask ourselves how much longer we can continue to support, be complicit with, and benefit from a system that results in the kinds of ironies alluded to above. In other words, rather than feeding us with obvious prepackaged answers or solutions to the devastation and poverty experienced by people in Tanzania, films like *Darwin's Nightmare* force us to ask ourselves difficult questions about a world order dominated by neocolonial exploitation in the guise of globalisation. It exposes the fallacy – promoted by mainstream development institutions such as the World Bank – that globalisation is the answer to poverty, offering instead a sophisticated understanding of the multifaceted devastation of the 'new imperialism', and pointing the finger at globalisation as the cause and not the cure. Unlike softer versions of development education, films like *Darwin's Nightmare* succeed in taking us beyond feeling touched by pity or compassion and inspire, if not demand, a response that is at once political and ethical. In other words, films like *Darwin's Nightmare* are so effective precisely because they are so upsetting and because they lead to real and deep understanding and awareness of the problems that are depicted. The film's underlying message is that empathy, pity and compassion are not enough. There must indeed be 'outrage', so that motivations for change are high (Davies, 2005).

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DEVELOPING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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FOR education to be experienced as a holistic process, the many and various approaches to and strands of education provision need to be integrated. Such integration will only be achieved through dialogue and debate. This paper presents an initial exploration of continuities between issues of concern in early childhood education (ECE) in infant classes in primary schools in Ireland and in global citizenship education. To provide a focus, we have taken the principles of early childhood education developed as part of *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education [CECDE], 2006) as the starting point.

An important consideration in choosing to focus on the principles is that they themselves were developed through an intensive process of consultation and debate with the CECDE Consultative Committee (CECDE, 2006). This consultative committee was itself an inclusive entity, with groups representing early education professionals and providers, the wider education community, special needs professionals and advocacy groups, and organisations concerned with issues of diversity and inclusion (CECDE, 2006). According to the Introductory Handbook IV, 'These organisations provided us with valuable insight into the multiple dimensions of quality that exist in ECE services in Ireland and contributed significantly to achieving balance and equity of focus in the Framework materials' (CECDE, 2006).

The principles we have chosen to focus on are: the value of early childhood, children first, equality, diversity, and play.

Global citizenship education can be defined as:

> An educational process aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal

world in which we live. It seeks to engage people in analysis, reflec-
tion and action for local and global citizenship and participation.
(Irish Aid, nd)

ECE must always, first and foremost, be focused on the emerging development of the child, but our purpose is to identify the processes which also facilitate the skills and dispositions at the heart of the individual's global citizenship. The paper is structured to reflect ECE and global citizenship perspectives separately with a consolidating comment at the end of each section.

THE VALUE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early Childhood Education

The spirit of this principle concerns the integrity of the earliest period in the human life cycle and the way in which society provides for its youngest citizens. Valuing early childhood has been at the heart of educational theory for a considerable period of time and the history of ECE is a long and distinguished one (Walsh, 2004; Fallon, 2005; Nutbrown et al., 2008). However, it is widely accepted that provision for the education of young children in Ireland does not always reflect best practice: 'Of real concern to the OECD review team also was its observation of a predominantly didactic approach towards early learning in the primary school infant classes' (OECD, 2004).

One implication of this principle is that the child must be given time to fully experience this phase of life – it is not a transition into or preparation for a more worthwhile phase of life. This is also true of educational provision. Bruce (1991) talks about children having opportunities to 'wallow' in experiences and Broadhead (2004: 33) describes the disruptions the school day imposes on children's play, specifying 'allowing children the time to sustain and develop play' as an underpinning principle of provision for young children.

Equally, if we are to value early childhood and young children, we must respect the ways in which they learn. *Towards a Framework for Early Learning* (NCCA, 2004) talks of play and relationships as being the two key contexts for learning for young children. The Primary School Curriculum (Department of Education and Science [DES], 1999) emphasises first-hand experience of the environment as 'the most effective basis for learning' (DES, 1999: 15) and further refers to play as being crucial in the teaching of infant classes (DES, 1999; English

Language Teacher Guidelines: 41). Valuing young children at this stage in life requires us to work with their developmental progress and not against it. As Fromberg (2002: 5) observes, 'It is collaborative, humane and ethical to match meaningful instruction with how children actually learn.'

Global Citizenship

Valuing early childhood is not a minimalist approach to letting children enjoy their childhood; it is about nurturing and respecting this time in a child's life and the way in which children build their learning at this stage.

Young children learn about their world, about themselves in it, and about how they interact with others by 'constantly observing, comparing and responding to experiences in their immediate environment. Their experiences generate feelings and attitudes about themselves and about things around them' (TIDE, 2006: 9). Already in the earliest years of their education, 'they are developing attitudes about their own self-worth and the worth of others' (Lea, 2005). That children form attitudes about their world at an early age is borne out by research in Northern Ireland which showed that from the age of three, children were beginning to identify with a particular community and that 'by the age of five or six a significant proportion are already acquiring negative attitudes' (Connolly et al., 2006: 53).

Citizenship is about playing one's part in society, and this entails knowledge about society and about the world. But first it entails skills and attitudes as a foundation on which such knowledge can be built, and this foundation is learned from an early age:

> The attitudes and skills needed to make a positive contribution to making the world a fairer and more sustainable place in the future need to be encouraged and developed from an early age because, as research shows (Milner, 1983 and Dixon, 1977) many of the attitudes and skills learnt by children at the Foundation Stage are there to stay. (Lea, 2005)

In nurturing and respecting early childhood and the learning experiences that are taking place for young children, the early childhood teacher is also nurturing the skills and attitudes that will underpin the child's engagement with issues of global citizenship at later stages. As the child's ways of learning are respected, so she/he begins to learn how to respect others. Respect is a key value underlying any understanding of citizenship, and it is of fundamental importance in development education (DE), which aims to create a well-

functioning society where equality, justice and the well-being of all are striven for. Education cannot teach concepts such as 'justice' or 'equality', rather children learn these concepts by experiencing them in their learning environments.

> *Methodologies in ECE which work with the child's development and learning pathways can help to engender attitudes and dispositions which are conducive to the development of global citizenship skills.*

CHILDREN FIRST

Early Childhood Education

Respecting and valuing young children's lives is the starting point for child-centred education which seeks to support the individual's learning and development (Fallon, 2005: 16). Accepting fully that the child is an active agent in her/his own learning has consequences for professionals working with young children. It requires us to reflect honestly on who is exercising control in the learning context and 'that each individual practitioner understands and acknowledges adult power and responsibilities within the adult–child relationship' (CECDE, 2007: 8). This principle talks of children as competent learners, a point emphasised by Bruce (1997: 28), who refers to what children can do as the starting point for education. Young children come to school with a considerable amount of learning already achieved and it is not tenable to conceptualise the teaching–learning relationship as one-way-traffic. Nor is it tenable for teaching behaviours to be limited to those in which the children do what the teacher wants them to do.

In ECE, working with children is a collaborative and interactive experience epitomised by the process of 'sustained shared thinking' (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002: 8): 'An episode in which two or more individuals "work together" in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative, etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend.' This can be conceptualised as a 'pedagogy of with' (Donnelly, 2008). The Framework for Early Learning (NCCA, forthcoming) will expand our understandings of how this might be progressed in infant classes as we move away from the tradition of whole-class teaching methodologies towards a more interactive, democratic, partnership approach.

Global Citizenship

Development education strives to understand not only development but also the nature and purpose of education. The work of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, has been a profound influence on the formation of the educational theory underpinning DE and the methodologies it uses. Freire's work with the illiterate poor of Brazil demonstrated again and again the educational value in respecting the autonomy and the experience of the learner: as he put the learner first, they not only learned literacy skills much more quickly than those taught by conventional methods but also developed skills as active citizens (Freire, 1972).

That learners are active agents in their own learning and are 'competent learners' was a basic principle in Freire's teaching. So too in education for global citizenship, learning begins with the learner and the learner's experience; and the teacher knows that 'it's impossible to talk of respect for students, for the dignity that is in the process of coming to be, for the identities that are in the process of construction, without taking into consideration … the knowledge derived from life experience which they bring with them to school' (Freire, 1998: 62).

The pedagogical values espoused by DE and underlying the teaching of global citizenship emphasise that: 'To act in front of students as if the truth belongs only to the teacher is not only preposterous but also false' (Freire, 1998: 39) It is especially true in the early years of education that the young learner should be respected and the creativity of the individual's learning process be allowed to flourish. Sterling remarks that 'education is not about realizing production but realizing potential' (2001: 19). In putting children first, we are recognising and respecting their innate creative potential.

> *ECE methodologies which acknowledge the child as an active partner in the teaching–learning process contribute to high-quality educational provision and are consistent with the values of global citizenship education.*

EQUALITY

Early Childhood Education

Equality means treating children differently. High-quality ECE starts from the premise of the child as an active learner whose previous learning is the foundation for continued development (DES, 1999: 14).

'This learning should arise from children's own interests and experiences, and take account of their specific strengths and needs' (NCCA, 2004). Further, the Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999: 20) characterises the role of the teacher as being concerned with the individual child, the differences between children and the range of learning preferences across the class group. There is no 'one size fits all' in ECE, or indeed in education generally. This translates into a considerable challenge for teachers in Ireland who are coping with the second largest class sizes in Europe (OECD, 2008), a fact which goes some way to explaining the inappropriately didactic, whole-class methodologies which appear to dominate practice in infant classes (OECD, 2004).

However, as Dunphy (2008: 225) has noted, 'Teachers of infant classes in primary schools are themselves becoming increasingly aware of recommendations for a re-examination of pedagogy for young children at school', and she goes on to outline how this might be achieved. Such a reconceptualisation of teaching and learning in infant classes is absolutely necessary if, as the principles of *Síolta* (CECDE, 2006: 7) state, 'the individual needs and abilities of each child are [to be] recognised and supported from birth towards the realisation of her/his unique potential'.

Global Citizenship

If to treat people equally meant to treat them all the same, then the result would be discrimination. In its *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools* (NCCA, 2005), the NCCA pairs equality and discrimination together as a key theme, and recognises that to achieve equality demands that we first recognise difference. In learning this seeming paradox by experience in the infant classroom, children take their first steps towards a global citizenship where social justice is paramount. Not only is this principle important for children themselves as individuals, but it is also essential in the endeavour to bring about a more just world.

Through education for global citizenship, children learn the importance of ensuring equality of respect not only for everyone's needs but for their rights. Children coming to school for the first time already have experience of rights, whether their rights have been met or denied. They also learn that linked to every right is a corresponding responsibility: where rights are not met, or where they seem to clash, it is everyone's responsibility to work to find a balance where all rights can be fulfilled.

The principle of equality looks to the result; it is not about sameness but a goal to be achieved by recognising difference and working with it. Young children learn the values, attitudes and skills underpinning this principle from all their social interactions, including those in the infant classroom.

> *Teachers who acknowledge difference and model acceptance for the range of strengths and abilities in the classroom can contribute to the child's recognition of her/his responsibility to support participation rights for all.*

DIVERSITY

Early Childhood Education

Because of the emphasis in ECE on addressing the specifics of the child's interests and experiences through an emergent curriculum, the anti-bias approach (Derman-Sparks qtd. in Rhomberg, 2008) has particular resonance for those working with young children. Such an approach also presents many challenges for professionals working with young children, not least the challenge to reflect critically on one's own 'beliefs, values and attitudes' (CECDE, 2006: 91). As emphasised in *Síolta* (CECDE, 2006), the role of the adult is crucial in ECE and requires considerable skill in reflective practice. Best practice in this regard, as envisaged in *Síolta*, is that the individual engages with the team in the particular setting, be that a school, crèche or other early childhood service. This requires a whole-school, integrated approach to reflection on issues of diversity and an integrated, holistic response in which children and teachers are supported through consistent implementation of school policy.

One of the most important vehicles for addressing issues of diversity in ECE, given that the children spend much of their time interacting with the environment, is the way the teacher devises and stocks that learning environment. In *Síolta* (CECDE, 2006: 91), the standard on identity and belonging cites the use of images, the variety of toys and materials, computer software and books as some of the considerations which will impact on the child's growing appreciation of diversity. It is through such a carefully planned learning environment that the child will see reflected the reality of the community and society in which she/he lives. Given the rapid pace of socio-cultural change in society in Ireland over the past number of years (Fallon, 2005; Duignan and Walsh, 2004),

educating for diversity across all settings is important. Reflecting diversity is not the exclusive responsibility of those early childhood settings with a diverse population of children (Fallon, 2005: 12).

Global Citizenship

Diversity is a key concept in any education for global citizenship; it involves a recognition not only of the diversity and the complex networks of interdependence which exist in the world, but also of our human capacity for creating norms and speaking of difference in terms of 'otherness'. Thus the NCCA Guidelines (NCCA, 2005) balance difference with an equal emphasis on similarity: diversity is about celebrating difference but also about recognising similarities within different identities: 'Everyone is a member of a wide variety of groups … identities are complex and layered: and every individual has differences from others within their groups as well as commonalties with those from different groupings' (DICE Project, 2008: 29–30).

Young children learn from their experience of multiple categories of difference: culture, ethnicity, religion, language, educational and physical abilities and needs; categories which may overlap and be cross-cutting. What values children learn to place on diversity depends on attitudes formed from an early age. Where they experience the celebration of difference along with an awareness of similarity even across differences, they will be better able to understand their citizenship in global as well as local terms. We can no longer rest on the belief 'that children of this age are just too young to know or learn about cultural differences' (Connolly et al., 2006: 53).

> *Children can develop an appreciation of diversity and learn to recognise commonalities across the group when the adult models these characteristics from a position of careful reflection in the context of a whole-school approach.*

PLAY

Early Childhood Education

The Vygotskian description of the child standing a head taller than himself when playing imaginatively (Leong and Bodrova, 2006) is one that resonates with early childhood teachers who pursue best practice in their classrooms and settings. While play is not the only way for children to

learn (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002), it is fundamental to their development and well-being: 'As such, play will be a primary focus in quality early childhood settings' (CECDE, 2006: 9). While there are many aspects of learning which can be progressed through play (Moyles, 2005), there is evidence that such opportunities are not available in a systematic way to young children in infant classes in primary schools (OECD, 2004). While the Revised Curriculum (DES, 1999: 30) states with regard to practice in infant classes: 'The informality of the learning experience in [the curriculum for infant classes], and the emphasis it gives to the element of play are particularly suited to the learning needs of young children', specific guidance for teachers on the use of play methodology is not sufficient. Dunphy (2008: 228) calls for 'imagination, creativity and daring in the interpretation and implementation of the curriculum [which] would greatly enhance the quality of young children's learning experiences in infant classes in primary schools'. She further points out that to succeed in reconfiguring pedagogy in infant classes, teachers will need a range of supports from principal teachers and the DES Schools Inspectorate.

They will also need the support of parents but this is likely to be a two-way process. In a study by the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), teachers cited parental expectations of schooling as a difficulty in implementing a play-based curriculum (Nic Craith and Fay, 2008). Some evidence emerged of teachers trying to educate parents away from ideas of education as a formal, textbook-based operation towards the more appropriate pedagogy of play. However, this position exists in tension with teacher practices evidenced by the INTO survey which 'discovered that primary teachers use textbooks and workbooks to a great extent in their classrooms' (Nic Craith and Fay, 2008: 214). In an effort to support teachers to resolve these tensions, and to move towards a pedagogy of play, the INTO and the Church of Ireland College of Education have embarked on the development of a DVD on play-based methodologies for the infant classes. This will contribute to pre- and in-service teacher education. Bruce writes that 'play is a unifying mechanism' (1997: 20) and, according to CECDE, it is a 'source of joy and fulfilment for the child' (2006: 9). Our responsibility as educators is to ensure that our practice guarantees young children such experiences.

Global Citizenship

That learning processes affect learning outcomes is basic pedagogy. In education for global citizenship, the process of learning is as important as the content; the means of learning inform and are an essential part of

the learning outcome. The use of a range of participatory methodologies, which cater for different learning styles and intelligences, models respect for diversity and equality in the learning environment, and values of the individual's prior learning and experience. Education for global citizenship (EGC) recognises that if through education we hope to lay the foundations for a better future world, then simply transferring 'knowledge' is not enough; we need to encourage learners who are able to engage with knowledge, question and think about it critically and develop their own thinking.

But beyond this cognitive learning, we need to promote the development of qualities and skills such as creativity, flexibility, the interpersonal skills of communication, empathy, co-operation, dealing with conflict and ethical action. These qualities and skills cannot be taught directly, but are developed through creative strategies and processes in the classroom. In being encouraged to 'interact with, explore and make sense of the world' (CECDE, 2006: 9) through play, children are learning to take the first steps not only in thinking about and questioning their world, but in developing the qualities and skills which will help them to be active and effective citizens in the twenty-first century.

> *Promoting changes in current practices in infant classes towards a play-based pedagogy will facilitate children's development of the interpersonal and learning skills identified as central to the individual's approach to global citizenship.*

CONCLUSION

While there are examples of integrating global citizenship into ECE processes, such as Oxfam's *Education for Global Citizenship* (Oxfam, 2006) and the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA) (Department of Education, Training and Employment qtd. in Ebbeck, 2006), such examples are context and culturally specific. There has been – and continues to be – considerable change and development in ECE policy in Ireland and how we knit global citizenship and ECE together as we implement change in our infant classes also has to be context specific. This could be an enriching process for children, teachers and those with an interest in promoting high-quality ECE.

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SITUATED COGNITION

A REVIEW OF INNOVATIVE LEARNING METHODOLOGIES APPLICABLE TO THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

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D EVELOPMENT education (DE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) within the school sector has made some progress over the last number of years. In the primary sector, there have been some changes in the curriculum such as the introduction of more development and environmental issues into Geography, and Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE). According to Osler, development education 'encourages the linking of ideas with action for change and a radical approach to the issues we all face working for a new international, social and economic order' (Osler, 1994). Without this action link, DE and ESD can lead to a feeling of disempowerment in the face of such daunting dilemmas. However, it is not always easy to incorporate effective action into all DE and ESD programmes. This paper proposes the use of situated cognition methodologies to increase the integration of effective action in DE and ESD, and consequently increasing the empowerment of learners.

RCE-Ireland is at present conducting a research project into increasing activism among post-primary students by embedding DE and ESD into the curriculum through key skills and situated cognition (NCCA, 2008). This research project is being conducted with mostly transition year teachers in the Limerick region. The classroom examples at the end of this paper are taken from this research. The first sections introduce the origins and concepts of situated cognition and traditional apprenticeship.

This paper explores the origins and applications of three situated cognition methodologies for possible use in the Irish classroom in conjunction with development education and education for sustainable development. The first section looks at the origins of situated cognition and its links to apprenticeship-style learning. The second section

outlines the common principles between DE, ESD and situated cognition. The third section describes and analyses the three methodologies with examples from ESD, taken from the RCE-Ireland flagship project on activism and ESD. In conclusion, some of the advantages of situated cognition methodologies with DE and ESD are outlined with a call for further research to be carried out into integrating them into the Irish education system.

ORIGINS OF SITUATED COGNITION

The shift within cognitive science to situated cognition theory first appears in the early 1990s when research begins to demonstrate how 'rule bound' approaches were no longer able to explain the complex workings of human learning in the 'real world'. The current dominant computational, or symbol-processing view, sees thinking and intelligence as similar to a computer performing operations on symbols. Although the symbol-processing view of intelligence has been quite successful in providing a relatively limited and unified account of human thinking, knowing, learning, and development, a growing number of critics began suggesting that the computer comparison has reached its limits and cannot fully explain human cognition. This has caused a shift to occur in learning theories, which now look to explain how human learning occurs in 'real world' environments. One example of this comes from research carried out on street children in Brazil and their mathematical skills used to sell things (Nunes et al., 1993). This research found that when they tried to teach these children the same maths in a classroom in an abstract way, the children could not learn it as easily. This and other research has strengthened the case for situated cognition theory.

Situated cognition theory suggests that learning is 'situated' and 'on the fly' (Brown et al., 1989). Learning always takes place in a specific context, with learners having specific goals and in response to specific affordances (stimuli) of the learning environment. Situated cognition sees thinking as complex, radical, individual, yet irrefutably tied to and motivated by social human interaction and our need for such interaction. 'Activities, tasks, functions and understanding do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 53). Situated cognition consequently takes learning theory one step further by perceiving the learner as a complex individual and also as part of a wider community which strongly influences and interacts with their learning.

TRADITIONAL APPRENTICESHIPS AND LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION

One of the main texts to which many advocates for situated-learning methodologies refer to is the landmark book by Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991), where they coin the term 'legitimate peripheral participation' and explore the main characteristics of traditional apprenticeships, which they call 'communities of practice'.

In this book, Lave and Wenger analyse five different types of apprenticeships from around the world: Vai and Gola tailors, butchers in the USA, Yucatec midwives, a group of Alcoholics Anonymous, and naval quartermasters in the USA. They define legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) as a 'descriptor of engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent' (Collins and Brown, 1988; Lave and Wenger, 1991). The idea of peripherality relates to the various ways of more or less engagement that a learner can experience within a community. Peripherality describes the real variables within the social world, such as changing locations and perspectives, developing identities, and the different forms of membership that a learner experiences. Lave and Wenger clearly point out, however, that 'legitimate peripheral learning is not itself an educational form, much less a pedagogical strategy or a teaching technique. It is an analytical viewpoint on learning, a way of understanding learning' (40). LPP provides a framework to describe how individuals become part of a community of learners.

In their examination of the five apprenticeships, they come to several conclusions about situatedness of LPP and its relationship to successful learning. Success for newcomers/learners include:

- Access to all that the community membership entails
- Involvement in the productive activity
- Learning the discourse of the community ('for newcomers the purpose is not to learn from talk as a substitute for LPP, it is to learn to talk' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 109))
- Peer learning
- Sense of identity and belonging – becoming part of a community, incorporating values and beliefs

Lave and Wenger hypothesised on how learning occurred among the learners. They proposed that learners acquire knowledge through full participation in the curriculum set by the community which surrounds them, not just by copying performances of others they see or acquiring knowledge through instruction (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 100). In this

way, they believe that learning depends on the newcomer's/learner's 'place' within the community and the cultural and political life between the newcomer and the community. The value of actively participating and being *useful* to the community was a significant motivator and creator of self-identity: 'Learning and identity are inseparable; they are aspects of the same phenomenon' (115). Peer learning also plays an important role in the apprenticeships: 'There is anecdotal evidence that where the circulation of knowledge among peers and near peers is possible, it spreads exceedingly rapidly and effectively' (93).

From Lave and Wenger's analysis of traditional apprenticeships, three main differences of apprentice-style learning over classroom learning begin to emerge. First, an apprenticeship learner can see the process of work, making the learning visible. Second, all learning is situated in a context. We can also infer a third important difference, that in apprenticeships the task-specific skills are not as transferable (e.g. tailoring skills cannot be used in furniture making) as school curriculum skills, such as reading and writing.

According to Collins et al. (1991), standard pedagogical practices do not pay enough attention to the reasoning and strategies that experts employ when acquiring knowledge or applying it to solve complex or real-life tasks. Even though the traditional apprenticeships model learning in practical situated contexts, the apprenticeship model as it stands is not entirely suited to many skills taught within school subjects such as reading, writing and mathematical skills. Various researchers and practitioners have looked at bridging these gaps and have developed and applied particular variations on the apprenticeship model to the classroom, which I will explore shortly. First, I will take a look at the similarities between the goals of DE, ESD and situated cognition to better understand how situated cognition can benefit DE and ESD programmes.

DE, ESD AND SITUATED COGNITION: LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNITY AND LEARNING IN COMMUNITIES

As we have already seen, the core idea in situated cognition is that learning and knowledge acquisition best occurs in context and is significantly tied to and enhanced through social interaction. This is also fundamentally important to DE and ESD, which inherently imply this same idea but come at it from a different direction. DE and ESD look to equip learners with the relevant social skills needed to work together (in efficient *communities of practice*) towards creating a more socially and

environmentally equitable world (Osler, 1994) (contextualised or situated learning). The situated cognition concept that knowledge is not owned by one individual but belongs to a group strongly links with DE and ESD perceptions and values of co-operation and teamwork and serves to emphasise the educational and intellectual importance and necessity of community learning and group action.

DE and ESD visualise society and the environment as an interconnected system which is greater than the sum of its parts, and where all parts (people and environment) can have a positive or negative effect on other parts of the system (UNESCO, 2002). Situated cognition further confirms the notion of interconnectedness and interdependence of different systems by presenting learning as another example of a co-operative system ('community of learners' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), whose parts work better together (as opposed to individuals) within a given context. Situated cognition therefore confirms DE and ESD values as important within the very process of learning.

DE and ESD as educational forms emphasise the need for teaching skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving as well as imparting values such as respect, empathy, responsibility, and solidarity for oneself and others (Irish Aid, nd). DE and ESD subscribe to the motto of 'the medium is the message', thereby engaging participants in educational activities that reflect the skills, behaviours and values being taught (e.g. role-playing, debates, case studies, interactive games, hands-on practical activities, etc.). These interactive group activities, although stimulating and engaging for the learners, sometimes lack the types of hands-on practical tasks associated with situated cognition which would tie into the action dimension of DE and ESD.

As previously mentioned, DE and ESD should empower people to take action on the issues being explored. Although the action dimension is central to DE and ESD, different educators interpret it in different ways, and therefore its focus can be lost or diluted. This means that a vital part of the equation can be left missing; namely the skills to organise *in groups* and take action together, which can have more empowering and long-term effects. This is where situated cognition can add coherence and effectiveness to DE and ESD and help bridge this gap.

In the next section, I will elaborate on three particular situated cognition methodologies that have arisen from the idea of context-oriented learning and apprenticeships: cognitive apprenticeship, knowledge building (KB), and problem-based learning. Their particular applications to DE and ESD will be discussed in the subsequent examples section.

COGNITIVE APPRENTICESHIP: MAKING THINKING VISIBLE

How does one apply the successful characteristics of a traditional apprenticeship to the classroom environment? The three main differences identified above have been used to develop cognitive apprenticeship. The first challenge is to make the processes by which certain tasks are carried out visible to the learners and to facilitate similar learning, even when the task is not physically visible as it would be, for example, in the making of furniture. Consequently, it is essential to make the thinking of the teacher visible to the student and vice versa. Cognitive apprenticeship is such a teaching methodology, through which expert learners (i.e. teachers or more advanced peers) speak aloud strategies they use to tackle a particular task (Brown et al., 1989).

Second, in a traditional apprenticeship, learning is not only more visible but is also situated in the workplace. Cognitive apprenticeship attempts to situate abstract tasks of the school curriculum in contexts that make sense to students so it can help them to understand the reasons for the learning taking place, and motivate them by seeing the overall model of the 'finished product' of their learning (Collins et al., 1991).

Third, cognitive apprenticeship incorporates the need for skills transfer in the school environment, which a traditional apprenticeship could not do. The idea is 'to present a range of tasks, varying from systematic to diverse, and to encourage students to reflect on and articulate the elements that are common across tasks' (Collins et al., 1991). As teachers present specific skills to students, they can progressively vary the contexts in which those skills can be applied. In this way, students can learn to generalise the skill and to transfer it independently where appropriate.

An example of a cognitive apprenticeship strategy is reciprocal teaching developed by Palinscar and Brown (1984). Their technique has been very successful in raising students' scores on reading comprehension tests, especially with poor readers. Their method centres on modelling and coaching students in four strategic skills: formulating questions based on the text, summarising, making predictions on what comes next, and clarifying difficulties with the text. The reciprocity is about the teacher and students alternating in the role of the teacher. The process is as follows: Both teacher and students read a paragraph silently. Whoever is playing the teacher role articulates a question based on the paragraph, summarises it, and makes a prediction or clarification on the text. Initially the teacher models this procedure and then hands over the role of teacher to each student in turn. At first, the teacher provides extensive coaching on how to devise good questions and

summaries, offering prompts, encouragement and critiquing their attempts. This coaching provides assistance at the most critical level – the skill level just beyond what the learner/apprentice could accomplish by themselves. Vygotsky (1978) called this the zone of proximal development (ZPD). He believed that fostering development within this zone leads to the most rapid development. The ZPD is the difference between what a learner can do on their own and what he or she can do with help. As a result, this coaching provides scaffolding for the students, allowing them to take on whatever portion of the task they are able to. As the students improve, coaching and scaffolding fades, and the teacher monitors more, providing occasional hints or feedback.

The success of reciprocal teaching lies in four main factors (Collins et al., 1991). First, by listening to a teacher explain exactly what they are doing and thinking as they model the skill, the learner can identify relevant behaviours and develop a conceptual model of the processes involved. Second, the skills are modelled in a shared problem context of knowing that they will soon perform the same task. Hence, after they have tried themselves, and perhaps had problems, they are more motivated to listen to the group's experiences, to reflect on and understand any differences. Collins and Brown (1988) have argued that this reflection is critical to learning. Third, scaffolding unmasks the task at hand, dividing it into detailed steps. It allows students to develop slowly confidence in a new skill, and then gradually fading out the scaffolding, slowly hands over more responsibility to them. Finally, assuming the dual role of teacher and student, or producer and critic, forces them to articulate their knowledge being practised and learnt, thus improving their metacognitive skills. Once verbalised, 'this knowledge becomes more available for performing a variety of tasks … it becomes freed from its contextual binding and can be used in many different contexts' (Collins et al., 1991).

Although DE and ESD methodologies and activities focus on real-life problems and also on the transferability of skills learnt to be used in multiple contexts (as in essence all contexts have potential links to sustainable development), they have much to gain from the principal idea behind cognitive apprenticeship, namely 'making thinking visible'. Modelling and coaching certain activities in this fashion for learners is an invaluable addition to DE and ESD in order to ensure learners better understand the concepts and skills which are being taught. Cognitive apprenticeship can also be seen as an overarching learning methodology which can be included within other situated-learning methodologies (discussed next), because modelling a new task for a learner is at the core of most learning strategies.

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

Knowledge building theory was created and developed by Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia. They make a distinction between learning and knowledge building (KB). They see learning as an internal, (almost) unobservable process that results in changes of beliefs, attitudes or skills. In contrast, KB is seen as creating or transforming public knowledge through means that increase the likelihood that what the community achieves together will be greater than the sum of individual contributions, and will form part of broader cultural efforts. KB is knowledge that lives 'in the world', and is available to be worked on and used by other people and therefore is not limited to formal education. KB theory sees students not as learners but as 'members of a knowledge building community' (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006). KB environments allow ideas to be available to the whole community so they can be discussed, interconnected, revised and superseded.

KB allows students to build extensive webs of understanding alone or in collaborative groups (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 2003). 'It allows learners to see knowledge advancement, as a community rather than individual achievement, as idea improvement instead of progress towards true belief, and discourse as collaborative problem solving rather than argumentation' (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006). By using mind maps, group diaries (written or audio) or other forms of tracking the learning process, i.e. Knowledge Forum® software developed by Bereiter and Scardamalia, a student or group has a physical tool which allows them to reflect on their learning and thinking process and therefore better understand how knowledge is constructed.

The knowledge which one individual possesses is not what is focused on here, but the communal knowledge which a group can access with respect to a particular context. 'People are not honoured for what is in their minds but for the contributions they make to the organisations' or the community's knowledge' (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2006). From a social standpoint, KB offers the ability to connect discourses within and between communities and so opens new possibilities for barrier-crossing and mutual support. As with cognitive apprenticeship, the characteristics and principles of KB and DE and ESD, such as co-operation and critical thinking, also correlate strongly. Moreover, there are other unnamed but necessary principles inherent to both, such as mutual respect. This makes it a very appropriate learning methodology to use within DE and ESD, as it reinforces similar values. KB can create a platform for learners to engage as equals and as part of a wider group striving towards knowledge creation.

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING AND ANCHORED INSTRUCTION

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a methodology which involves using richly complex real-life problem situations as a basis for presenting a problem/task for learners to engage in, and in the process the learners acquire particular skills and knowledge. It encourages the growth of student responsibility, initiative, decision making and intentional learning. It promotes collaboration among students and teachers. It utilises dynamic, interdisciplinary, generative learning activities that promote higher-order thinking processes to help students develop rich and complex knowledge structures; and assess student progress in content and learning-to-learn within authentic contexts (Grabinger et al., 1997). PBL has three basic characteristics: problem-solving in 'real-world' contexts; self-directed learning; and group work.

PBL is usually organised in small groups of learners, accompanied by a facilitator. A series of problems are provided to the learners by the facilitator, with more guidance at the beginning from the facilitator through introductory problems, and later guidance is faded as learner expertise increases. Merrill (2007) suggests beginning with worked examples to model the problem-solving process to the learners, then introduce smaller less complex problems, and progress gradually on to more realistic complicated problems. In PBL 'solving the problem is part of the process, but the focus is on problem management, not on a clear and bounded solution' (Savi-Baden, 2003). In PBL students work out their own learning requirements, and even though the problem scenarios may be chosen by the teacher/facilitator, the students define how and what they learn (Savi-Baden, 2003).

PBL is already used to a certain extent in DE and ESD through the use of case studies or project-based work. However, the better structuring of PBL projects to be more student-centred and reflective on the learning process would ensure a more in-depth understanding of sustainable development issues.

In summary, of the three methodologies discussed, their common features include co-operative group work, metacognitive skills development, student-led learning, and the teacher in a facilitator role. Cognitive apprenticeship is most useful when teaching a new skill or concept to learners. Knowledge building helps to visualise the learning process for the learners and enhances their perceptions of knowledge as communal – managed, advanced and owned by their community of learners, who in turn are part of wider communities. Lastly, PBL can be

used as the main framework into which cognitive apprenticeship and KB can be embedded and utilised together to best accomplish situated cognition in the classroom.

EXAMPLES OF SITUATED COGNITION METHODOLOGIES UTILISED IN DE AND ESD

In the ongoing study mentioned at the beginning of this paper, conducted by RCE-Ireland on integrating situated cognition methodologies in the post-primary curriculum with DE and ESD to increase levels of sustainable development activism, some of the teachers used the abovementioned methodologies.

One teacher took a problem-based learning approach. She gave the class examples of information on the social, environmental and economic impacts of cobalt mining in the Congo and its links to the mobile phone industry. This was placed on posters around the classroom. Dividing the class into groups, she gave them particular question sheets for each group to complete together from the posters to gain an understanding of the topic. The class then discussed the issue together. The task of the groups was then to decide on an action project they could carry out locally to tackle the impacts of the cobalt industry. Some groups decided to obtain mobile phone recycle bins for their school, while others organised a publicity campaign for their use in the school. Another feature of these projects was the use of mind maps (knowledge building) on a wall of the classroom, whereby weekly updates of information gathered were added by the groups. This allowed a visual record of the class learning and project progression.

Another teacher carried out some more standard DE and ESD activities with her class (a wealth distribution activity and an ecological footprint activity) to introduce the concepts and initiate discussion on ESD and its link with her subject, physics. She then asked each student to write a short essay on how physics can affect the environment and people. She then grouped the class under common themes and told the groups to further research their topic with the final purpose of carrying out an action project. This was basically a PBL approach. A mind map (knowledge building) was created on the class wall, which each group added to regularly.

These two examples illustrate clearly the possibility of using situated cognition methodologies effectively and in tandem to carry out ESD and DE activities in the classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has outlined how situated cognition can enhance the experience of DE and ESD by creating deeper learning for learners, engaging them in more real-world action tasks, making certain complex concepts more accessible through cognitive apprenticeship techniques and by expanding DE and ESD values further into the teaching methods themselves.

From this paper, the potential benefits of integrating situated cognition methodologies with DE and ESD are undeniable. There is an opportunity to develop further this proposal with more thorough action research by applying these methodologies in the primary sector, with a long-term view of integrating these methodologies into the curriculum in a more standardised approach. Younger learners would have as much, if not more, to gain from hands-on task-oriented learning methodologies.

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PART 2

VOLUNTEERING AND IMMERSION SCHEMES

A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

THE IMPACT OF SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEERING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON IRISH TEACHERS IN A SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

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THE phenomenon of teachers volunteering overseas in developing countries is expanding on an annual basis, yet there is little research to suggest what effect this occurrence is having on the volunteers and their communities. Placements in a different cultural setting pose a range of challenges and opportunities for volunteer teachers. These experiences must impact the volunteers in a social, emotional and professional capacity. This paper therefore aims to investigate the effect that four weeks teaching in Uganda in July 2008 had on 13 Irish primary school teachers.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Ireland has seen a significant economic, political and social transformation over the past thirty years. It has moved from being a country that has struggled economically to one of the wealthiest countries in the world in recent years. Irish citizens for the first time ever have disposable incomes. This has afforded them the opportunity to travel and experience different cultures and beliefs. Ireland's involvement with the United Nations, its entry into the European Union and developments in its fiscal policy have all influenced 'modern' Ireland and have subsequently helped shape the nation. It has a long history of development assistance, primarily through the missionaries and later through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and state-run bodies. Throughout the second half of the 20th century Ireland built upon this precedence and solidified its commitment to developing countries through its bilateral aid programmes and its focus on and commitment to development education. The recognition of the

importance of education in promoting equity, justice and action are key components of the Government's White Paper on Irish Aid: 'We recognise the need to work with both teachers and students in our efforts to build awareness and understanding of development issues' (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2006: 109).

In Ireland approximately 9 per cent of the student population in primary schools come from different ethnic backgrounds (NCCA, 2005). This number continues to rise on an annual basis and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Teachers must be equipped to deal with the effects of this diversity in their classrooms. Contemporary Irish society is rapidly becoming multicultural, and it is now apparent that teachers need to nurture and educate their pupils to be adequately prepared to be responsible citizens in the multifaceted world in which they live. Irish Aid, formerly Development Cooperation Ireland, state that 'teacher education is of critical importance in the mainstreaming of development education perspectives within the formal education sector' (Ireland Aid, 2005: 16). Despite this, there is a severe lack of formal training for teachers on development issues. 'How can teachers who have little personal or direct experience with ethnic and other differences learn to value and affirm the diversity of their students? What specific information do teachers need to learn to be effective with a diverse group of students?' (Rego and Nieto, 2000: 413).

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Little if any qualitative research has been conducted that examines the impact of short-term international experiences from the perspectives of established, experienced teachers. A report published by Irish Aid prioritises teacher education on the basis of its potential impact and coherence with national education policies, its ability to attract new audiences, its multiplier effect and its potential for regional distribution. Yet a study carried out by Dóchas highlights the discrepancies and inadequacies in the current climate of development education. It 'calls attention to the lack of opportunities for professional development and career paths for professionals in development education' (Irish Aid, 2005: 8).

Irish Aid states its desire for the maximum public ownership of its aid programme, and by encouraging that ownership it is hoped this will lead to increased public involvement in the issues at hand. Public opinion surveys have found that there is a high level of awareness among

the Irish public with regard to development and development issues. In spite of this, the level of understanding about the underlying causes of poverty and underdevelopment seems to be much lower. Research findings from Irish Aid, formerly the National Council for Development Education (NCDE) into the impact of development education in schools suggest that there is an alarming predisposition towards strongly negative attitudes amongst students in primary and secondary education. The report also acknowledges that the formal introduction of development education can help to combat such deep-seated pre-existing notions. (Irish Aid, 2003)

Studies into initial teacher education (Merryfield, 2000; Bondy et al., 2008) have highlighted the difficulty of preparing culturally responsive teachers. 'The dichotomy that exists between a predominantly white, middle class, female teaching workforce and an increasingly heterogeneous population of students creates challenges for the [US] educational system' (Bondy et al., 2008). Merryfield (2000) highlights the need for interrelationships between people of different backgrounds in order to transcend the difficulties posed by such homogeneity. Melnick and Zeicher (1998) also emphasise the difficulty in activating change within teacher education due to the similarity between the teacher educators and the population of students with whom they work. They criticise the majority of teacher education programmes as having a monocultural approach that perpetuate the 'kinds of teaching practices that have historically benefited middle class, white students but have largely failed to provide quality education for poor, ethnic and linguistic minority students' (1998: 89). The prerequisites for entering a teacher training college in Ireland further compound this monocultural system. Prospective teachers must hold an honours grade C in Irish in their Leaving Certificate exams, or its equivalent, in order to be accepted on to a Bachelor of Education course. This requirement automatically impedes any student who did not study in Ireland during their initial primary school years from being accepted on to the course. This rule also inhibits any qualified teacher from any other country from teaching in a primary school in Ireland. This therefore renders the teaching community to be for the majority, if not entirely, of an Irish cultural descent.

This homogeneity in the Irish teaching community raises a major theme in the literature that deals with global and multicultural education, which is the necessity to equip teachers with the ability to transcend the cultural divides that may appear in their classrooms. Global education is defined as 'education that develops the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are the basis for decision making and

participation in a world characterized by cultural pluralism, interconnectedness and international economic competition' (Merryfield (1995) quoted in Willard-Holt, 2001: 505). In her study, Merryfield (2000) argues that teachers' understandings of the wider world come from their lived experiences.

> Gay and Kirkland (2003) underscore the significance [of this] when they write that culture both constructs and constricts the lens through which people look at the world and that it is important for teachers to know who they are, to question their own knowledge and assumptions, and to try to better understand the context within which they are teaching. (Bondy et al., 2008: 2)

Martin (2008) reiterates this point when he asserts that teachers' own worldviews, with their underlying assumptions, values and beliefs, are a key factor affecting teaching and learning. This has a significant impact for this study as it presupposes that a 'lived experience' in a developing country would impact the way that teachers deal with their students on an everyday basis.

According to a study conducted in 1992, Mahan and Stachowski gleaned over 600 changes reported by international student teachers. Of which, 73 per cent were of a social or personal nature, while 27 per cent related to school and teaching. This correlates with Nava's (1990: 79) study which reports 'significant and lasting impressions' on pre-service teachers even from what appeared to be limited exposure. Mahan and Stachowski (1992) assert that for educators the flexibility to grow and change is a prerequisite to success and acceptance in the classroom and school community. Findings from their study also contend that 'project participants exhibited a willingness to assess thoughtfully and critically their own teaching, to identify their own professional weaknesses, and to target those specific areas that require further development and growth' (Mahan and Stachowski, 1992: 345). This professional attitude was affirmed by Willard-Holt (2001), who found that the benefits to student teachers of even such short visits were manifold, from greater global awareness through to increased flexibility, greater reflection on their own teaching and a heightened sense of professionalism in dealing with their Mexican colleagues and pupils.

Willard-Holt's study brings to light several changes that the participants, upon their return to the United States, executed in their teaching in both content and methodologies. Eighty-eight per cent of participants reported integrating content from their trip into their subsequent teaching. Sixty-five per cent of the participants testified to

including global and development education modules in their teaching, while 60 per cent claimed to have a more realistic view of the interconnectedness of the world. The study also shows that the experience of being in the minority for a short time in an unfamiliar culture sensitised the pre-service teachers to make special efforts to reach out to marginalised students in their classrooms. Twenty-five per cent of the participants claimed to have acquired a greater capacity for patience, both with their students' learning and in allowing time for translation to occur. Wilson (1993) also noted the sensitivity of teachers who returned from duty as Peace Corps volunteers. These returned volunteers noted that their cross-cultural experience had made the transition of foreign students into their classes easier and that they addressed students' problems from a cultural perspective. Villegas and Lucas (2002) argue for the need for culturally responsive teachers to be prepared to teach a racially, linguistically, ethnically, and economically diverse population. These reported changes further endorse Irish Aid's strategy of highlighting the importance of teacher education due to its multiplier effect.

Wilson (1982) identifies the political nature of teaching and highlights the benefits of cross-cultural experiences in light of this. She argues that there are four main benefits to cross-cultural experiences. First, teaching itself is a cross-cultural encounter, dealing on an everyday basis with students and parents from different cultural backgrounds. Second, cross-cultural experiences aid self-development. Third, cross-culturally effective persons have characteristics desirable for effective teachers. Finally, Wilson contends that cross-cultural experiences lead to global perspectives that are necessary if global education is to happen in schools. These benefits, when put into practice, can significantly impact the methodologies that teachers employ and the content of their teaching, which again leads to the multiplier effect that Irish Aid promotes.

In her study conducted in 1993, AH Wilson investigated the effects of an on-campus, cross-cultural conversation partners programme, which proved to increase the intercultural competence of American teacher education students. In this study, Wilson also contended that international experiences can make a powerful contribution to an individual's knowledge and perceptions of the world. Wilson asserts that this impact can be divided into two general categories, namely an increased global perspective and augmented personal growth. Wilson maintains that an internationally experienced person gains a global perspective, including substantive knowledge and a perceptual

understanding. Substantive knowledge includes knowledge of other cultures and a general awareness of world issues, global dynamics and human choices (Wilson, 1993: 2). This increase in the teacher's knowledge is in turn imparted into their classroom teaching, as verified in Willard-Holt's study. This finding has a significant impact for Ireland as it endorses Irish Aid's prioritisation of teacher education in the bid to enhance development education and global understandings amongst the student population and the general public. The perceptual understandings of people returned from international experiences are also considerably improved. This perceptual dimension of global perspectives aids open-mindedness, supports the anticipation of complexity, facilitates resistance to stereotyping and chauvinism, and encourages an inclination to empathise. This in turn can help render teachers 'culturally responsive' as espoused by Villegas and Lucas. In a study by Zachner and Zeutschel (1990) of American and German exchange students, 85 per cent of all respondents indicated that the exchange experience caused an attitudinal change, as a result of which they began to individualise people, rather than stereotype them by nationality (Zachner and Zeutschel, 1990, quoted In Wilson, 1993: 2). This attitudinal change is desirable in the current educational climate in Ireland where teachers are challenged by the complexity of teaching students from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Wilson (1993) also contends that international experiences can lead to personal growth and new interpersonal relationships. Personal growth has been underscored as a major benefit in this field. Self-confidence, general maturity, acceptance of responsibility and independence have all been highlighted as outcomes of time spent in a different cultural setting. Along with this, long-term intercultural relationships are perceived to be advantageous to international experiences. Returned participants in international experiences have highlighted the formation of relationships with people in other countries, along with co-participants, as influencing factors in their forming of opinions.

MY STUDY AND APPROACH

The focus of this study has its roots in development education, which is described as 'an educational process aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live' (Irish Aid, 2005). The primary aim of this

research is to assess the impact of volunteering on volunteer teachers and their teaching upon their return to Ireland. The study aims to discover how short-term volunteering in developing countries impacts Irish teachers socially, emotionally and professionally. The main objective is to investigate the validity of short-term volunteering with particular emphasis being placed on the impact of the volunteers on their own community upon their return to Ireland.

Within the core question there are three main areas upon which this research will focus, namely the professional, social and emotional effect that four weeks volunteering has on the teachers both while in a developing country, in this case Uganda, and on their return home.

From a professional point of view, the aim is to discover whether teaching in a developing country, where classroom resources are scarce, class sizes are large, and the emphasis in schools is very much focused on exams, affects the content of teaching and the methodologies that the Irish teachers employ upon their return to their own classrooms. Will they teach more development education topics? Will how they teach change? Has their professional opinions regarding teaching and best practice altered since their time in Uganda? One of the key questions that this study will strive to answer is whether this experience renders the participants, what Villegas and Lucas (2002) term, 'culturally responsive teachers'. Is such an experience beneficial, and what are the key themes that we as educators can derive from it?

From an emotional point of view, this study aims to ascertain how the participants feel and react in an unfamiliar setting amongst people of a significantly different cultural background. The participants had to move from a world where they are an ethnic majority to a world where they became an ethnic minority in a relatively short period of time. How will the participants cope when they are challenged by cultural differences and when they experience the impoverished conditions?

The social impact of the experience on the participants will focus on a broad range of topics. How do the participants socialise and interact while in Uganda and with whom? Are the participants more socially conscious upon their return to Ireland? Are there any cultural stereotypes that the participants have prior to visiting Uganda and if so will any of this change or become negated because of the experience? Six months after the experience has ended, it is hoped to discover whether any of the categories that Wilson (1993) classified as benefits to cross-cultural experiences have been realised, namely,

substantive knowledge of other cultures, world issues and global dynamics; open-minded and empathetic perceptual understanding of people and other cultures without stereotypes; personal growth in areas such as self confidence and independence and the propensity to make interpersonal connections with people of other cultures, both in the host country and after returning home. (Wilson, 1993, in Willard-Holt, 2001:506)

This ongoing study is a work in progress that began in April 2008 and will take place over a period of 12 months. The data collection has been divided into three stages. Stage 1 attains to the period prior to travelling to Uganda. During this stage all participants completed a qualitative questionnaire. Questions dealt with participant reasons for volunteering, their preconceptions around what lay ahead in Uganda and their current teaching practices, both with regard to content and methodologies (Appendix A). On 19 April 2008, two focus groups were conducted with seven participants in each group. These groups further examined the questions that had been asked in the questionnaire and any ambiguities that arose were clarified. The key themes from this focus group helped focus the next wave of data collection.

Stage 2 of data collection occurred whilst in Uganda in July 2008. During this stage, the principles of ethnography came to the forefront. Participant observation was the mainstay of the researcher's focus, with special attention being paid to empirical evidence. Informal discussions took place with the participants on a one-to-one and group basis. This informality was essential to the process of the researcher remaining as a partner and not an authoritative figure or an expert. Participants were also asked to complete a weekly evaluation sheet (Appendix B). Participants were encouraged to reflect on their experience on a daily basis, but also to verbalise how they see the other culture, the 'etic' perspective. The researcher took a phenomenological approach at this stage, which is, documenting as much evidence as possible, including anything that may have seemed irrelevant. This data was recorded and managed through coding, by themes. The participants also filled in an evaluation sheet at the end of the four weeks (Appendix C).

The final stage of the research, Stage 3, will take place in March 2009, six months after the volunteers return to Ireland. Participants will again fill in a questionnaire and some will be selected for interview. This stage will pertain to the teaching content and methodologies of the participants along with their personal lives and attitudes. Participants will be questioned as to how the experience has impacted their lives. Key

themes will again be selected and compared with data gathered over the course of the research. These themes will subsequently inform the manner in which the data is represented.

The volunteer placement occurred in July 2008. In total 15 volunteer teachers, including the researcher acting as a research participant, and including the teacher co-ordinator, travelled to Uganda in East Africa with A–Z Children's Charity. The teaching placements took place in four schools set in the town of Nansana, approximately 6 kilometres from the capital, Kampala.

Prior to travelling, there were a number of requirements that needed to be fulfilled. Acceptance on to the programme was facilitated by forwarding a curriculum vitae to the director, Mr Brian Iredale, of A–Z Children's Charity, an Irish-registered charity. The demand for places was unusually high, due in part to increased media advertisements, and a total of 28 teachers travelled over a two-month period, which was an increase of five teachers from the previous two years. Indeed the response to the advertisements placed in *InTouch* magazine, distributed monthly by the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), was so great that a waiting list had to be created in case of places becoming available. Once accepted on to the programme, volunteers were required to book their flights to Uganda in order to secure their place. All volunteers paid their own air fare, of approximately €1300, and also paid €100 to the host families upon arrival. It was also incumbent upon all volunteers, including the researcher, teacher co-ordinator and director, to raise €2000, which went directly to the charity in order to support some of their programmes.

In advance of travelling there were two meetings for volunteers with the director of the charity and the teacher co-ordinator. These took place in November 2007 and April 2008, respectively, in Dublin. Volunteer teachers from all over the country attended these orientation days. The volunteer teachers were informed of which school they would be placed in and also which Irish teachers they would be working alongside on the orientation day in April. All the teachers, with the exception of four, were travelling without any prior acquaintance of the others who were volunteering. The volunteers were given the contact details of the head teacher and the family they would be living with while in Uganda, and they were encouraged to make contact with them through email. The volunteers were split into three groups on the second orientation day in April in order to plan a scheme of work for the eight-week teaching period. Planning in the areas of English, art, and physical education took place. Each volunteer was sent a scheme of work for all three subject areas in May. Participants were encouraged to read and use the schemes.

There was a particular emphasis on planning in the Ugandan schools and all volunteers were expected to act professionally and follow the schemes of work put in place in order to avoid any overlap between the two different placements.

The researcher participant followed all the same procedures as the rest of the volunteers, working the same hours, teaching the same subjects and taking part in all the same extra activities. Prior to being accepted on to the programme, the research had been approved by the director of the charity and the teaching co-ordinator.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

As the research is ongoing, most of the data has yet to be analysed. However, from what has been found to date, it would appear that the volunteer placement had a positive and profound effect on all the volunteers. Twelve of the 13 teachers have reported that they have taught about Uganda to their pupils since their return. (The thirteenth teacher is currently on career break.) This already highlights an increase in the amount of time teaching development education topics.

The volunteers' attitudes to developing countries appears to have altered significantly. Prior to travelling, some volunteers were perceived to have a somewhat stereotypical view of developing countries and the problems they faced and most purported to believe that an increase in aid would help solve the problems these countries faced. However, initial responses from volunteers whilst based in Uganda signalled a shift in this understanding. All volunteers were surprised by the daily grind faced by Ugandans and came to form the opinion that an increase in aid alone would not solve the problems faced by the people of the country.

The volunteers had to grapple with moving from an ethnic majority to an ethnic minority overnight. They faced cultural, linguistic and social challenges on a daily basis. These difficulties allowed the participants to empathise with children in their own classrooms who are not of Irish descent. They came to appreciate the difficulties and challenges that these children face on a daily basis at school in Ireland.

The ramifications of this study are manifold. There are many organisations and interest groups who may benefit from such a study. First, there is a gap in the relevant literature with regard to the effects of short-term volunteering that could be filled by the findings of this study. Second, this study may aid teacher education, development

education, NGOs and relevant government bodies, such as the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ireland.

CONCLUSION

Exposure to development education greatly enhances the perceptions and attitudes of pupils to global issues. It is therefore incumbent upon teachers to help alleviate the predominantly negative attitudes that their pupils hold due to ignorance. As our multicultural climate continues to expand, we as a society must equip our students with the tools to welcome, accept and understand the different races, creeds and cultures that are living amongst us. We must also instil in them an appetite for social justice. They must be made to feel that they can instigate positive changes, not just in their own locality but also globally. To date, research has shown that international and cross-cultural experiences have impacted both the participants and their subsequent teaching. It is apparent that there is a need to investigate the impact of short-term volunteering on experienced, qualified Irish teachers and find out if the experience impacts on the content and methodologies the teachers employ in their teaching, thus contributing to the multiplier effect that Irish Aid has prioritised.

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APPENDIX A:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS TRAVELLING TO UGANDA

Please take the time to fill in the following questionnaire. All information provided shall remain confidential and shall be used for the purposes of research and thesis only. All results will be reported as a group. No individual results will be reported. The questionnaire will take 15 minutes.

Name: . . . .

Age: . . . .

Number of years teaching experience: . . . .

School name and address: . . . .

. . . .

. . . .

School structure: (*Please tick any appropriate*)

☐ Vertical   ☐ Junior   ☐ Senior   ☐ Co-educational

☐ Boys Only   ☐ Girls Only   ☐ Urban   ☐ Rural

☐ Designated Disadvantaged   ☐ Gaelscoil

☐ Other (*Please specify*) . . . .

. . . .

What class/classes are you currently teaching? . . . .

. . . .

1. **Have you been to Africa or another developing country before? If so please give details, i.e. name of country, length of visit, date, purpose of visit.**

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

These questions refer to the A–Z Children's Charity programme
in Uganda in July and August 2008.

2. What is your reason for travel? . . . .
. . . .
. . . .
. . . .
. . . .

3. What are your fears/anxieties about the programme?

. . . .
. . . .
. . . .
. . . .
. . . .

4. Do you have prior acquaintance with anybody else travelling with the programme? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please give names: . . . .
. . . .

5. If placed in a stressful situation do you

☐ Like to spend time alone? ☐ Like company?

6. How often do you teach development/third world issues? (*Please tick*)

☐ Never ☐ Rarely

☐ From time to time (e.g. a couple of times a month)

☐ Frequently (e.g. every week – try to be more specific about these)

7. Please give some examples of the development education topics you have taught, if any:

. . . .
. . . .
. . . .
. . . .
. . . .

8. What do you expect to find in the Ugandan school you will be placed in, i.e. resources, class sizes, teaching methodologies, subjects?

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

9. How do you envisage your role in the Ugandan school you will be placed in?

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

10. How often do you buy fair-trade products?

☐ Never   ☐ Rarely   ☐ From time to time   ☐ Frequently

11. What do you believe are the main causes of Africa's problems? (Please tick)

☐ Corruption   ☐ Mismanagement of funds   ☐ Lack of education

☐ Neglect of Africa by developed world

☐ Other (*Pease specify)* . . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

12. Describe Africa in five words :

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in the questionnaire.

APPENDIX B: WEEKLY EVALUATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. What was your highlight of the week?

2. What extended you or proved the greatest challenge to you throughout the week.

3. Did anything happen this week that you will remember for a long time – a frozen moment or an image?

4. How was your worldview challenged or changed in the course of the week?

APPENDIX C: END OF PLACEMENT EVALUATION SHEET

1. In what way has this experience differed from your expectations?

2. What has been the greatest challenge for you throughout the last month?

3. What will you take from this experience?

4. What has been the highlight of the month for you and why?

5. How has your worldview challenged or changed throughout the course of the last month and how will this affect you upon your return to Ireland?

'IT HELPS IF YOU'RE THROWN IN AT THE DEEP END…'

AN INVESTIGATION INTO STUDENT TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE WITH THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF DEVELOPMENT AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

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WE are living in a global society of ubiquitous poverty. Nearly 1.2 billion people do not have access to clean water, one in seven children of primary school age is not in school, about 840 million people are malnourished and an estimated 1.3 billion people live on less than £1 a day (UNDP Human Development Report, 2006). These shocking statistics carry rights and responsibilities for all global citizens. 'The world is shrinking rapidly. We share a world economy, a world environment which is the basis for the present and future economy; and a stake in world development: we must learn to think globally and in a long term perspective' (Harlem-Bruntland, 1987). To enable pupils to become informed global citizens with recognised rights and responsibilities, development education has grown and now encompasses citizenship, moral and intercultural education.

The experience that a teacher has with cultural diversity and development issues has a major impact on their ability to deliver a development education programme. Fitzgerald (2003) argues that certain life experiences can influence a teacher's value system, which can in turn impact on the extent to which their teaching methodologies and approaches reflect global and justice perspectives. Personal backgrounds and life experiences of openness, cultural diversity, and prejudice prompted participants in Fitzgerald's study to believe strongly in the need for fairness and equality. They were keenly aware of the presence of racism in society, and of the need to do something about it. However, those teachers who did not have the same life experiences did not exhibit the same awareness of social injustice, or a desire to bring about change in society. Instead they focused more on imparting factual

information about cultural and global issues, but without developing an appreciation of the interconnections between these issues at both global and local levels. Consequently, it can be argued that their teaching methodologies and approaches did not reflect global and justice perspectives. The underlying cause of this differentiation between the two groups of teachers was found to lie in a differing value system between the teachers, arising from having different personal experiences in life. Shah (1996) suggests that student teachers are at different places along a continuum in respect of their interest and commitment to intercultural education issues: some will be opposed to the need for culturally adaptive teaching; some will be very committed, while others will have only a slight interest; some may only be concerned with specific issues such as environmental factors, while others will have an awareness of the power relations that contribute to such issues. Therefore, Shah argues that educating these student teachers on global issues will be complex and require both theory and practice.

Dramatic changes in the Irish population also have educational implications in terms of intercultural education. Ireland no longer has a mono-ethnic population, as people from approximately 170 countries currently live, work and go to school in Ireland (Cullen, 2005). Kieran and Hession (2005) attribute this recent and dramatic change in our social make-up to the increasing numbers of immigrants from other countries seeking asylum, along with general mobility within and across countries of the European Union. According to a discussion document published by the European Union, despite a slight decrease in the number of newcomers for 2008, over 280,000 people have still entered Ireland in the last three years (http://www.eubusiness.com). But not only do we have a diverse population, we also have a young demographic. Crampton (2007) reports that of the 4.2 million people living in Ireland in 2005, about 36 per cent were under the age of 25, and therefore concludes that these population demographics have implications for education. Students in classrooms today reflect diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, gender, religious, and other cultural backgrounds. A cultural mismatch is therefore appearing between the teaching and student populations in Irish classrooms. Leavy (2005) outlines that while the student population is becoming more diverse, the teaching population is predominantly white, middle class, female and Catholic. Terrill and Mark (2000) conclude that not only do most teachers differ from their students in terms of race, culture and language, they also differ in terms of socio-economic circumstance. Furthermore, Leavy (2005) argues that this mismatch will not change in

the near future, as the teaching population is not going to become more diverse due to the restrictive entry criteria for teacher education courses and the lack of alternative routes for non-Irish speakers.

This cultural mismatch is perpetuated by an absence of interaction between majority and minority groups. Previous research indicates that many white pre-service teachers have little cross-cultural background, knowledge, and experience to bring into the classroom (Ward and Ward, 2003), as many teachers did not attend culturally or racially diverse schools or live in racially integrated neighbourhoods (Milner et al., 2003). Hagan and McGlynn (2004) conclude that the student teacher population of Northern Ireland comes from a largely similar socio-cultural background, with little prior experience of diverse contexts. Leavy (2005), following an examination of the demographic backgrounds of student teachers in the Republic of Ireland, reports that 92 per cent of pre-service teachers are from majority national, religious, and cultural groups in Ireland. The fact that 69 per cent of pre-service teachers report at most one interaction with a refugee or asylum-seeker, and 29 per cent at most one interaction with a non-Irish national, exposes a concerning lack of familiarity with other cultures residing in our country. Not only will this lack of experience with cultural diversity impact upon a student teacher's ability to address intercultural education but also on development education, due to an absence of life experiences addressing diversity or equality as outlined by Fitzgerald (2003).

Student teacher candidates therefore enter teacher-training colleges with little experience of development education or intercultural exchanges (Holden and Hicks, 2007). There is a great deal of learning from both theory and practice to prepare these students for the inevitable task of delivering development and intercultural education to the next generation. Abdallah-Pretceille (2006) argues that having already assimilated psychology and sociology, the fields of training and pedagogy are now in the process of integrating anthropology. Student teachers in the Republic of Ireland currently study such areas as the history, philosophy, or sociology of education (Ryan, 2006). Introductory lectures to the policy of development education are also evident in colleges of education. Reflective sessions, as advocated by Kyles and Olafson (2008), provide students with opportunities to explore personal beliefs and past experiences with diversity. Hartley and Whitehead (2006) argue that the teaching practice component of initial teacher education programmes has a strong influence on the professional development of teachers. Boydell (1986) goes as far as to

suggest that it carries more significance than the college-based theory parts of the course. In recent years, the focus has been on teaching practice in diverse situations, both at home and abroad, as a key component in teacher education programmes. In the Northern Ireland context, 85 per cent of student teachers interviewed by Hagan and McGlynn (2004) felt that increased opportunities to conduct teaching practice in diverse schools with diverse pupils would contribute to their professional development as teachers. Siberry and Kearns (2005) recommend that student teachers should have the experience of teaching abroad during teacher preparation, as they argue that it prompted student teachers to experiment with pedagogies, include more co-operative learning, and focus on a more inclusive and negotiated curriculum.

This study will explore final year student teachers' experience of the theory and practice of development and intercultural education. These participants are based in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick and have experienced such theory and practice as part of their initial teacher training. Experience with these concepts will be investigated to uncover whether trainee teachers are indeed teaching from theory and learning from practice. The following research questions are under investigation:

- To what extent have student teachers engaged with the theory of development and intercultural education?
- To what extent have classroom experience with these concepts aided participants professional development?

METHOD

Rationale and Approach

The experiential life of people is the area qualitative methods are designed to study. This study is related to participants' experience with the theory and practice of development and intercultural education and so a qualitative interview was selected as the methodology of choice. Robson (2002) describes three types of interview: structured, semi-structured or unstructured. A semi-structured format, it was considered, would provide a sufficient structure to allow participants to answer the research questions in a meaningful way, yet allow for discussion of their views in depth. While the interview guide assures the consistency of topics across all interviews, each particular interview is different due to the individual interaction and discussion between interviewer and participant.

Participants

The 18 participants were aged between 19 and 22 (mean age of 20.89). Of these, 2 were male (with a mean age 20.5) and 18 were female (with a mean age of 20.94). All participants are currently enrolled in their final year of study at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, which is a Catholic teacher-training institution in the Republic of Ireland. Nine participants are undertaking BEd in Education, whereas the other nine participants are undertaking the BEd in Education and Psychology degree. All participants have completed six teaching placements and have undertaken or are currently undertaking their curriculum specialisation. This presents an opportunity for student teachers to specialise in a particular subject or issue within the curriculum. Two participants undertook a module in development and intercultural education in the previous year. Systematic sampling was the technique undertaken in this study. The sample consisted of final year students as they have theoretically had the most professional opportunities to encounter development and intercultural education. Participants were recruited through a process of referral within Mary Immaculate College.

Interview Procedures

The semi-structured interviews were conducted at an agreed place for a period of approximately 30 minutes. During the briefing session participants were informed of the research goal: their experience with the theory and practice of development and intercultural education was being investigated. Following signature of the informed consent form assuring privacy, confidentiality and the right to withdraw, the dictaphone was switched on and the interview commenced. A list of topics provided a provisional structure to the interview. However, the order and wording of the questions slightly changed from person to person as the interviewer responded to the demands of each social situation. Throughout the interview process the interviewer was conscious of the phenomenon of transference; that of transferring their views onto the participant and so did not share personal views during the interaction. Instead, the researcher would often summarise a participant's response to a particular question and ask for clarification. A variety of questions were included in the interview guide, including open and closed questions, as well as their response to hypothetical situations. Participants had an opportunity at the end to ask any questions pertaining to the research project, or to share any additional views not previously covered in the interview.

Data Analysis

The methodological approach used in the study was designed to produce data that could undergo a deductive thematic analysis, whereby themes were analysed, reported and interpreted within the data in relation to the two research questions.

All talk between interviewer and interviewee as recorded by the dictaphone was transcribed. Pauses, laughter, sighs and other non-verbal sounds were noted in the text. The use of Jeffersonian transcription (Jefferson, 1985) also drew attention to changes in tone, inflection and emphases placed by the speaker. Transcripts were repeatedly read in an active, interpretative manner to check for consistency. The initial coding stage involved a systematic reading of the entire data set, coding one sentence at a time giving equal attention to each data item and identifying noteworthy aspects of the data set. Notes were jotted down the left-hand side of the transcript. Once a long list of possible codes had been constructed, the next task was to move from a number of specific codes to broad general themes arising from the data. This involved sorting the codes into potential themes, resulting in some initial codes forming main themes directly, others forming sub-themes and others still being disregarded. Themes were reviewed, defined and consolidated. The final step involved the extraction of quotes for the results section of the paper. Data extracts were selected to highlight sufficient evidence for and prevalence of a theme. Vivid examples capturing proposed points were highlighted to reinforce the point of discussion.

RESULTS

The results from the coded transcripts indicate that student teachers are indeed learning from both theory and practice during initial teacher preparation. It appears that the immediate prospect of teaching practice involving development and intercultural material acted as the most significant catalyst for researching the topic. Practice prompts learning from theory. The results have been organised as follows:

1) Learning from practice
2) Learning from theory
3) Practice prompting theory

Learning from Practice

Teaching practice enabled pupils to encounter cultural diversity and address intercultural diversity. Positive prior experiences on teaching practice prompted positive attitudes towards cultural diversity and development education. An awareness of challenges and difficulties also prompts an increased understanding of the concepts of development and intercultural education, and the educational implications for the delivery of specific programmes. Challenges were met as these student teachers engaged in teaching practice, but when these were overcome they served as a greater learning experience.

It was interesting like, because he'd be talking about all the time he'd been in Thailand and I love that because I have general interest in that myself. There can be a problem when there's not too much English but I mean you still want cultural diversity.

***

It's only when I addressed the content in the classroom that I understood and appreciated the concept. Yes, I had the theory and resources behind me, but they only go so far. I had to isolate subject area and time, inform the parents, pick a suitable topic; I had to address it very sensitively in the classroom, taking a neutral stance even when that was against my beliefs; it really was a learning process.

***

I mean I've had the experience, I have the knowledge, I would feel capable and like that after teaching practice, after that I would feel confident in it and I would probably feel a lot more capable a year from now, when you've taught for a full year in a class. Like your five weeks teaching practice gives you a taste of it but isn't really enough to fully prepare you with like, methodologies and confidence. I mean you are learning on the job, the experience is fantastic.

***

The one thing was when we were doing something to do with development and the little girl from the Congo got quite upset because she was looking at the map and the map showed all the areas in red and orange, you know the worst affected areas in the world, and she realised that the Congo, where she was from, was one of the red areas, one of the areas of the world that was least

developed; and she was asking a lot of questions about it but I was kind of anticipating it and I had stuff prepared and I just kind of talked away to her and had a chat with her about it like, how she felt, etc. and I just asked her if she knew anything about her own country.

Learning from Theory

Preparation in terms of a voluntary curriculum specialisation was undertaken by two participants and described at length. Participants see this as the single greatest amount of development education theory present in the college but isolate it as simply an option to pick for the curriculum specialisation, 'ped op', rather than an ubiquitous course of study. The participants who opted for another course of study for the curriculum specialisation spoke of an insufficient preparation in terms of intercultural and development education, arguing that the rationale rather than the actual classroom strategies were outlined in lectures.

During the ped op we went into the theory of development, development education, how to approach topics, methodologies, etc. and then moved on to intercultural education where we talked about similar topics in this new context. Although two different topics, they are interlinked in terms of cultivating knowledge and values related to a global community and the rights and responsibilities associated with each.

***

They make it very obvious, in sociology like, include the children, a lot of general knowledge that you're going to do anyway, I think, you know anyway; I mean you should be able to do that as a teacher anyway, include the children, try and include them, but the actual strategies of how to teach a child with no words, how to actually break things down to a child that has no English.

***

I mean apart from the book that [name] wrote, that we didn't even really read, we just read a couple of chapters from it for a couple lectures. Apart from that and the fact that we did the ped op in intercultural education. But, if I hadn't done that ped op, I wouldn't even know that there's a document available from the Department on intercultural education in school.

Practice Prompting Theory

The concept of tunnel vision was raised, whereby student teachers apparently focus on the near future, essays, degrees, etc. and do not look to long-term challenges in teaching.

In college, there's this thing where people only read what they have to read to get their marks and grades – I don't think there's going to be many people going in and picking up a book just for their future career.

Participants spoke in detail of the demands and work requirements of teaching practice being the single most effective stimulus of learning the theory of development education.

Well, sometimes it helps if you're thrown in at the deep end because you have to cope yourself, and you're probably going to cope better than you expect. You read more, prepare yourself more than you give yourself credit for. I think that when you read theory you have to apply it practically.

***

Until they get a job and realise that they will be teaching newcomer children in a few weeks. Then I'd like to think that they'd use the internet, maybe come back to the library to research the various countries and also how to deal with the whole language barrier. That's what I'll be doing anyway if I'm faced with the prospect. I wouldn't say people are worrying about it or researching countries already, I mean we're so busy and focused on college but when they have to, people might.

***

So I think that we learn more from classroom practice as it brings the theory to life. Practice is more than just delivering the theory to the pupils; all of the different considerations make it a challenge, but also a worthwhile learning experience.

DISCUSSION

Results suggest that the teaching practice segment of initial teacher preparation provides the most significant opportunity to explore the theory and practice of development and intercultural education. When presented with the immediate challenge of development and intercultural education in practice, participants responded with an informed, enthusiastic inclusion of the theory of such constructs. The concept of tunnel vision, as raised during the interview sessions, prompts speculation that student teachers engage in theoretical study only in meaningful immediate situations.

Fitzgerald (2003) argues that life experiences encapsulating diversity, equity and openness influence the extent to which the methodologies and context adopted reflect justice perspectives. In the same way, experience which participants report with the practice of development education seems to be in the context of cultural diversity in the classroom. Teaching practice is equipping student teachers with the opportunity to engage with development and intercultural theory in the classroom, and also the life experiences which influence their value system and in turn influence their teaching for years to come. This links in with Hagan and McGlynn's investigation with Northern Irish student teachers, whereby the majority advocated the need for opportunities to conduct teaching placement in different schools addressing different populations, purporting it as a fundamental part of initial teacher training.

However, the concept of sampling should be addressed in relation to this study. The qualitative methodology of interview involves an interviewer delving deeply into social and personal matters and is used to discover shared understandings of a particular group (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). As a result of this, the sample was quite homogenous, namely white, Irish student teachers in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. It is also worth noting that half of the sample comprised a unique group of student teachers, those who were undertaking psychology as an additional course of study to their BEd degree. These participants had a detailed knowledge of social psychology and group dynamics and so were able to identify and actively work to reduce such phenomena interfering with their teaching. This form of non-probability sampling does not aim to produce a statistically representative sample or draw statistical inference (Wilmot, 2005). In terms of implications for further study, a larger sample of BEd students from different colleges of education

across Ireland could produce further insight into the theory and practice of development education that student teachers are engaging with during initial teacher training.

Weafer (2002) found that 15–24-year-olds in Ireland report the highest percentage of people stating that they didn't know anything about 'developing countries'. Although primary school children are younger than those represented in this sample, it does give an indication of the lack of knowledge that young people in Ireland possess in relation to certain global issues, and therefore an indication of the challenge facing teachers attempting to redress this knowledge deficit. However, the survey revealed that this particular age group also had the highest percentage of people wishing to learn more about 'developing countries', thereby indicating an openness and willingness to learn. If this finding can be applied to a younger age group, this has implications for the student teaching population in terms of preparation to deliver development education in the classroom.

Following the concession of teaching practice as a fundamental part of student teachers' developing development and intercultural knowledge, concentrated efforts must be made to expose student teachers to diversity both at home and abroad. Wiggins et al. (2007) argue that targeted field placements comprising pupils of different backgrounds facilitates the preparation of culturally responsive teachers. Sahin (2008) recommends an international teaching placement during initial teacher training, arguing that it can increase cultural awareness and allow for meaningful professional development of student teachers.

As pre-service teachers report low levels of familiarity with ethnic minorities, concentrated efforts must be made to enable student teachers to encounter diversity and become knowledgeable and capable in such a context. Norberg (2000) recommends the creation of colleges of education as intercultural environments as this leads to the internalisation of the core values by teachers. Cornwell and Stoddard (1994) offer a word of caution in stating that a comprehensive approach to interculturalism must be undertaken, including curriculum, environment and ethos, to allow for meaningful learning and internalisation rather than simply displaying fragmentary and token exposure to specific aspects of interculturalism.

In conclusion, as Hollins and Guzman (2005) argue, the paradox of teacher preparation programmes is that 'everything' is about diversity and social justice in the preparation of teachers and, simultaneously, 'nothing' is about diversity and social justice in the preparation of teachers. Dedicated efforts must be made to ensure the theory and

practice of development education is specifically included in initial teacher training. The results of this investigation show teaching practice as the catalyst for learning the theory of development and intercultural education and so a particular focus must be maintained on this practical segment of initial teacher training.

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EXPLORING EXPERIENCES

A SHARING OF PERSPECTIVES
BETWEEN ZAMBIAN AND IRISH PARTICIPANTS
OF A SCHOOL IMMERSION PROGRAMME

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THIS paper will explore aspects of the Developing World Immersion Programme, a programme that has become increasingly popular as a development education practice in Irish post-primary schools over the last number of years. The programme is an initiative of the Edmund Rice/Christian Brothers Network. It emerged in response to the 1996 Christian Brothers General Chapter, which articulated two themes: 'which would readily resonate with the hearts and minds of young people – internationality and the call to (work with) people at the margins of society' (Crowley, 2004: 3).

The overall aims of the programme are stated as follows:

- We in the Developing World Immersion Programme aim to increase the desire and capacity of students and wider school communities from the Edmund Rice Network in Europe to act in solidarity with others for a more just world.

- We aim to do this by providing senior students from these schools with structured opportunities to engage with local communities in the Developing World.

- By 'being with' local communities in the Developing World, students will have opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Christian faith, to grow in their own sense of God and to increase their commitment and capacity to work for real change in our world today. (Edmund Rice Network, 2008)

Specific objectives of the programme centre on 'personal development', 'faith development', 'development education' and 'host communities'.

In 1999, the two Irish Christian Brothers' Provinces (North of Ireland and the Republic) explored the possibility of forming links between Irish schools and the projects of Christian Brothers communities in the developing world. Today, in 2009, there are almost forty Irish Edmund

Rice/Christian Brother schools participating in Immersion Programmes to Zambia, India, Kenya, Tanzania and Bolivia.

Our school is an Edmund Rice/Christian Brothers boys secondary school based in Cork City. In 2003, the school took part in the Developing World Immersion Programme for the first time when a link was established with the Murundu Development Centre in Mufulira, Northern Zambia. In June of that year eight fifth-year students, between the ages of 16 and 18, travelled to Zambia for a period of three weeks accompanied by four teacher-leaders. Since then two further groups of teachers and students have been involved in the programme, in 2005 and 2007. A fourth group will travel in June 2009.

The Murundu Development Centre in Zambia aims to train local people, both men and women, in a variety of skills like metalwork, woodwork, tailoring, brick-making and horticulture. Currently, the centre is managed by the Christian Brothers and local Zambians.

Students involved in the Immersion Programme engage in a number of different activities. Prior to travelling they have regular preparatory meetings as a group, which include learning some of the local language and learning about issues in Zambia. They raise funds for projects in the Murundu Centre and throughout the process they are encouraged to keep a reflective journal. While in Zambia, typically they spend much of their time in the Murundu Development Centre working alongside students in the various workshops; interacting with the local children and organising activities with them; visiting the local home for the elderly and people in the local village. Similar types of activities take place in other schools involved in immersion programmes.

Despite the programme's increasing popularity in Edmund Rice/Christian Brothers schools, in a variety of locations throughout Zambia and elsewhere, a review of the literature suggests that little has been written on the experience and impact of these programmes particularly from the perspectives of people in the developing world. Personal involvement and interest in the Immersion Programme led me to undertake a small-scale study as part of a master's degree in development education. In August 2008, I carried out semi-structured interviews in Zambia. The second phase of the research will be to interview Irish participants. It is therefore a work in progress.

This paper aims:

- To give a brief background to the study, including a description of previous research carried out in relation to immersion programmes
- To identify key emergent issues
- To outline my approach in carrying out the study
- To highlight reasons why this study is important

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Development Education

Ireland's Development Education Strategy defines development education as:

> An educational process aimed at increasing awareness and under-standing of the rapidly changing, interdependent, and unequal world in which we live. It seeks to engage people in analysis, reflection and action for local and global citizenship and participation. It is about supporting people in understanding, and in acting to transform the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives and the lives of others at personal, community, national and international levels. (Development Cooperation Ireland, 2003: 11)

The strategy states that development education is concerned with knowledge, ideas and understanding of issues that relate to global poverty and underdevelopment; is an educational process based on learner centred and interactive methodologies; has a strong values dimension based on commitment to social justice and human rights; and is oriented towards action to effect change for a more just and equal world.

Immersion/Linking Programmes and Development Education

In the last number of years, immersion and linking programmes have become popular as a form of development education in Ireland. The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) conference report gives the following understanding of these terms:

> The terms 'linking' and 'immersion' have commonly been used interchangeably. Irish schools [are] frequently involved in 'immer-sion' style schemes which [involve] short visits by Irish students or young people to schools/youth/community projects in the Global South, i.e. they 'immerse' themselves for a short period. Linking projects on the other hand do not necessarily involve visits from the Global North or South, though there may be mutual teacher visits. Linking in the latter case is through the internet, shared projects, etc. (2007: 5)

The reasons for engaging in these programmes vary. O'Keeffe states:

> Groups link for a variety of reasons: for development education; to learn about global issues; to learn about cultural difference and

diversity; to build relationships of friendship; to share experience and knowledge. Linking is seen as a very good way to achieve these aims. (2006: 4)

Throughout this paper, I will refer to both the terms 'immersion' and 'linking'.

Principles of Immersion/Linking

The UK One World Linking Association (UKOWLA) identifies general principles of linking programmes: reciprocity; understanding and respect; equity and mutuality; commitment; community wide participation; shared values; open and honest communication; sustainable development; challenging colonialism; women's participation and equality of giving and receiving (2008). O'Keeffe echoes these in his report, identifying 'equality, mutuality, reciprocity, honesty, humility, critical thinking and reflection' as central principles (2006: 6). Specifically, the Developing World Immersion Programme identifies 'gospel values' as core to its programme. Principles include solidarity and social justice, 'being with' and engaging with communities in the developing world, critical thinking and action based on reflection (Edmund Rice Network, 2008). What makes this programme different to other linking programmes is its strong faith dimension.

Common threads emerging from each of the examples above include forming relationships and critical thinking leading to action.

Perceived Positive Outcomes of Immersion/Linking Programmes

In general, a number of positive outcomes of immersion/linking have been identified, including challenging perceptions and attitudes, creating friendships, raising awareness around social justice issues, and changing behaviours.

O'Keeffe concludes that 'if done well' (2006: 35), then linking is an effective way of achieving development education. He identifies a range of responses to linking in both North and South. Some responses in the North include a tendency to see linking as resulting in 'altered attitudes' and behaviour, effectively challenging stereotypical thinking and contributing to 'the development of relationships of friendship' (2006: 16). Some responses of people in the South include 'the importance of material resources and development assistance' (2006: 17) and 'increased awareness and knowledge of link partners from the North as well as altered attitudes' (16). It is noted that some of those interviewed

for the study 'felt that the greatest benefit accrues to the Irish students in terms of learning, rather than to the Southern partners. However, Southern partners frequently benefit from fund-raising' (24). O'Keeffe also notes that while most people both North and South felt it was a positive experience, some had reservations and that there is a possibility 'that negative impacts may arise as a consequence of bad practice' (17).

A 2004 report on the Developing World Immersion Programme found that it demonstrated many positive features when analysed within a 'development education' framework: the provision of a number of key learning experiences with a focus on understanding the developing world; the presentation of an international development perspective within education for teachers, students and schools involved; the provision of opportunities to compare development challenges and issues in Ireland with those of developing countries and the opportunity to reflect on our international roles and responsibilities (Crowley, 2004: 37).

Further research carried out in 2005, again specifically on the Immersion Programme, focused on 'the social impact, and social justice awareness which participation has created for students and teachers involved' (Cummins, 2005: 1). Among the conclusions drawn by the researcher were that involvement in the programme led to a significant development of students' social, interpersonal and emotional maturity, facilitating the 'internalising of social justice awareness in students, which is important if a response is to be sustained' (2005: 72).

EMERGENT ISSUES

However, despite these findings, a number of key issues emerge relating to the areas of evaluation and preparation/follow-up activities, fundraising, language and attitudes, and the issue of reciprocity.

Evaluation of the Impact of Immersion Programmes

There is relatively little evidence of research on the impact of these programmes in the long-term and particularly from the perspectives of people in the Global South. Burr's assertion that 'there is little assessment of impacts or benefits of linking initiatives' (2008: 2) is echoed by Regan's criticism of the lack of documentation 'which makes evaluation and the tracking of long-term impacts impossible' (2007: 10). O'Keeffe's research found 'few formal evaluations of linking activities' (2006: 16) and that furthermore 'evaluations that do take place are often

one-sided, with little input from southern partners, especially women' (Bond qtd. in O'Keeffe, 2006: 16). He makes the recommendation that 'there is ... a need for further research into the impact and effectiveness of linking, particularly with regard to its impact on southern partners and its long-term impact in terms of development education' (2006: 36). This point is further emphasised by Burr when she says that evaluation and impact assessment is only of value if people from the Global South 'have their voices heard' (2008: 5).

A report on the Developing World Immersion Programme in 2004 found that while many schools had a programme to inform people about their experiences, most did not plan a structured follow-up development education programme (Crowley, 2004: 17). Any such programme depended on the commitment and effort of individual teachers (Crowley, 2004: 19). A challenge for the immersion experience was seen to be in improving 'the depth and quality of learning for participants' (37) and encouraging 'a whole school approach to development education' (37). Although this report found evidence of preparation, the more recent IDEA conference report expressed concern that schools had not taken 'adequate time to research, prepare, and become aware of global issues prior to approaching linking and immersion' (IDEA, 2007: 23).

Cummins, again commenting specifically on her research on the Developing World Immersion Programme, suggests in her concluding comments that 'this research may prompt a further piece of investigation at some future point into the influence of their Immersion Programme experience on participating students' career choice or ongoing interest in social justice issues' (2005: 78). Views expressed in the examples outlined above represent recurring themes in the literature. It is interesting to note that the Development Education Strategy identifies a 'paucity of research' (Irish Aid, 2007: 7) in the development education area in Ireland in general, particularly in the area of evaluation. It would appear that linking and immersion programmes are, in many cases, part of this trend.

Fundraising

The issue of fundraising is recurrent throughout the literature. An overemphasis on fundraising may 'reinforce stereotypes' (O'Keeffe, 2006: 5), and the fact that Northern partners are often significantly wealthier than Southern partners 'can create power imbalances in the relationship'. The IDEA conference report pinpoints fundraising activities as a cause for concern particularly following visits to the Global

South, stating that 'there is strong concern that this created dependency and unequal relationships, did not promote equality of partnerships, self sustainability, or an equality and social justice agenda' (2007: 24). The conference recognised, however, the importance of considering the reality of the needs of the Southern partner and did not rule out fundraising in the context of 'a process including in-depth consideration of the implications of funding led linking' (24).

The 2008 UK Development Education Discussion Paper includes among the possible pitfalls associated with fundraising 'promoting feelings of superiority amongst those raising money, failing to understand global interdependence and the root causes of poverty' (DEA, 2008: 30). Duke suggests that fundraising deepens the divide between 'Us' and 'Them' (2003: 205). Since many immersion programmes have an element of fundraising, these are issues which merit careful thought.

The Developing World Immersion Programme states that 'fundraising is not the primary focus' nor should it 'become the primary focus of the preparation' (Edmund Rice Network, 2008). There is also an acknowledgement that visiting groups may wish to donate funds but this must be done in 'a most sensitive way which promotes good relationships and harmony'. This suggests recognition of the potential difficulties which may arise as a result of fundraising activities and a need for the consideration recommended in other reports.

These perspectives prompt the key question about whether immersion/linking programmes are based on a 'charity'/'aid' model or on a model which is based on transformation for social justice, exploring and challenging the causes of poverty and inequality in society.

Language and Attitudes: Colonialism and Racism

Connected with the difficulties associated with fundraising are issues around language and attitudes. Colm Regan argues that 'far too many … immersion models and practices are based on colonial attitudes and perceptions. *We have – They need; We give – They take...* (2007: 10). Andreotti calls this 'cultural supremacy', which is:

> …the drive for a 'civilising mission' of the North 'educating' the South in an attempt to solve their problems … linked to the idea of 'making a difference out there' with the assumption that the 'problem' of developing countries is only based on a lack of attributes that the North possesses. (2007: 5)

She makes the argument that these attitudes exist in many development education practices, including school links. Even the term 'immersion' may be problematic. Martin Kelly says 'the terms "exposure" and "immersion" grate with me ... because they feel one-sided and separating ... I believe that they still carry their own dynamic of colonisation' (2005: 7). He makes the case that when immersion is used for personal growth and development that this is an example of colonialism, a view echoed by Colm Regan who says that 'we have no right to build our spiritual experience on the backs of African schools' (2007: 10).

Although not directly referring to immersion or linking programmes, Rosalind Duke's study offers interesting insights into language and attitudes around development education with particular reference to secondary schools. She raises some challenging and thought-provoking issues that are applicable to linking/immersion programmes. In her research she found that people interviewed held 'overwhelmingly negative images of Africa and the South generally' (Duke, 2003: 202). Her study found that certain negative and patronising attitudes often came through in language used by both teachers and pupils: 'teachers very often spoke of development education work in terms of mission, charity and duty' (208) and how pupils were 'unable to escape from the notion of "development" as natural or of the need to bring underdeveloped countries up to the standard of developed countries'.

Duke recommends encouraging students to learn how to 'critique, to analyse [and] to look for hidden assumptions' (209). In a similar vein, Andreotti speaks of the importance of 'critical literacy', which is at the heart of an ethical relation with the Global South, involving '"unlearning privilege", learning to learn from below and learning to live with uncertainty' (2007: 7). She emphasises the importance of 'looking through others' eyes' (11).

Critical reflection, questioning and challenging assumptions and attitudes emerge as vital elements of school immersions and links.

Reciprocity

Among the key principles of linking is reciprocity (O'Keeffe, 2006: 6). This is defined as giving and receiving mutually, 'recognising that each side has something to give and something to receive. Benefits should flow in both directions ... it is not expressed at a material level but through input of expertise and dialogue' (UKOWLA, 2008). However, the reciprocal nature of linking/immersion programmes is challenged by Colm Regan, who questions the fact that while we send students,

teachers, etc. 'there', they do not come 'here' in equal numbers (2007: 10). He argues that those involved in these programmes have not engaged properly with the reasons for this.

THE STUDY

In the light of the themes discussed above, I undertook a piece of research with the aim of exploring the real experiences of participants in the Immersion Programme both from the perspectives of people in Zambia and in Ireland. There are two phases in the study: the first is a series of interviews conducted in Zambia, while the second phase focuses on the experiences of Irish participants.

Research in Zambia

In total, I carried out 10 semi-structured interviews with some key local people associated with the Murundu Development Centre. A number of factors were taken into consideration in the selection of interviewees. First, most had experience of the programme since its inception in 2003. Second, many of the people are based either in the centre or in the local village on a permanent basis and therefore were relatively accessible. Third, the perspectives of people in various roles was sought in order to consider the research question from different angles. Fourth, an effort was made to include women in the interviews. There were a number of challenges facing me as I proceeded with the research. An area of potential bias in carrying out this study is the fact of my own involvement in the programme. In an effort to counter this bias, perspectives were sought from both Zambian and Irish participants and people with a variety of roles within that: students, teachers/instructors, Christian Brothers, and managers/directors/project leaders.

There was, of course, the added complexity of researching in a cultural setting different from my own. I was aware that 'every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing' (Silverman, 2005: 182). This was a concern in two main ways. First, in interviews there is always the possibility that participants may say what they think is expected of them by either the researcher or by others. I sought advice from a researcher who has lived in Zambia for some time on how to minimise this. Care was needed to allow participants to express their views, feelings and attitudes freely and to ensure they knew that what was said would be treated confidentially.

Second, there was potential difficulty around the use of language. It was necessary to pilot the interview questions with some Zambian participants first, to identify the most appropriate ways of posing questions. Language barriers could also lead to misinterpretation of what a person was actually saying. It was important to ensure participants understood the questions being asked and clarification needed to be sought when I was unclear about what a participant was saying. I had also considered the possible need of an interpreter in Zambia. However, the people I interviewed had a relatively good standard of spoken English, which meant that an interpreter was not necessary.

Another challenge was the limited time available to conduct the interviews; sufficient information had to be gathered in the time allowed, which was approximately two weeks. I was conscious that limited time might influence the degree to which people would be willing to open up, although in some cases I had already established contact with some of the people I intended interviewing in previous trips to Zambia. The sourcing of a key informant who was able to suggest interviewees was an important factor in being able to organise and carry out interviews in the time available.

Research in Ireland

The second phase will be to interview Irish participants in the programme. Three immersion programmes have been carried out to date in our school, in 2003, 2005 and 2007. Each immersion programme involved eight or nine students. For the purposes of this research and in the interests of looking at the long-term impact of the programme, students who participated in the first immersion programme in 2003 will be interviewed. To gain perspectives on the programme from different angles, I will also interview a project leader of the last three immersion programmes in the school and a member of the current steering committee for the immersion programme nationally.

CONCLUSION

Why is this Study Important?

From evidence in the literature, there is clearly a general lack of research on the impact of immersion programmes, particularly from the perspectives of people in the Global South. This study is essentially a response to the call for research in this area. It is an attempt to put into

practice the theory that evaluation is vital. It will aim to bridge this gap in a modest but important way. It is an opportunity to hear the voices of those who are directly affected by the programme and to engage with some of the contentious issues emerging in relation to immersion programmes.

Key questions to be addressed in the study include:

- How has the Immersion Programme impacted on Zambian and Irish participants' knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and behaviours?
- How has the programme contributed to development education in the long-term?
- How does the issue of fundraising affect participants' experience of the programme?
- What are the positive/negative aspects of the programme from the perspectives of participants?
- How could the programme be improved?

The research could yield interesting comparisons between the experiences of those in Murundu with the experiences of the Irish participants, regarding how they understand and feel about the programme, how it has affected their lives, their attitudes and their behaviours. This could contribute to further understanding of 'the other', from both perspectives. I believe that this study is both a timely step in reflecting on current practices and an opportunity to inform future practice. The research may also have relevance not just to this particular school but also perhaps to the practice of the programme in other schools.

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HOW RESEARCH INTO MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE'S AFRICAN SENDING PROGRAMME IS INFORMING PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

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THIS paper will focus on the ways in which Mary Immaculate College (MIC) is moving to develop further the quality and depth of its Africa sending programme (Alternative Education Experience placement in Africa) for both MIC students and their African counterparts through relating the results of recently completed research into the area, with pre/post-departure and in-country training of the programme participants.

The paper arises from research funded by Irish Aid into the Africa sending programme carried out in 2008 by Fiona Bailey (MIC) in partnership with Colm Regan of 80:20, Development Education Organisation. This research, entitled 'The Impacts of Student Teaching Placements in a Developing Context', outlined and assessed the impacts of a MIC student teaching placement programme in Africa on student teacher participants. While the research highlighted a varied and rich range of personal and professional impacts on student teacher participants, it also highlighted specific areas within the programme which need greater focus, such as postcolonial attitudes, assistencialism, further development of the African partnerships, and the teaching element of the placement.

The paper will first give an overview of the MIC student teacher placement programme in Africa; it will then outline the research methodology, and the findings arising from it. It will then report on the changes to the programme that are being implemented.

OUTLINE OF MIC AFRICA SENDING PROGRAMME

MIC provides its third year Bachelor of Education (BEd) students with an opportunity to undertake teaching practice in an alternative educational setting — the Alternative Education Experience (AEE). The purpose of the overall AEE programme is to provide student teachers with teaching practice experience in an educational field which is normally outside the range of experience of students on teaching practices. Since 1997, over 300 students have chosen to complete their AEE teaching practice placements in primary schools in developing countries. Some 220 of those students completed AEE placements in primary schools in Africa, more specifically in Zambia and The Gambia; placements which were facilitated and accompanied by MIC staff. Within Mary Immaculate College there has long been an institutional commitment to local, national and international issues of social exclusion, development and human rights and diversity. The accompanied AEE placement programme in Africa is just one example of the college's commitment to the development agenda.

OUTLINE OF RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN

A study was undertaken by Mary Immaculate College in partnership with Development Education Organisation; 80:20: Educating and Acting for a Better World, Ireland in order to outline and assess the impacts of a student teaching placement programme in Africa. It specifically explored the knowledge, attitudes and practices of teachers in terms of classroom delivery of development education (DE). The study also briefly outlined the impact of the student teaching placements on the host community in Africa.

The specific objectives of the research were to examine:

- How accompanied AEE placements in Africa impacted on the knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviour of the student teachers personally.
- How accompanied AEE placements in Africa impacted on the knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviour of the student teachers professionally.
- To identify the impacts of accompanied AEE placements in Africa on the host counterparts.
- To identify ways in which MIC can improve and develop the quality, depth and intensity of the accompanied AEE placements in Africa programme for students, staff and for African counterparts.

This study builds further on the assessment offered by Dr Fullam and Dr Dolan (both of MIC) in their 2005 study 'Impact Study Visits on Student Teachers'. This paper explored the short–term personal and professional impacts of student teaching placements on 28 student teachers who went to Africa, accompanied, in 2004. This research continued and developed the present study by looking at the long-term personal and professional impacts on student teachers.

A student teaching placement in a developing country is one method of exposing students to development issues and, in doing so, motivate them to engage in DE with their future pupils in the classroom. Such placements can also be used as a way of developing an awareness and respect for cultural diversity in student teachers, which is very necessary in the multicultural Irish schools of today. MIC is working to achieve both of these aims. Student placements in developing countries can bring about many positive benefits and changes both for the students and the host community, examples of which will be outlined and assessed in the research findings to follow.

However, such placements can also bring about many destructive impacts, particularly for the host community. The difference of material wealth between the North and the South can result in power imbalances, the expectation of an 'aid' or welfare component, a dependency syndrome which is very difficult to challenge and, most importantly, the danger of reinforcing attitudes of superiority and inferiority. Reciprocity and shared educational or cultural experiences tend to be lacking in such placements, particularly with Irish institutions often over-relying on Irish clergy and aid agencies; there may be a lack of real engagement between Irish students and local people.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire was sent to the 220 past MIC BEd students who had completed their AEE placements in Africa, placements which were facilitated and accompanied by MIC staff. In addition, a structured questionnaire was also distributed to a control group of 220 past MIC BEd students who did not complete their AEE placement in a developing country.

The control group was selected in order to provide a comparative base for those who completed their AEE placement in Africa and those that did not, specifically in relation to engagement in development education in the classroom. Focus groups and interviews were held with

past MIC students who had completed accompanied AEE placements in Africa and were currently teaching, with MIC staff and accompaniers and with representatives from other colleges of education in Ireland. We also analysed secondary documents and reports.

KEY FINDINGS

Professional Impacts on Student Teachers

The research has clearly indicated a number of consistent professional impacts on student teachers in terms of knowledge, skills and behaviour.

Knowledge

There was a high level of interest in development issues in Africa and developing countries in general. Eighty per cent of those who did complete their AEE placement in Africa saw their interest level in development issues as 'very high' or 'high', while 19 per cent saw it as 'average'. In comparison with those who did not complete their AEE placement in a developing country, 40 per cent saw their interest level in development issues as 'very high' or 'high', while 60 per cent saw it as 'average'.

While an increased awareness of the issues was regularly addressed, understanding of such issues was less so; linked in here is the quote which was stated many times: 'They are poor but happy.'

An important finding in relation to the respondents' understanding of African development issues and people was an increased awareness of the lack of opportunities available to African children in comparison to Irish children; that this lack of opportunity was the cause of poverty, as opposed to African people being the cause of their poverty, thereby encouraging tolerant views rather than a 'blaming the victim' approach.

Skills

Improved skills and capacities as teachers were reported, particularly in the context of teaching in multicultural classrooms. Ninety-two per cent of respondents who teach in multicultural classrooms stated that their ability to teach in multicultural classrooms had been influenced by their AEE placement: 'I feel better able to communicate with a child through a language barrier, and I understand better the issues which may affect a child from a developing country.'

Behaviour

Professional behaviour in relation to the level of engagement in DE changed as a result of the experience. Eighty-one per cent of those who had been to Africa stated that they did teach DE and related issues regularly in their current jobs. In comparison with those who did not complete their AEE placement in a developing country, when asked if they currently engage with DE in the classroom, 67 per cent said they did engage in DE. In relation to their motivation for engagement in DE with their pupils, 72 per cent responded that their motivation to engage in DE was influenced by their placement in Africa.

When asked whether their placement in Africa had impacted on the type of DE topics they engage in, 62 per cent said 'yes it had'. Highlighted here was the high degree to which respondents used personal resources which they had gathered in Africa, including photographs, clothing, musical instruments, and also recounting personal experiences during their DE classes.

In terms of how the placement in Africa influenced respondents' ability/capacity to engage in DE, there were many references to an increased confidence in their capacity to teach DE, specifically as a result of their personal experience and knowledge of Africa.

In relation to personal and professional behaviour, specifically in terms of links and solidarity with Africa, 79 per cent of respondents answered 'yes' as to whether their placement in AEE Africa has influenced their decision to (or not to) associate financially or otherwise with development-related organisations. Respondents generally indicated that as a result of their AEE placement in Africa, they have become more understanding of the necessity of their financial support for development agencies. They have also become more discerning of aid agencies and how money is spent. Highlighted regularly was the comment: 'I prefer to give to those working on the ground.'

SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The issues highlighted in the focus group discussions include:

- Some participants felt that they were not experienced enough to have fully engaged in teaching in the African classroom; some felt that they could have been more prepared for teaching specific classes, for example, lesson plans developed before they went. Others felt that large class sizes, insufficient resources, and language barriers inhibit teaching subjects other than English, music, and art. It was suggested that too much is

expected of them in the classroom by African teachers, particularly in relation to their age and experience. It was also suggested that any teaching methodologies they could have passed on to African teachers would have been extremely difficult for African teachers to implement and use due to the system in place in African schools. The majority felt that African children loved to learn and they really enjoyed teaching them.

- The importance of debriefing was referred to often in focus groups and it was suggested that it is often more important than preparation in terms of helping students to share their experiences and engage further in development issues.

- The importance of reciprocity was discussed, with the majority feeling that African student teachers/teachers should also be given an opportunity as part of AEE Africa to gain experience of an Irish classroom. In relation to reciprocity, others felt that it would be unfair to expect African teachers to return to their bad conditions and lack of resources after experiencing a well-equipped Irish classroom.

- Many felt that their understanding of development issues was enhanced by their experience, even though they felt that this was not their main objective. Their main objective was to learn about the educational setting in Africa.

- The role of Irish missionary/NGO representatives and AEE accompaniers was regularly highlighted and praised in terms of helping them to understand some of the issues they were seeing for the first time and a respect for their dedication and service to African people. Almost all participants felt that accompaniers played an extremely positive role, particularly in terms of making them feel safe and secure, in providing them with support and guidance, and in allowing them the independence to develop their own relationships with the people they were meeting.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The interview findings reiterated the positive professional and personal impacts on participating students. All of MIC accompaniers recounted witnessing these impacts first hand and emphasised the commitment of the majority of students to give their best to African schools, teachers and children. While reciprocity was welcomed and has been facilitated in the past by MIC (a MIC-facilitated Gambian Teachers Union visit), the difficulty of this, particularly in terms of financial expense and visa applications, was also highlighted.

It was suggested that a dependence on accompaniers and Irish missionary/NGO representatives distorts the level of real and genuine engagement between African people and Irish students. The importance

of increasing and strengthening the role of African counterparts so as to facilitate a more genuine and equal relationship between African and Irish counterparts was suggested. Suggestions here included developing more African partners, particularly in Zambia, and an increased involvement by African partners, particularly in management and administration procedures.

Inequality in the relationship between African people and Irish students was addressed, particularly in relation to Irish students being treated as 'heroes' in Africa and the impression this gives to young students, and it was discussed whether it maintains notions of superiority/inferiority and postcolonialism.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF IMPACTS ON AFRICAN COUNTERPARTS

The following programme benefits were identified:

- Local teachers benefit from observing and discussing the teaching strategies and methodologies used by the visiting students.
- Local pupils who are disadvantaged educationally benefit from the remedial work undertaken by the Irish students and from the 'extraordinary' project work undertaken.
- Local pupils also benefit from being taught by English speakers.
- Donations by MIC of equipment and resources to the participating schools.

However, they feel that improvements could be made to increase benefits for the host community. Suggested improvements included:

- Increasing the length of the placement.
- Increasing the number of students, and so the number of schools covered by the programme.
- More follow-up after the placement is completed.

In late 2007 as part of a restructuring of the DICE Project, Irish Aid funded a development and intercultural education (DICE) lecturer in each of the initial teacher education colleges. Part of the DICE lecturer's duties in MIC is preparation for teaching practice placements and supervision of teaching practice placements in a developing context. The appointment of the DICE lecturer in MIC coincided with the commencement of the study outlined above. The findings of the report have informed the work of the DICE lecturer and others in reorganising the AEE placement in Africa to further develop its quality and depth.

Previous to the appointment of the DICE lecturer, the programme was organised by various lecturers within the college, most notably Paddy Fulham and Anne Dolan (as referenced earlier) and Margo O'Sullivan. While working in various fields of education, these lecturers are all committed to the AEE placement in Africa and development education in general. They originated the concept of the sending programme and developed it over 10 years, managing to do so in addition to their mainstream duties. Irish Aid's funding of a dedicated DICE lecturer in late 2007 has meant that the AEE placement in Africa has now been designated as part of a staff member's core responsibilities. This is significant from the point of view of future development of the AEE placement in Africa programme as it is now officially part of a staff member's workload.

This section of the paper will focus on the ways in which MIC is moving to further develop the quality and depth of its AEE placement in Africa in light of the findings of the 'Student Teaching Practice Placements in Developing Contexts' report. It will look specifically at four areas: assistencialism, postcolonial attitudes, further strengthening of the partnership with African counterparts, and a greater focus on the teaching element of the placement and the debriefing process.

ASSISTENCIALISM

The issue of assistencialism was one of the first to be highlighted in the report findings. The report revealed that 'while an increased awareness of development issues was regularly addressed, understanding such issues was less so', making reference to one student's quote that 'They are poor but happy'. The report also found, however, that the students had an increased awareness of the lack of opportunities available to African children in comparison to Irish children and that they directly related this lack of opportunity to the poverty of the communities they were working in.

As the students interviewed pointed out, the main objective of the AEE programme is for the students to experience an *alternative* educational setting, not to increase their knowledge of development issues. However, fully comprehending the educational setting they are operating in, in either Zambia or The Gambia, would not be possible without an understanding of the type of problems facing countries of the Global South and where these issues originate. It would also be highly irresponsible of the programme to send anyone to a country in the Global South without adequate preparation in the above areas.

While information on development issues did form part of pre-departure training in previous years, it is now being more clearly identified to the students. There is a dedicated session on development issues timetabled in the pre-departure preparation which focuses on the Millennium Development Goals and the Human Development Index. Much of this type of information is difficult to effectively deliver to students at this point in the programme as they are more preoccupied by the practical aspects of the trip, i.e. vaccinations and flight times, etc. Neither have the majority of the students previously been to a country where these issues are so prevalent, therefore this part of the preparation is very theoretical for them.

Conveying the type of poverty they will be exposed to and its interrelated nature is a challenge. Therefore, much work on development issues is done informally on the ground on an ongoing basis, both through the accompanying lecturer and through the Irish missionary/NGO representatives and host organisations. This in-country training is invaluable as it can be directly linked to the types of issues the students are experiencing. For example, during the placement in The Gambia in 2008 one student, who was assigned the equivalent of senior infants class, was confused as to the presence of a 10-year-old girl in the class. This prompted a discussion on why the child had been placed in that particular class, why she had never been to school previously, and gender inequality.

Finally, the Irish missionary/NGO representatives and host organisations are very effective in helping the students to understand some of the issues they are being faced with for the first time.

GREATER FOCUS ON TEACHING ELEMENT OF PLACEMENT

As part of pre-departure training students meet with a former programme participant; this provides them with an opportunity to hear what the schools they are going to are like physically, what sort of numbers to expect in the classrooms, and what type of lessons and activities worked well in those particular settings previously. At the start of the placement in their host school, they also spend time observing various classes. It is only at this point in the programme that the students are assigned a class. This decision is jointly reached between the head teacher, the class teacher and the Irish student.

In light of the report, this process has been changed. It is hoped that from 2010 the DICE lecturer will have already agreed the classes the Irish students are to be placed in with the various head teachers before the group departs from Ireland. They will also indicate the subject areas they

want the students to focus on. This will allow both the Irish students and the class teacher on the ground to prepare adequately. The Irish students will continue to meet with former programme participants as part of their pre-departure training. In addition to this, students will be able to familiarise themselves with the Gambian/Zambian curriculum through textbooks bought during this year's trip.

POSTCOLONIAL ATTITUDES

The report also references the inequality in the relationship between the African people and the Irish students and the danger this creates in perpetuating a feeling of superiority among the Irish students. The report found that there was recognition among the students that economic inequality influenced the relationship they had with African people and that they were expected to 'give' all the time. The report also found that this did not upset the majority and that they wanted to help and felt this was to be expected.

From the point of view of the programme organisers, it is very difficult to dissuade the students from fundraising for their 'host schools'. They are advised that this is not a requirement to take part in the programme and the college does not enquire into how much they have raised. As acknowledged, they treat the economic inequality as a fact and see donating money as an obvious response to it. The responsibility on the programme organisers then is to highlight other responses to this fact, i.e. using development education in the classrooms.

While the 'charity model' of development and all that goes with it is to be avoided, it is not evident from the report or from personal interaction with participating students that a feeling of superiority permeates any of the interactions between the Irish students and their African hosts. Through the development of the 'AEE Africa Information Booklet' (internal to MIC, 2008) and *The Volunteering Charter* (a shared document of the five teacher education colleges, DICE, 2009), pre-departure training now openly explores these issues. Both documents address respecting the host community through being sensitive to local culture, an awareness of the local languages, and acting in a professional manner at all times. Travelling with the attitude that they are 'here to learn' rather than the narrow-focused 'here to help' is also stressed.

Meeting with representatives from the Gambian Teachers Union (GTU), visits to initial teacher education colleges and even observing their host teachers at work ensures the respect and admiration of the

students for the professionals with whom they are interacting. This in turn causes the students to revaluate the assumptions they may have made about Africans in general. The attitude of a learner is the prevalent one. One student put it well when she stated:

> For the first day we observed the class, saw what the teacher did, how she coped with so many students, what subjects were being taught, etc. I honestly can say I was amazed! The teachers in The Gambia are so resourceful! There is no such thing as Mary I's beloved 'fearas'[1] … don't underestimate the standard of the students! I was amazed with how advanced my class were in maths and English![2]

Pre-departure training also ensures the students consider the power dynamic between them as visiting Western teachers and their African hosts; this is done through various role play activities. Students are also given time to examine their motivations and expectations in participating in the programme. The issues of inequality and superiority is explored further in the debriefing sessions.

FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF PARTNERSHIP WITH AFRICAN COUNTERPARTS

It is an aim of the programme to strengthen the role of our African counterparts; this can be achieved through a number of ways.

Zambia

MIC has always worked primarily through an individual Irish missionary in organising the AEE placement in Choma. This was firstly for ease of communication and secondly as working through official channels would result in MIC students being placed in government schools as opposed to the community schools, which was the preference. This can be tackled in a number of ways, for instance, through increasing direct communication with the schools in Choma either through the post or electronically, bearing in mind however that postage is unreliable and internet access while accessible is again discontinuous, expensive and unavailable within the schools themselves. However, MIC has been developing links with an initial teacher education institute not far from Choma — Charles Lawanga — and it is hoped that a partnership can be developed from this.

The Gambia

In the case of the GTU, communication is easier as they have easy access to electronic communication and there is a designated person within the GTU as a contact. However, increasing the amount of work expected from their side of the partnership would mean that the GTU spend increased time carrying out the additional work, and this would have implications for MIC in terms of remuneration for that person's time. Furthermore, it is refuted that the level of real and genuine engagement between African people and Irish students is distorted by the lecturers accompanying the students or the linking with Irish missionary/NGO representatives. In reality, the presence and involvement of accompanying lecturers merely facilitates the students placement, i.e. organising accommodation and transport, etc., leaving the students free to engage in the teaching and experiences they came to Africa for in the first place. The Irish missionary/NGO representative's interaction with the students is also desirable as it extends their experience in Africa beyond the educational setting to other areas of interest, such as that of healthcare and social outlets.

Each year the students form friendships with those they meet, for example, local student teachers that they work alongside in the schools or members of the community they meet at the church on Sundays. These friendships often result in unique experiences for the students, for example, visiting someone's home or taking part in sporting events.

Respondents generally indicated that as a result of their AEE placement in Africa, they have become more understanding of the necessity of their financial support for development agencies. They have also become more discerning of aid agencies and how money is spent. Highlighted regularly was the comment: 'I prefer to give to those working on the ground.' This can be understood to mean that they prefer to give money to those with whom they have made a personal connection.

DEBRIEFING

The importance of debriefing was referred to in the focus groups where the students were of the opinion that it is often more important than preparation in terms of helping them to share their experiences and engage further in development issues. The debriefing process is a complex one as students usually only have one full day in between returning from their African placement and starting their final college semester. The needs of a robust debriefing process must therefore be

balanced with the demands being placed on the students in their final semester. The aim of the programme is to have debriefing stretch across the semester as a whole and for it to be an ongoing and gradual process with sessions dedicated solely to development education.

There were some suggested improvements:

- **Increasing the length of the placement:** Due to the current timing of the placement (falling between two semesters), it is currently impossible to extend the duration of the placement. However, the possibility of moving the placement outside of semester time, i.e. the summer of second year, has been suggested and is currently being considered.

- **Increasing the number of students, and so the number of schools covered by the programme:** The ultimate aim of the programme is to increase the number of students participating. However, this has to be done in a responsible manner, ensuring that the host schools and communities are able to cope with the number of Irish students. That the number participating will allow for adequate preparation and debriefing and that the member of staff accompanying the students is not overwhelmed.

- **More follow-up after the placement is completed:** It is hoped that follow-up with the host schools after the placement is completed can become a way of increasing the MIC—African host partnership. While this is already carried out in an informal manner by the accompanying lecturer at the end of each placement, it is planned to put this on a more formal footing. This has begun to happen in the Gambian setting where the contact person with the GTU was interviewed to ascertain the benefits and drawbacks of the programme for the host schools. This will be expanded to include the host schools in Zambia.

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[1] An Irish language word widely used in the educational setting to describe equipment brought into the classroom to aid in teaching.

[2] Laura Boland, programme participant in The Gambia 2009.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Fiona Bailey is currently working on a research report targeting primary school teachers and principals examining enterprise education in primary schools. She has previously spent over three years working in development projects with rural indigenous communities in Guatemala and has recently worked on research examining global development issues and social inclusion issues. She also has a familiarity with teacher education and primary school education through her work researching and writing a report exploring the impacts of student teaching practice placements in Africa. Her particular areas of interest include the use of 'partnership' and 'linking' in development co-operation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE DICE PROJECT IS:

Dr Christopher Farrington, Project Coordinator
Eimear McNally, Project Officer
Sean Bracken, DICE Lecturer, Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education
Rosalind Duke, DICE Lecturer, Church of Ireland College of Education
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