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THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND
MAYNOOTH

Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

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An exploration of the teaching and learning opportunities to promote resilience in the primary classroom

Ciara Curran

A Research Dissertation submitted to the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Research in Practice)

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Supervised by: Aoife Titley

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Abstract

This self-study action research investigated: *what are the learning and teaching opportunities available in my first class classroom to promote resilience*? Inspired by the growing interest surrounding resilience, well-being and mental health in children, this study grew out of a personal interest with the aim of introducing resilient approaches to teaching and learning in my classroom.

Interventions were introduced in the form of increased interaction time, *Fun FRIENDS* programme, mindfulness activities and visual art lessons. The self-study action research model of this study allowed me to examine my own practices while working alongside the children as co-researchers. Qualitative data was collected and analysed using a reflective journal, surveys, classroom observations, visual data methods and finally feedback from critical friends.

By engaging in reflective practice, a living theory was developed that demonstrates my core values. Findings include insights into the following:

- Teacher modelling of resilience

- Developing meaningful relationships in the classroom

- Cross-curricular links

- Promoting learner agency

Resilience is developed from 'ordinary rather than extraordinary processes' (Masten, 2001). Considering that 'no one is exempt' (Grotberg, 1995, 5) from adversity, I believe that resilience is an essential life-long skill for young and old that must be nurtured throughout a child's education so that children can effectively cope with the inevitable stresses of daily life. I strongly abide by the influential words of Laurence Stenhouse who argues that "it is teachers who will in the end change the world of the school by understanding it" (1981:104). It advocated my firm belief that teachers are one of the greatest assets of any education system. We, teachers stand on the frontline in the transferral of skills and values and so have a significant role in how knowledge is absorbed by our students.

<u>Abbreviations and Acronyms</u>

BERA	British Education Research Association
CF	Critical Friends
CO	Classroom Observations
CYRM	Child and Youth Resilience Measure
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunities in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DOH	Department of Health
HSE	Health Service Executive
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Services
PQ	Pupil Questionnaire
RJ	Reflective Journal
SPHE	Social, Personal, Health Education
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
VD	Visual Data (pictures)
WHO	World Health Organisation

Table of Contents

List of Figures

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"You can't stop the waves,

But you can learn to surf".

-   Jon Kabat-Zinn (1993:262)

Chapter One: Introduction

Mental health impacts us all despite age, gender or our socio-economic background (Government of Ireland, 2006). One cannot fulfil daily routines without positive mental health and well-being and so it must be consistently promoted and embodied in our lives (HSE, 2007; DES, 2015; Forman, 2015). Research has shown that the majority of young people in Ireland have positive mental health (Oireachtas Library & Research Service, 2012; Department of Education and Science, 2015) however there is still evidence identifying a cause for concern which has prompted my research.

The Clonmel Project identified that an estimated 15% of under five year olds and 18.5% of six to eleven year olds satisfied the criteria for at least one psychological disorder (Martin, Carr, Burke, Carroll & Byrne, 2006). There is limited empirical evidence surrounding children of six and seven years, however *The Adolescent Brain Development Study* claims that by "13 years, 1 in 3 young people in Ireland is likely to have experienced some type of mental disorder" (Cannon, Coughlan, Clarke, Harley & Kelleher, 2013:7). Correspondingly evidence shows that Irish adolescents (15.4%) display higher rates of disorder. This is comparable to British (9.6%) and American (11.2%) adolescents of a similar age (Cannon et al., 2013). Taking into account that ''no one is exempt'' (Grotberg, 1995: 5) from adversity, resilience is a vital, life-long skill that must be promoted so children can effectively "bounce back" from the complexities society presents such as peer and academic pressure, cyber bullying and body image pressures.

1.2 Rationale

The central aim of this research was to explore the learning and teaching opportunities that can be created to promote the resilience of the six and seven year old children I teach. Upon embarking on this course, we were encouraged to reflect on our teaching practices. As I undertook this, a concern came to the forefront of my thinking making me question my current practice. First and foremost, I was concerned that I was not teaching the children to be resilient in their lives or their learning. I have witnessed a helplessness, a fear of making mistakes and a lack of self-esteem amongst the children in my class. I began to question if I was nurturing or hindering their levels of resilience with my practice?

The word resilience has been widely researched giving different meanings to various organisations. The original meaning is "to bounce or spring back" (Simpson, 2005) from adverse experiences and to succeed despite adversity. Considering that "no one is exempt" (Grotberg, 1995:5) from adversity, I believe that resilience is an essential life-long skill for young and old that must be nurtured throughout a child's education so that children can effectively cope with the inevitable stresses of daily life.

Last year, following a recommendation from a NEPS psychologist, two learning support teachers trained as *Fun FRIENDS* facilitators in my school. I was interested in undertaking this training as First Class are the optimum age for this intervention and being in the classroom I would have first-hand experience of implementing this programme. I registered for a training day with The Psychology Tree. I left the training somewhat shocked by the simplicity of what the programme entailed and was embarrassed that some elements were missing from my classroom. Returning to school, I discussed with critical

friends the importance of relationships and how we make others feel when they are in our company. This forced me to reflect on my practice and my values. I began to reflect on my own experiences in school and my experiences as a teacher and how these experiences have moulded my values both professionally and personally. I wanted to be living my values more closely in my teaching. Action research concerns building connections between what you value and what you know, in order to justify your actions (Mills & Butroyd, 2014).

1.3 My Values

Initially, the idea of locating core values was a personal strain. I struggled to fully engage with reflection and appreciate its significance to my journey. My reflective journal became a forum where I constantly chastised and belittled much of the work I had undertaken, and often unfairly. Using our own experiences as a resource for self-study requires openness and vulnerability (Samaras & Freese, 2009). Transcending through this research I realised that I could not separate myself from this work, all areas of my life were arguably intertwined and this research undoubtedly affected all aspects of me, both personally and professionally. By looking back and reflecting upon our own beginnings, we can begin to explore our values and beliefs. In doing so, I gained a clear focus on my values of: care, compassion, relationships and knowledge. The work of Nel Noddings and her exploration of ethics of care and its relationship echo my values and the impact both I, and the atmosphere I create have on the children I teach. Noddings was deeply influenced by her own experience of being taught. Flinders (2001:10) discusses the central role school played in Noddings life and how "her early experiences with caring teachers contributed to a life-

long interest in student-teacher relations". Personally, my early school years depicted the negative impact a teachers' language, words or even utterances can have on a child. Fortunately, the latter experiences included influential teachers who instilled a passion for teaching and experiences in me.

I wholeheartedly believe that learning should be shared in the classroom so that everyone is equally involved as active agents of their learning and that the children should have some autonomy in their own learning. Paramount to this is an environment where students and teachers respect one another, where there is a sense of belonging, where there is open communication between the children and the teacher; where pupils and teachers talk with one another and not at one another in a non-didactic manner. There must be mutual respect for one another's experiences, knowledge, values, needs, weaknesses and capabilities.

1.4 Purpose of this research

The focus of my research study is an attempt to create an active, welcoming learning environment where the students I teach will become autonomous in their learning. I sincerely hope to learn a new role as a facilitator of this process. I aim to contribute to increasing their resilience whilst nurturing their well-being and ensuring learning and school is a positive, holistic experience. Schools and particularly I feel my teaching; have traditionally concentrated on teaching tools for academic achievement rather than life-long skills that enhance positive mental health, well-being and resilience (O'Rourke, 2015).

1.5 Thesis Structure

Chapter One: outlines an introduction to my research and highlights my rationale for undertaking this research topic.

Chapter Two: exploration of topics related to resilience. Initially, reviewing both national and international literature; the correlation between positive mental health and well-being and both the benefits of early interventions and the available interventions will be investigated. An examination of the role of the parents, schools and teachers in the promotion of resilience is outlined leading to the significant impact protective and risk factors bear on our mental health and well-being. Visual art opportunities, as a subject for cross curricular links are revealed and finally assessment and differentiation in the primary school is discussed.

Chapter Three: methodological approach and the research design of the study. Self-study action research, as a methodology is defined and justification for the various data collection instruments are outlined during the various action research cycles.

Chapter Four: analysis of findings. The most relevant findings are outlined and discussed in relation to germane literature. Findings include:

1. Teacher modelling of resilience

2. Developing meaningful relationships in the primary school classroom

3. Cross-curricular links

4. Promoting learner agency

Chapter Five: conclusion of insights from the study and makes recommendations about practice issues and further research in the area. It concludes with a personal reflection.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This self-study action research project aims to assess the research question: *What are the teaching and learning opportunities available to promote resilience in my first class classroom?* The following review examines some of the literature surrounding resilience and its associations with positive mental health and well-being. The literature is presented by exploring key topics throughout. The concepts of resilience are defined initially, highlighting the benefits of early intervention along with different resilience building strategies, including the impact of outside influences and experiences. The use of a subject based approach (visual art) will be discussed. The significant role of parents, schools and teachers in promoting children's mental health and resilience are outlined including a brief discussion around assessment and differentiation and living theory.

2.2 My Values: Care, Compassion, Relationships and Knowledge

A teachers' values encapsulate their philosophy of teaching and learning and essentially why and how we act as teachers (Sullivan, Glenn, Roche & McDonagh, 2016). It relates to the "assumptions we hold about knowledge and our relationships with others" (Sullivan et al., 2016:12). Our epistemological values epitomise how we understand knowledge whilst our ontological values include how we see ourselves in relation with and to others. Additionally, our educational values correspond to our beliefs around education and

guiding principles that frame our teaching and learning underpinning our daily practice (Glenn, Roche, McDonagh & Sulliven, 2017).

Ontological values have implications for how I see myself in relation to the children I teach, the reality of if I am modelling resilience in my practice. Valuing the uniqueness of the children, and caring for the child and their best interests and needs are at the forefront of my values. The Revised Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999:14) was designed to "nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life-spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical". My work as a teacher is therefore rooted in enhancing a child's uniqueness through providing each child with a learning experience where the child is valued and cared for. Ginsburg (2014) states care is at the core of resilience building in individuals. Noddings (1995) believes that children will not achieve any degree of success unless they believe they are cared for and can additionally care for others. Compassion for both myself and others is another core value. Relating to pupils' educational abilities and helping to create a curriculum that works for all equally is of prime importance to me. Compassion acts as a driving force in my work, ensuring that pupils have opportunities not previously afforded to them. I seek to encourage pupils to have compassion for one another by teaching them to listen to and value each other's opinions both inside and outside of the classroom. Relationships and the power a positive dynamic may have on a child is one value that I both hold and endeavour to instil in my pupils. It is echoed above consistently as without a trusting, caring and a mutual respect for one another we could not have any of the above. From a professional aspect, I strive to model perseverance and determination in the classroom by encouraging students to learn difficult and complex material or even simply continue to attempt new tasks with the

rationale that with practise, we can achieve and knowing that I will scaffold each experience where necessary.

My epistemological values accentuate how I comprehend knowledge and how I come to acquire and create knowledge. Knowledge and how we utilise it is paramount when analysing my values both from a personal and professional level. I aspire to instil a love of learning and a commitment to fully engage in the pursuit of knowledge from a young age whilst motivating a mindset and environment of resilient learners who do not give up but flourish during difficult tasks. This correlates to me as the focus of this self-study action research, the importance of thinking critically, questioning and challenging knowledge and investigating "how do I improve my practice?" (Whitehead, 1989). A large quantity of my educational and epistemological values is profoundly anchored in the philosophy of Fredrich Froebel.

Key theorists such as Fredrich Froebel and John Dewey remain pertinent today, aligning strongly with my Froebelian teacher training background. Froebel perceived children as active, curious and creative learners. Accordingly, it was also considered that children learn best through self-activity, rich first-hand experience, problem-solving, play and talk (Tovey, n.d.). Dewey believed that education should be based on the principle of learning through doing and experience. Dewey believed experience is an interpretive, meaning-making process which occurs through perception (Dewey, 1910). He advocated that students thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with the curriculum and all students should have the opportunity to take part in their own learning. Quite simply, giving the children a sense of autonomy in their learning. Dewey also highlighted how the teacher should be a partner and a guide in the learning process.

As a teacher, I contain the ability to create a positive learning environment where students feel respected and valued. Consistent and somewhat predictable classrooms, managed by a caring teacher, can provide the security required for children to learn (Jordan and LeMetais, 2000). Regular explicit praise, encouragement and positive classroom management can contribute to a positive sense of self and well-being (Webster-Stratton, 1999). By accommodating children with the time to listen to their thoughts and opinions, feelings of self-worth are reinforced. Positive student-teacher relationships can have significant impact on students' levels of resilience. This evidence gave me the impetus to discover the positive implications which could be made by undertaking new approaches in my own classroom. However, prior to doing so an examination of the current situation within the Irish context was imperative.

2.3 Irish Context

Enrolment figures for the 2018-2019 academic year indicated there were 549,679 pupils enrolled in 3,111 mainstream primary schools being taught by 22,430 mainstream teachers in Ireland (September 30th enrolment figures, cited in DES, 2018). Literature suggests that teachers of four to seven year old children are at an optimum position to promote children's resilience (Eron, 1990). Literature further states that interventions with older pupils are less effective (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990). This is because a child's social and emotional functioning starts to align around eight years, at which point it is possible to predict future behaviour and mental health (Huesman & Guerra, 1997). Worryingly, interventions with eight year olds and older may be deemed as ineffective as behavioural and academic issues manifest (Clarke & Barry, 2010). Considering this, my class level are at the optimum age for an effective intervention. Consequently, research suggests that

more specific attention is given to early school years and that a "long term developmental" approach is undertaken (Clarke & Barry, 2010:12).

2.3.1 Mental Health Issues in Ireland

The Clonmel Project identified that an estimated 15% of under five year olds and 18.5% of six to eleven year olds satisfied the criteria for at least one psychological disorder (Kerin, 2014). The *My World Survey* (2012) of 6,085 twelve to nineteen year olds and 8,221 seventeen to twenty-five year olds, discovered almost 30% self-reported degrees of depression and anxiety (Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012). *Headstrong* (2012:86) indicates similar findings with mild to moderate depression (22%) and anxiety (21%) being experienced by adolescents (Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012). Although there is a moderate degree of mental health literacy, there are misconceptions regarding its prevalence (HSE, 2007). Educating Irish society on what constitutes and what promotes mental health and resilience will increase awareness and improve attitudes (HSE, 2007). Both teachers and schools have a responsibility to develop a clear understanding of the prevalence and nature of mental health issues if they are to affect positive change (Weare, 2006).

2.4 Positive Mental Health and Well-being

The World Health Organisation [WHO] defines health as a "state of complex physical, mental and social well-being" (WHO, 2016). *A Vision for Change* interprets that good mental health is a fundamental element of health and well-being which enables people to fulfil their capabilities (Government of Ireland, 2006; Forman, 2015). Mental health comprises our opinions on how we think we feel about ourselves and how we regard different interactions, including the means in which we manage unforeseen stress. (HSE,

2007). Our "emotional resilience" is nurtured ensuring we are capable of living fulfilled lives whilst regarding "our and others dignity and worth" (HSE, 2007:ii). Respectively mental well-being encompasses how efficiently we function during daily living. (HSE, 2007). It correlates with mental health in that mental well-being allows us to manage stress and cope with challenges while sustaining positive relationships (HSE, 2007). The DES guidelines *Well-being in Primary Schools* recognise the connection between positive mental health and well-being (2015). Mental Health Ireland (2016) depicts that positive mental health recognises well-being by acknowledging strengths, empowering people to deal with daily stressors, while working to improve the community, an opinion shared by the WHO (2016). Positive mental health and well-being are critical to daily life (HSE, 2007) and for leading rewarding lives (DES, 2015). A focused approach to mental health generates "people's sense of control, resilience and the ability to cope with life's challenges" (DES, 2015:10).

A great deal of current research has focused on teacher resilience in order to understand teachers' job satisfaction and motivation (Kitching, Morgan & O'Leary, 2009) and teacher burnout and stress (Howard & Johnson, 2004). In a study by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation [INTO] on *Workload, Stress and Resilience of Primary Teachers*, the report found that about 90% of the teachers took the view that "teaching had become more/much more stressful, demanding, challenging and hectic" (2015:12). Remarkably and worth noting, when referring to the positive aspects of teaching around half the teachers thought their work had remained about the same with sentiments of "being satisfying, enjoyable, rewarding and worthwhile" (INTO, 2015:16). Furthermore, Professor Katherine Weare reviewed available literature on teacher stress and concluded that 80% of teachers' state that they experience work related stress, anxiety and depression while 50% report being

"severely stressed" (2015:6). Evidence suggests that pupils of teachers with lower stress are more likely to perform better academically than their peers whose teachers are not able to sustain their commitment (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington & Gu, 2007). This finding is in line with outcomes of several studies that have shown that a positive classroom atmosphere not only influences social and emotional development of children but also enhances achievement.

2.5 Resilience

There is a multifaceted debate surrounding the complex nature of resilience amongst researchers (Nolan, Taket & Stagnitti, 2014; Robertson & Cooper, 2013). This complex phenomenon has aroused much interest duly because it effects a person's whole development (Nolan, Taket & Stagnitti, 2014). The word resilience has been widely researched giving different meanings to various people and is perceived and measured according to the theoretical lens being applied (Ginsburg, 2014). The original meaning is "to bounce or spring back" (Simpson, 2005) from adverse experiences and succeed despite adversity. A significant amount of literature focuses on the impact of acute trauma such as, illness, bereavement, social conflict and socioeconomic disadvantage on resilience; however, there is a minority of research which that acknowledges that daily stresses impact an individual's resilience. Contrary to this, Newman (2004) considers that what appear to be trivial mundane everyday problems impact a child's resilience more than acute events. Resilience is developed from "ordinary rather than extraordinary processes" (Masten, 2001: 227).

Tronick and DiCorica (2015) effectively use the analogy of a marathon runner to explain their *Everyday Stress Resilience Hypothesis.* A person prepares for an acute event i.e. the marathon, following several smaller events that tested their capabilities. Insulating pupils against inevitable challenges by increasing their protective factors is more effective than eradicating all of their adversity's threats because the latter is impossible (Newman, 2004; Grotberg, 1995). Providing caring relationships, supportive environments and resilience's language, namely, *I have* (children's external resources)*, I am* (their internal capabilities) and *I can* (their social abilities) (Grotberg, 1995) are paramount for promoting resilience. Teachers must be "well-informed of its complexities" (Briggs et al., 2002) if the multiple resilience-building opportunities are to be exploited (Tronik, 2006). A whole- school approach that comprehends and encourages resilience benefit "all who learn and work there" and is pivotal for effective early intervention.

In recent years researchers have begun to examine resilience as having various aspects, such as; academic, behavioural and social and emotional. Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1990) suggested the academic resilience as the heightened likelihood of success in school despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences. In fact, resilient pupils manage to sustain high levels of achievement, motivation and performance despite the presence of stressful events and conditions indicating motivation may be central to the development of educational resilience. For me, resilience embodies strength and self-believe to persevere, learn and adapt during testing times. I believe that if the foundations are established from an early age (i.e. the skills are taught), children will have a strong mindset, positive mental health and a positive outlook which can be nurtured as the child develops in the future.

2.6 Early Intervention

An array of literature emphasises the significance of the early childhood years for promoting resilience (Masten & Coatsworth 1998). Heckman (2006) acknowledges that early investment is essential because adult intervention is economically inefficient (Oireachtas Library & Research Service, 2012). This report concludes that despite mental health programmes being most beneficial to pupils ages two to seven, the majority focus on older children (Oireachtas Library & Research Service, 2012). A child's social and emotional functioning begins to align around eight years of age by which time it is possible to foresee future behaviour and mental health (Huesman & Guerra, 1997). As a result, early intervention is paramount for reducing or possibly eliminating challenging behaviour (Domitrovich, Bradshaw, Poduska, Hoagwood, Buckley & Olin 2008). An investment in our children's mental health now is of prime importance as not doing so is a violation of their rights and makes no economic sense (DOH, 2009).

In light of the above, there has been an emerging policy response with the publication of the *Well-Being in Primary School: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion* (2015) published collectively by the DES, HSE and DOH. It highlights the role of teachers and schools in fostering and promoting a positive sense of health and well-being. Government investment is significant and as a result in a growing phenomenon surrounding mental health, well-being and resilience, publications like the above, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (2014) and an *Action Plan for Education (2016-2019)* and *(2019-2021),* we have begun to acknowledge the problem, but to what extent? Unfortunately training for such programmes are not freely available for all schools so I believe these problems remain pertinent today.

2.7 Interventions

2.7.1 Resilience and Well-being Programmes

The Oireachtas Library and Research Service (2012) states that school is an effective environment for implementing resilience programmes from an early age. An inclusive, whole school approach is encouraged as it includes students, parents and staff over a sustained timeframe (DES, 2015, Weare, 2015). These whole school programmes positively impact staff's well-being by reducing stress and improving performances (Weare, 2015), and benefits a child's educational attainment, social skills and problem-solving while decreasing depression, anxiety and stress (WHO, 2004; Weare, 2005). In addition, these programmes correlate with various strands of the Social, Personal, Health and Education [SPHE] curriculum (Clarke & Barry, 2010) such as: self-identity, taking care of my body, growing and changing, making decisions and relating to others.

Examples of evidence based intervention programmes in the field of well-being include *Fun FRIENDS, The Incredible Years, Weaving Well-Being and Zippy's Friends.* Payton et al. (2008) observes that when these programmes are administered by teachers, children's academic performances improve dramatically. Furthermore, strategies from these programmes should be integrated into the school day and not limited to explicit lessons to reinforce its learning objective (Clarke & Barry, 2010). Various programmes are available across primary and secondary level school however programmes for younger children is limited. My school is in its second year of completing the *Fun FRIENDS* programmes with selected classes throughout the school.

2.7.2 Fun FRIENDS

The *FRIENDS* programme created by Dr. Paula Barrett is Australian developed and involves cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) based programs, endorsed by the World Health Organisation, as best practice for the prevention and treatment of anxiety and depression, promoting resilience in families, schools and communities. (Friends Resilience, 2017). There are four *FRIENDS* programmes (Friends Programmes, 2016) consisting of similar theoretical principles (Ruttledge, 2014) suitable for four year olds up to adulthood. I will focus primarily on the *Fun FRIENDS* programme (2007) for four to seven year olds as this is relevant to the context my school. The framework for the programme is based on the *FRIENDS'* acronym meaning: friends; relax; I can try; encourage; nurture; don't forget to be brave and stay happy (Appendix G). The programme is administered over twelve sessions and must follow the *FRIENDS* programmes sequence and structure (Barrett, 2012). It incorporates a "multi-system approach by actively involving children, families, teachers and schools" (Pahl & Barrett, 2007:84-85) while also making connections between thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Routledge, 2014). The programme comprehends that most children experience stress at some point and the significance of providing these children with the necessary skills to conquer these challenges namely "how to be brave, problem-solving, positive thinking, relaxation, self-soothing" (Pahl & Barrett, 2007:85). Children who attain these skills have good social and emotional development and perform better educationally and socially (Pahl & Barrett, 2007).

2.7.3 Positive Self-talk and Growth Mindset

Binet (1909-1973) recognised that education has the power to change children's intelligence (Dweck, 2007). Pupils' self-talk is influenced by what significant others namely parents, teachers and friends say (Burnett, 1996). A teacher is of critical importance when moulding pupils' self-talk (Dohrn & Bryan, 1994) because praise and encouragement for effort aids pupils in replacing negative thoughts with positive ones by generating "constructive emotions and behaviours" (Solley & Payne, 1992:2). A child's belief in their own intelligence is crucial because some have a fixed mindset while others have a growth mindset (Dweck, 2010).

Pupils with a fixed mindset constantly need to appear intelligent; they fear making mistakes and do not value correcting mistakes (Dweck, 2010). Alternatively, growth mindset children favour learning as the ultimate goal and approach learning obstacles with a strong work ethic whilst embracing mistakes and considering them as learning opportunities (Dweck, 2010). In comparison to their peers, they have heightened motivation and resilience compared to their fixed mindset peers (Dweck, 2010) with the latter appreciating that their capabilities are correlated to their effort and learning. A teachers' conscious awareness of their own mindset is essential because it influences students' mindsets (Dweck, 2010). Likewise, a teachers' awareness of praise for intelligence reinforces a fixed mindset while praise for effort reinforces a growth mindset (Dweck, 2010). Focusing on the latter empowers pupils so that they can be autonomous of their own achievements (Dweck, 2007). Ricci (2013) suggests a means of embedding a growth mindset in classrooms and on a whole-school level emphasising the importance of caring relationships in supportive environments with a growth mindset rich curriculum

(Dweck, 2012). Dweck's concept of a growth mindset (2010), positive self-talk for kids (Helmsetter, 2016) and visual art as a subject based approach all complement each other and work to strengthen a child's resilience.

2.7.4 Mindfulness

The subject of mindfulness has increased in recent years extending in popularity into the educational domain (Hooker & Fodor, 2008) with literature acknowledging the importance of addressing pupils holistically (Yager, 2011). Mindfulness is "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally to the unfolding of experiences moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003:145). It benefits both teachers and children (Jennings, 2015; Greenberg & Harris, 2012) because its holistic potential and education implications improve children's concentration, memory, and self-acceptance (Burke, 2009) while improving teachers' awareness of and ability to manage their own emotions; fosters a positive learning environment; and improves relationships (Jennings, 2015). Mindfulness is deceivingly simple in reducing life's stresses (Germer, 2004) with children and teachers benefitting from moments of quiet and stillness, useful stress management skills (Lantieri, 2008). Thomas (2003, cited in Lantieri, 2008:44) advocates "Heart and soul time", a designated quiet time, and recognises potential benefits for everyone. In explicitly teaching children to self-regulate, children are better positioned for optimal learning (Goleman, 2004). Self-regulation, a component of resilience, is an invaluable skill (Taket, Nolan & Stagnitti, 2014) and is essential for school and life's success (Galinksy, 2010 cited in Florez, 2011). Mindfulness' success depends on the teacher implementing it because children are more likely to embody it when the teacher does (Jenkin, 2014).

2.7.5 Visual Art

There is limited research which specifically explores the resilience benefits of visual art interventions (Coholic, 2011) however, there is a host of 'arts for health' research articles which mention resilience and can be related to this concept. In the United Kingdom, it is only in recent years that the impact of art on resilience has become the focus of study (Macpherson, Hart & Heaver, 2012; Winter, Buttery, Gahan, Taylor, Gagnon, Hart & Macpherson, 2012). Up to this point, research which explores the resilience benefits of visual art interventions is confined (Coholic, 2011). Australian literature considers art as a cost-effective medium in combatting mental illness and promoting mental health and wellbeing through its identification of mental health (coping mechanisms, self-confidence and esteem), physical and mental activity through participation and social connection (McQueen-Thomson & Ziguras, 2002). Within the Irish PSC, visual art aims to provide for sensory, emotional, intellectual and creative enrichment and to contribute to the child's holistic development contributing to a sense of well-being amongst learners (NCCA, 1999). *The Arts in Education Charter* published by the DES and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht highlight the contribution of visual arts to education stating that arts education 'makes a vital contribution to the development of a range of intelligences' (2012: 11).

Research studies show that participation in a group visual arts activity can stimulate a sense of belonging (Skudrzyk, Zera, McMahon, Schmidt, Boyne & Spannaus, 2009; Parr, 2006), foster new social interactions (Askins & Pain, 2011) and mirror pro-social experience lacked in a wider community setting (Cumming & Visser, 2009; Slayton, 2012). Conversely, some studies show participants experiences of art interventions are not always positive. For example, some participants found that self-evaluating their own

artwork was unfavourable in comparison to others (Parr, 2006). Parr (2006) also recognises that often feelings of belonging within art groups were partial and feelings of otherness and difference can be exacerbated in these settings. Springham (2008) highlights that if administered in the wrong context or by unqualified practitioners it is possible for art interventions to cause serious harm to those who have mental health complexities. According to Coholic (2009) the most successful art for resilience programmes tend to combine more than one strategy for example co-ordinating art with mindfulness techniques. However, there is also evidence which suggests that any participation in arts activity is likely to enhance overall well-being (Clift, Camic, Chapman, Clayton, Daykin, Eades & White, 2009; Ings, Crane & Cameron, 2012; Secker, Hacking, Spandler, Kent & Shenton, 2007, Staricoff, 2004).

2.8 Protective and Risk Factors

2.8.1 Protective and Risk Factors in Mental Health

Protective and risk factors have an impact on our mental health and well-being. Although we cannot eliminate all risks, however we can focus on enhancing protective factors and reducing risks where possible. The promotion of protective factors is critical to resilience building (DES, HSE, DOH, 2015). A mental health protective factor can be considered as an internal condition, such as temperament or personality or an external condition, such as environment that guards positive mental health, increases your ability to cope in adversity and minimises the possibility of developing a mental health problem or disorder (DES, HSE, DOH, 2013). Essentially, protective factors build and enhance resilience in children and can be perceived as a strong indicator of positive outcomes for children in comparison

to exposure of risk factors (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). Alternatively, a mental risk factor can be described as either an internal or external condition that heightens the possibility of a mental health problem. Within the school environment mental health protective factors applicable to children include the following:

Protective Factors	Risk Factors
• positive relationships with peers and teachers	• disengagement, absenteeism, isolation and alienation
• opportunities for skills development and achievement	• bullying and relationship difficulties
• recognition of contribution, effort and achievement	• low academic achievement
• sense of security	• violence/aggression
• a positive school climate	• learning disabilities
• a sense of belonging and connectedness in schools	• cultural differences
• effective school policies related to mental health	• low self-esteem
• positive classroom management strategies	• stressful life events
• fostering expectations of high achievement and providing opportunities for success	• difficult school transitions
• opportunities for social and emotional learning and the development of problem solving skills	• poor connection between family and school

Figure 1: Protective and Risk Factors

2.8.2 Parents' Role in Promoting Resilience

According to both national and international research, positive parenting in a supportive setting impacts positively on vital stages of development including children's future outcomes and well-being (Department of Children & Youth Affairs, 2014). Brooks (2006) states that the family environment offers the greatest protective factor nurturing children's resilience. A large amount of literature emphasises the significant role of parents (Spookane et al., 2014 cited in Hoffman, Marvin, Cooper & Powell, 2006; Tronick & DiCorcia, 2015; Bowlby, 1988 cited in Gilligan, 2000).

2.8.3 Schools' Role in Promoting Resilience

Schools are effective for enhancing pupils' resilience (DES, 2015; Clarke & Barry, 2010) by increasing their protective factors (DES, 2015). Although these environments are conducive to promoting resilience's protective factors (Wang & Gordon, 2012) measures must be in place to benefit both staff and children (DES, 2015). Schools must cultivate a culture for staff and pupils where "it is acceptable to acknowledge difficulties and ask for help" (Weare, 2015:5). School staff's resilience is crucial as they act as "brokers of resources" to children (Masten et al., 2008:8). An understanding of resilience is important in order to label characteristics that promote pupils' resilience in a supportive environment (Thielmann, (n.d.) cited in Russo & Boman, 2007). Identifying daily opportunities that promote "intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and persistence in the face of failure" is essential (Masten, Herbers, Cutuli & Lafavor, 2008:5). Schools must provide children with protective factors regarding positive peer connections and important relationships with grown-ups who are not their parents coupled with socio-emotional learning (Morrison & Allen 2007). Essentially, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Appendix C) must be adhered to

if schools are to supply an "oasis of safety and …a platform for growth" (O'Dougherty et al., 2005 cited in Cefai & Camilleri, 2015:148). The first four levels of needs are considered deficiency, while the highest level is regarded as growth (McLeod, 2007). A child's educational attainment increases when they are content, have self-belief and have teacher and school support (Weare, 2006). A sense of belonging is vital, without it, disengagement from learning can manifest increasing anxiety and depression (Routledge, 2014; Weare, 2015). Developing this connectedness is associated with decreased emotional distress (Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, Harris, Jones, Tabor, Beuhring, Sieving, Shew, Ireland, Bearinger & Udry, 1997). Adopting a holistic view of education that promotes a sense of belonging, competence and autonomy for all children's potential is important (Jackson, 1997) and must be embedded in the whole-school through curriculum, environment and school culture (DES, 2015; Weare, 2015).

Intrinsic (self) and extrinsic (relationships, secure attachment, support network) factors are core components of resilience. Another example of key components necessary to a young person's well-being and personal development is *The Resilience Framework* (adapted from Hart & Blincow, 2007). It utilises Maslow's hierarchy to propose that basic needs must be met before progression to the next stage (Figure 2). The framework identifies five areas of a young person's life that need to be addressed in order to support the building of resilience. These are Basics, Belonging, Learning, Coping and Core Self (Taylor, Hart & Hove Park School, 2017). In summary, these refer to the capacity of an individual to feel safe, commit to a group and belong, develop their learning, cope with difficult feelings, help others, develop self-understanding, and foster a sense of identity. Within each of the

five compartments is a selection of evidence based ideas to draw on when trying to make a resilient move with a child.

Resilience Framework (Children & Young People) Oct 2012 – adapted from Hart & Blincow 2007 www.boingboing.org.uk				
BASICS	BELONGING	LEARNING	COPING	CORE SELF
Good enough housing	Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong	Make school/college life work as well as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope
	Help child/YP understand their place in the world		Being brave	
Enough money to live	Tap into good influences	Engage mentors for children/YP	Solving problems	Support the child/YP to understand other people's feelings
Being safe	Keep relationships going			
	The more healthy relationships the better	Map out career or life plan	Putting on rose-tinted glasses	Help the child/YP to know her/himself
Access & transport	Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope		Fostering their interests	
Healthy diet	Get together people the child/YP can count on	Help the child/YP to organise her/himself	Calming down & self-soothing	Help the child/YP take responsibility for her/himself
Exercise and fresh air	Responsibilities & obligations			
	Focus on good times and places	Highlight achievements	Remember tomorrow is another day	Foster their talents
Enough sleep	Make sense of where child/YP has come from		Lean on others when necessary	
Play & leisure	Predict a good experience of someone or something new	Develop life skills		There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them
Being free from prejudice & discrimination	Make friends and mix with other children/YPs		Have a laugh	
NOBLE TRUTHS				
ACCEPTING	CONSERVING	COMMITMENT		ENLISTING

Figure 2: The Resilience Framework

2.8.3 Teachers' Role in Promoting Resilience

The *My World Study* carried out by the Psychology Department in UCD acknowledged the importance of "one good adult" in a young person's life (Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012). The presence of one good adult is a key indicator of how well a young person is connected, self-confident, future looking and how best they can cope with problems. Teachers are regularly those adults. Research advocates their role in promoting students' resilience

(Benard, 1991) regarding social support and caring relationships (Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994). Dooley and Fitzgerald (2012) suggest that teachers undervalue their contribution to a child's resilience; however, other researchers argue that teachers can be perceived as the most significant role model, after families, for resilient children (Werner and Smith, 1988). On the encouraging side, even a teacher's brief positive relationship that actively increases pupils' confidence can influence their "trajectory of development" (Gilligan, 2000:39). A teacher has a duty to understand resilience so they can effectively promote it in children.

Resilience derives from "ordinary magic" which presents teachers with multiple opportunities to promote its protective factors (Masten, 2001:227; Gilligan, 2000). Seemingly insignificant things like smiles, giving attention, acknowledging achievements within daily routines recognises that small things and daily interactions are important (Johnson, 2008; Downey, 2008). These organic opportunities namely, supportive relationships in predictable classrooms, may benefit pupils more than organised therapy (Gilligan, 2000) . Teachers can be depicted as shields protecting children (Schorr, 1997) by fostering their well-being, sense of belonging, self-belief and ultimately their resilience (Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012). These supportive adults' interactions are grounded in "understanding…availability…respect and being a good role model" (Laursen & Birmingham, 2003:242). These daily interactions mean that teachers are critically positioned to promote children's resilience (Clarke & Barry, 2010) echoing the Reggio Emilia philosophy where the teacher's role is to scaffold, observe and guide the children.

Effective classrooms promote a sense of belonging through predictability and consistency (Gilligan, 2000) resulting in caring teacher-pupil relationships (Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Lewis & Schaps, 2006; Weare, 2015). Interactions with children should embody a sensitive nature within a respectful culture of high expectations so relationships flourish (Brooks, 2006). Expressing high expectations to all transmits an important message that everyone can achieve and this improves educational attainment and behaviour (Benard, 1991). Secure relationships and success in completing interesting tasks promotes self-esteem, a component of resilience (Rutter, 1990 cited in Gilligan, 2000) therefore, acknowledging children's strengths and achievements is paramount (Wang et al., 2012).

2.9 Implementation of programmes in the primary school

In 2017 the Minister for Education and Skills as part of the *Action Plan for Education* announced that all teachers in DEIS school would have access to *The Incredible Years' Teacher Classroom Management Programme* and *The Friends programme* over the next three years in order to support student well-being in all schools. The *Incredible Years Programme* is an evidence-based programme for teachers, working alongside parents, which aims to minimise behavioural difficulties and increase the social and emotional development of children in the primary school. Currently, *The Friends Programmes* over a five year period have reached 690 teachers in 267 DEIS primary schools and to 2,479 teachers in 982 non-DEIS primary school. Additionally, 200 teachers in 80 DEIS post primary schools and 690 teachers in 283 non-DEIS post primary schools (DES, 2017). Since engaging with the literature, it is apparent that there is an array of programmes on offer, however, it is worth noting that the government does not offer training to all schools and non DEIS schools must pay for training. A stark statistic provided by The Oireachtas

Library and Research Service (2012:2) depicts the cost of poor mental health in Ireland was estimated to be €3BN in 2006. This reiterates the DOH (2009) that investing now in children's mental health makes more economic sense than later. Although we are catering to some children, we are not to all. Moreover, as previously mentioned the significance of everyday stressors in a child's life can be deemed more detrimental than acute adversity in resilience building and thus, I believe programmes like the above should be rolled out to schools across the country.

2.10 Assessment

Assessment in education involves gathering, interpreting and utilising information concerning the processes and outcomes of learning (NCCA, 2007). "It takes different forms and can be used in a variety of ways…" (NCCA, 2007:7). It can be both summative (Assessment of Learning- AoL) and formative (Assessment for Learning- AfL) and can take the mode of teacher observations, teacher-designed tasks and curriculum profiles (NCCA, 1999). Within assessment for learning pupils exercise agency and autonomy (Black & William, 2001), whereas in formative assessment pupils can be passive recipients of teachers' decisions and actions. AfL contributes to both making and understanding knowledge. Children are more active agents in their learning as a result (NCCA, 1999) that learning is more visible (Hattie, 2012) in the classroom. AfL models what excellence looks like and provides a platform of how work can be developed to reach that level. This is achieved by scaffolding reflection, a focused approach to learning, effective questioning and formative feedback (NCCA, 2007). Black and William (2001) argue that if teachers use formative assessments as part of their teaching, students can learn at approximately double the rate. Research conducted by Hattie (2008) also shows that using formative assessment in the classroom brings about real-world differences in learner achievement.

Carol Dweck (2006) argues that high-achieving learners avoid taking risks because they are afraid of making mistakes. Consequently, this reduces the amount they can learn. However, utilising an AFL approach to learning can help to create a supportive and cooperative classroom where everyone should feel able to try new things without worrying that they might fail. This resembles Dweck's (1999) idea of academic resilience as the attitude of not giving up in challenging situations because of the belief that effort and challenge lead to success more than ability.

Summative assessment focuses on both medium and long-term assessment at the end of a given period of time after teaching and learning have taken place and generally involves teacher designed tasks, tests and standardised tests (INTO, 2010). All schools are required to administer standardised tests in English and Mathematics to their student twice during their primary school years (NCCA, 2007). Pollard and Tann identified that assessment can be both "enormously constructive" and "enormously destructive in teaching and learning" (1989: 52). A report of schools in Switzerland identifies that "a number of pupils…are content to get by…" (Black & William, 2001:3). When a culture of rewards and class rankings is evident, students only wish to obtain the best marks or rewards and are not focused on improving their actual learning. Are we over emphasising rewards leading to a willingness to avoid tasks that are more complex for fear of making a mistake and crumbling their self-esteem? This again echoes Carol Dweck's idea of a fixed mindset (2006). Could we differentiate tasks so every child experiences some success whilst also challenging them further? Assessment should focus on the learning process, allowing all children to witness successful and build upon this nurturing their resilience.

2.11 Differentiation

A protective factor commonly mentioned in literature surrounding resilience involves providing opportunities for participation, (Benard, 1991) in other words: differentiation. Heacox (2002) describes differentiation as changing the pace, level, or kind of instruction you provide in response to individual learners' needs, styles or interests whilst Willis and Mann (2000) identify that differentiation is a teaching philosophy based on the premise that teachers should adapt instruction to student differences. There are varying opinions that differentiation should correspond to the level of the curriculum content to the differing capabilities of the children. Alternatively, it is argued that differentiation should provide alternative means to enable a child to reach their full potential (Primary Professional Development Service, n.d.). Teachers can assist children in these areas by facilitating a range of differentiated learning experiences to suit children's individual needs. Children enter the classroom with varying degrees of resilience similar to varying degrees of reading and numeration.

Both the model of Multiple Intelligences developed by Howard Gardner (1993) and Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive processes can be integrated into the curriculum as a differentiation tool (Appendix D & F). Gardner strongly refuted the theory that intelligence is a single fixed, uniform phenomenon (1993a). Instead his theory proposed a more versatile, encompassing view of intelligence, one that cannot be measured by the standard IQ test. Instead, he asserts that intelligence is much too significant to be minimised and simplified. He advocated teaching various learning styles, preferences and strengths offering various forums to express their intelligences and abilities, thus allowing them to participate in learning on many levels.

Gardner's model of Multiple Intelligences demonstrates the various levels of intelligence including: verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, logical/mathematical, body/kinaesthetic, intrapersonal and naturalistic intelligences (Checkley, 1997). Gardner perceived the brain not as an instrument having one general ability but as having a whole range of individual capabilities working in unison and interacting together in a non-predictable way (Gardner, 2009:3-5). Furthermore, Bloom's Taxonomy offers a foundation for challenging pupils thinking by engaging in lower and higher order thinking through questioning and thus categorising activities by their level of complexity. It enables the teacher to look at instruction through the lens of the challenge. It focuses on questioning using particular language and also by assessing concepts such as: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation and synthesis with knowledge appearing at the lower-order and synthesis at the higher end of questioning (NCCA, 2007). Essentially, it supports differentiation by reinforcing basic content and therefore ensuring that children who need additional time to their peers develop their content knowledge and are afforded such an opportunity. A simple example of this in relation to my research is stories within the *Fun FRIENDS* programme (e.g. Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae) whereby children are asked to identify a problem in a story and come up with a possible solution (analysis and evaluation). This requires them to revise the story and firstly recall the original solution (knowledge and comprehension).

More recently the term Universal Design for Learning [UDL] is gaining popularity in the field of inclusive education. It is a framework that incorporates and supports many current and research-based approaches to teaching and learning including the above Multiple Intelligences Theory and Blooms Taxonomy. Differentiation is merely a component of UDL. Nelson (2015) correspondingly identifies differentiation as a strategy that helps a practitioner address each pupil's individual levels of readiness, interest, and learning profiles. UDL is an overarching approach that addresses the environment first, including the physical location and the lesson, unit, and/or curriculum.

There are three guiding principles of UDL. The first principle is multiple means of representation. There is no one way of presenting knowledge suitable for all learners. Instead learners must be given multiple means of acquiring information and knowledge. The second principle is multiple means of expression. This involves providing learners with alternatives for demonstrating what they know in a range of different ways. Lastly, the third principle is multiple means of engagement. This concerns varying levels of motivation amongst pupils, Teachers can appeal to this by sharing learners' interests, offering appropriate tiered challenges where each child experiences success thus increasing motivation. In simple terms this is a research based framework that helps teachers plan learning to meet the diverse and variable needs of all students. It involves effective planning and moving away from traditional forms of teaching and instead targeting more than one sensory pathway in order to successfully reach all learners. Prashnig (2004:x) clearly illustrates that "Everyone of us has a learning style, thinking style and working style as unique as our fingerprints". UDL similar to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences strives to minimise barriers and maximise learning for all students whilst considering each child's background, strengths, needs and interests. UDL draws upon

neuroscience accommodating a variety of learners (Figure 3). By adopting such an inclusive approach to learning we are essentially nurturing a child's resilience modelling resilient learners.
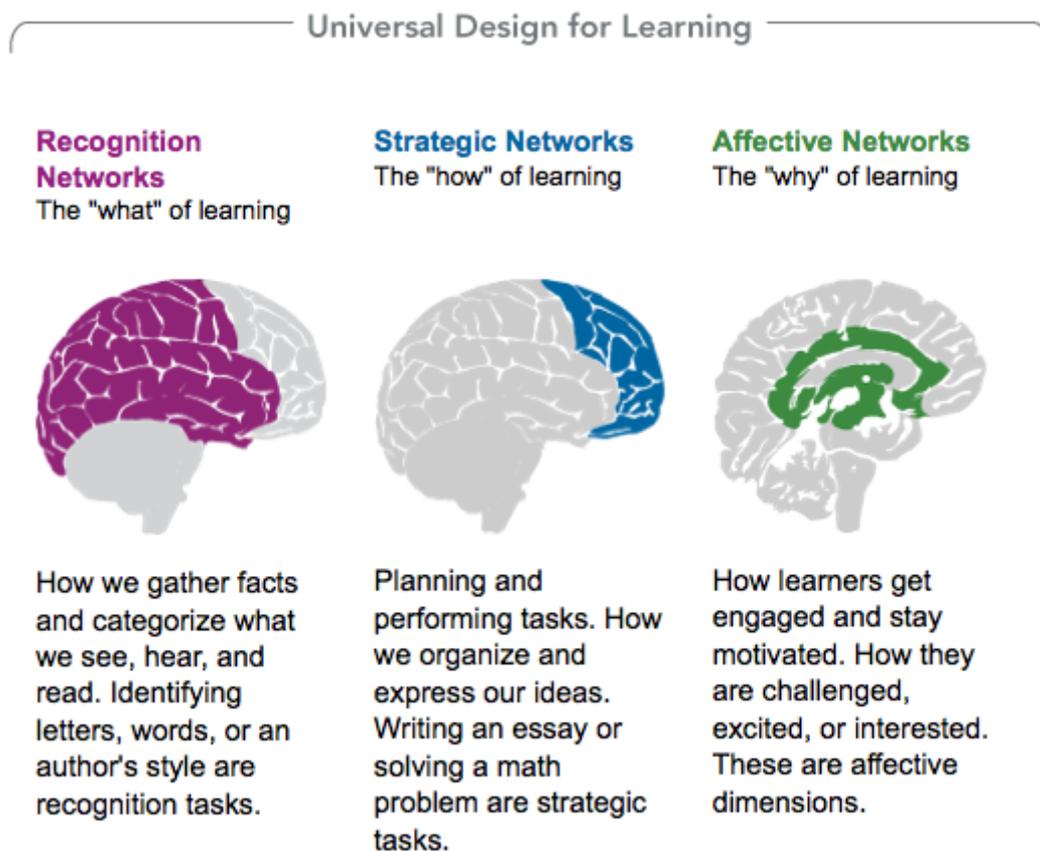
Figure 3: Universal Design for Learning

2.12 Living Theory

This Review of Literature examined both interventions and theory around resilience. As the focus of this self-study action research is improving my practice, I will now discuss the theory underpinning my research, specifically my living theory. In the past, educational theory was dominated by the disciplines approach which consisted of "philosophy

psychology, sociology and history of education" (Whitehead, 2008:104), however, an alternative was suggested because these disciplines did not explain the educational influences of people regarding their and others' learning (Whitehead, 2008). A living theory was proposed as: "…an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work" (Whitehead, 2008:104). The theory is generated by asking 'how do I improve my practice'? It describes how the inquiry is implemented in a bid to create improved knowledge (Whitehead, 2008:103). A "constellation of values" is central and therefore, should be reflected in enhanced practices, which contributes to this new knowledge (Farren, 2008:50). Embracing these values helps to form a living theory. It is paramount that, instead of passively accepting solutions, alternative options that promote learning are debated (Farren, 2008). Dialogue is essential for articulating values and enhancing learning. Fundamentally, exploring living theory holds the teacher/researcher accountable for personal and professional practices (Mc.Niff, 2016).

2.13 Conclusion

This literature was reviewed under the following headings: an Irish context and mental health prevalence; the correlation between positive mental health and well-being, positive psychology and resilience; early interventions' benefits; interventions including resilience programmes namely *Fun FRIENDS*, positive self-talk, growth mindset and mindfulness strategies; parents, schools and teachers' roles in promoting children's resilience, forms of assessment and differentiation. The possibility of using visual arts to coincide with another intervention became apparent throughout and finally the importance of my values and living theory. It is concluded that parents play a significant role in promoting their children's resilience particularly in early years. Early interventions are most effective in

the context of supportive adults in positive learning environments which are significant protective factors.   Teachers' awareness of their own resilience is essential when developing it in children through multiple daily resilience building opportunities presented by schools.   Effective leadership must develop a whole-school understanding of resilience's protective factors for both staff and pupils.   Embracing these factors, schools and teachers are well positioned to impact large numbers of pupils' resilience which has positive social and educational implications.   Reflecting on relevant literature, there is a scarcity pertaining to six and seven year olds and whether interventions can promote resilience. Adding to this, there is limited research showing how cross curricular links can support a child's resilience.   I believe my research will address this gap in the literature: *What are the teaching and learning opportunities available to promote resilience in my first class classroom?*

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

"You are not trying to prove something. You are trying to understand something. Your classroom is a living laboratory for your personal understanding of your development, work, and growth as a teacher" (Samaras, 2011a:9).

This chapter examines methods employed to justify why particular research methods were selected. Additionally the synergy between the research methodology (self-study action research) and the research content (resilience) will be explored throughout. This project utilised different methods of data collection: pupil and teacher questionnaire, reflective journal entries, pictures of the children's work and finally critical friend's perceptions. The variety of instruments aimed to ensure validity and triangulation (Sullivan et al., 2016) to my research. Issues of validity, subjectivity, reflexivity and reliability will be considered. Ethical issues will be addressed, and finally the limitations of the study will be appraised. The aim of this research was to explore the teaching and learning opportunities available to promote resilience in my first class classroom. By placing myself at the epicentre of this research and critically reflecting upon my current behaviours, pedagogies, actions and reactions, I wanted to comprehend how I could enhance my teaching and the children's learning (Samaras, 2011a) whilst nurturing resilience.

3.1.2 Research Site

I have worked in the same junior school in a middle-class urban setting since qualifying from college in 2011. The research took place in a first class, the children were six and seven years old at the time research began. The school caters for 429 students. There were 23 students in the research class, 10 girls and 13 boys.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative and quantitative methodologies have two apparent philosophical backgrounds that develop different types of knowledge (Blaxter, 2010). Qualitative research is underpinned with an allegorical philosophy and targets the social world (Scott and Morrison, 2006). Qualitative research was employed throughout my research as I attempted to understand the participants' perspectives (Bell, 2014). Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013) acknowledge that "behind the apparent simplicity of qualitative data there is a good deal of complexity, requiring care and self-awareness from the researcher" (cited in Punch, 2014: 87). This form of research is inductive and open to interpretation as people's lived experiences are examined (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). Therefore, both the researcher and instruments of data collection must be cognisant of relationships between people in order to generate insightful descriptions. Moreover, it concentrates on observing, questioning and investigating (Wolcott, 1992). As a result, data collection is concerned mainly with words, which are highly subjective (Blaxter, 2010; Watt, 2007). Validity and reflexivity are key concepts at the core qualitative research and are discussed later in this chapter. It is frequently argued that action researchers must be familiar with triangulation when gathering data. In simple terms, they must gather, compare and contrast

a number of different accounts of the same situation (Elliot, 1978). This was achieved throughout my research by using a variety of research instruments to gather data from different perspectives using Brookfield's (1995) four lenses.

Qualitative research was the sole research approach used for this study. Action research is a particularly viable way to conduct qualitative research as it describes what is happening using words, describing the effects of an educational intervention. Quantitative research, however gathers information and relationships are interpreted between large sets of facts using "numerical data…structured and predetermined research questions, conceptual framework and designs" (Punch, 2014). As a result, I found employing qualitative research methods was more pertinent to my research.

3.3 Action Research

3.3.1 What is Action Research?

Action research encompasses a combination of both *action* and *research,* resulting in it being most appealing to researchers in an educational setting (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007: 297). It is a distinct way of looking at your own practice and determining whether it is satisfactory or not. Evidence supports claims and when action is taken to improve practice justifiable evidence can thus be produced to demonstrate how practice has changed (McNiff, 2013). Cohen and Manion define it as "a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention" (1994:186). A key aspect of action research is that it is done by the practitioner and is therefore often referred to as "practitioner research". Action research is

an "on-the-job research", which becomes a "critical self-reflective practice" (McNiff, 2013:23).

There are misconceptions surrounding action research as a research design. Action research "does not refer to a methodology that leads to harmonious thought and action but to a problematic practice of coming to know through struggle" (McNiff, 2002:3). It is "not a thing in itself; the term implies a process of people interacting with one another" (McNiff, 2002: 16). This collaborative approach has been argued for on the premise that teachers are more likely to change their attitude, practice or behaviour if they have been involved in the research that demonstrates the need for such (Oja & Smulyan, 1989: 14 cited in Cohen et al., 2007:301). McNiff (2013) argues that in undertaking action research it is deemed as impossible to disconnect practice from the practitioner. It is considered that what we do influences others, and what they do influences us (Buber, 2002 cited in McNiff, 2013:30). The above showing a striking parallel between importance of relationships when building resilience and my own personal and professional values.
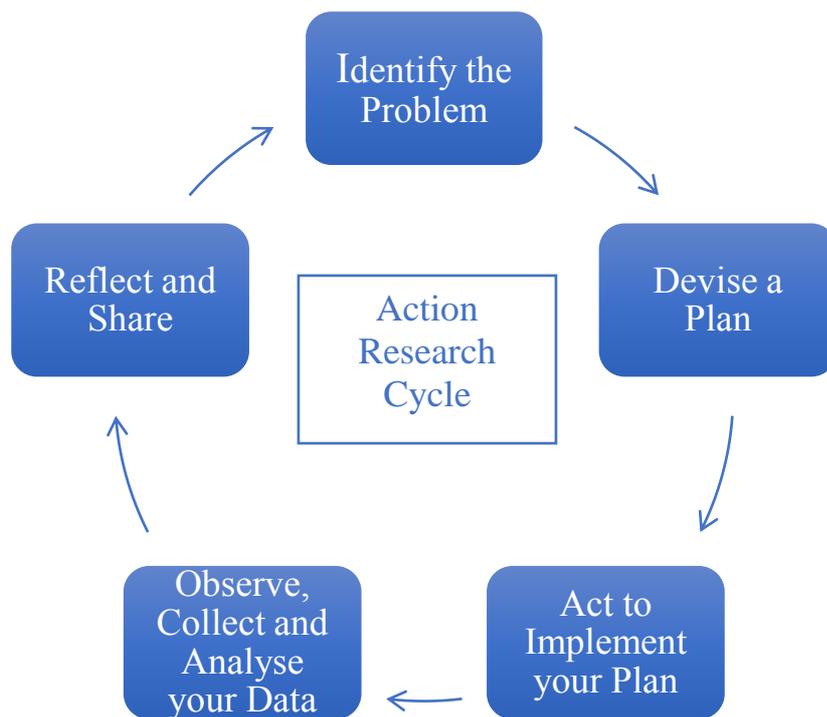
Figure 4: Action Research Cycle

3.3.2 Self- Study Action Research

Whitehead (2000) recognises that the introduction of self-study had the most significant impact on the teaching world with teachers undertaking it motivated to improve various domains of their educational lives (Samaras et al., 2007; Hopkins, 2008). Critical self-reflection is paramount in investigating how to improve practices when examining Whiteheads concept of a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 2000:93). Acknowledging and identifying values is critical because they inform our classroom practices (Cuban, 1993 cited in Samaras, 2011a).   The most significant changes begin with a teacher questioning their own practice as these instigate reform from within (Samaras, 2011b). Kalmbach, Philips and Carr state that self-study itself is an action research framework and that the purpose of teacher research is to "continually engage and delight in the learning process with the goal of improving our own practice, the learning environment for our students,

and the greater school community" (2010:35). Essentially, the flexibility and adaptability of both action research and self-study make them effective for such an enquiry-based project.

Reflecting on what promotes children's learning redirects our attention to effective practices while improving our learning at the same time. Utilising teachers as "agents of their own reform" and colleagues as critical friends fosters a community that nurtures individuals' learning, self-study's main goal (Samaras, 2011b:43). By reflecting upon my own personal experiences and everyday values, I evaluated my role as a teacher in promoting resilience in the classroom it became clear through my journal reflections that the children learned from the example I set. My behaviours, mood and sentiments channelled the course and outcome of the day and I regularly was a living contradiction who was not living by my values. I was allowing various stressors hinder effective use of the PSC curriculum to nurture resilience in my classroom. By acknowledging these discrepancies, I became accountable, instigating a plan of action for change. Essentially, I underestimated or lost sight of my significance as an educator and this was a concern. These stressors will be discussed further in the following chapter.

3.3.3 Planning Action Research

Undertaking action research requires judicious planning so that changes will be as successful as possible (McNiff, 2013). Questions surrounding action research are distinctive and challenge such things as: What is my concern? What can I do about it? What changes can I make? (Whitehead, 2005). Furthermore, Whitehead (1989) recommends that the researcher commences by establishing a situation where their values

are not reflected in their practice. In effect, an action plan can be devised by addressing a systematic set of questions such as: Why do I wish to investigate it? How do I show and describe the current situation as it is? How do I communicate the significance of what I am doing? (McNiff, 2013:91). Accordingly, the researcher must identify success criteria to judge its effectiveness (Cohen et al., 2007). Deeper understanding examination of ontology and epistemology was therefore essential.

Ontology is a question of what the researcher believes in and an explanation of their values. As previously stated, my core values are care, compassion, knowledge and relationships. I believe that this self-study approach encompasses my values and transforms my research into a living theory. Action researchers have the capacity to view things from another's perspective and reflect on their own lives before making judgements about another's (McNiff, 2013). They appreciate the potential to direct learning into social action for both personal and communal benefits (McNiff, 2016). The importance of this is critical in the context of this action research project; resilience is concerned with altering the impact of daily stressors on a child's well-being rather than avoiding it. As an educator, my goal is to prepare my pupils for the future, by providing them with coping skills to be resilient in their lives and learning. Hymer, Whitehead and Huxtable (2008) describe this as preparing them to contribute to their own well-being and that of our community as confident, competent individuals.

Equally, epistemology is the study of knowledge and how it can be acquired. Action research deems knowledge as a continuous and incomplete pursuit. It prompts questions which may not have definitive answers (McNiff, 2013: 29). Action research values peripheral learning, which contradicts the idea that knowledge can only be acquired in

official settings with mindful intent (Bateson, 1994 cited in McNiff, 2013: 29). Action researchers are constantly learning and making new connections through their learning (McNiff, 2013:30). Appropriate to my research and values, self-study is classified as "supporting theoretical growth, ongoing development, the production of knowledge, and the enhancement of self-confidence" (Lunenberg, Korthagen & Zwart, 2011:1). This research project provided me with the opportunity to challenge what I proposed I valued, whether I was a 'living contradiction' and finally whether my values remained pertinent during and after my research. My educational values justify my existence in teaching, they mould the teacher I am and strive to be. Care, compassion, knowledge and relationships encompass my educational values and were central to planning interventions for the duration of both my action research cycles.

3.4 Critical Theory Research Paradigm

A paradigm can be described as beliefs or a view of the world that influences action research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It adheres to four elements: ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. Discussions around ontology, epistemology and methodology have been mentioned above. Axiology, however, refers to the ethical issues that need to be considered when planning research (Kuvinji & Kuyinin, 2017:27). Chilisa outlines the significance of placing research within a particular paradigm, simply because methodologies will be "guided by philosophical beliefs about the nature of reality, knowledge and values and by the theoretical framework that informs comprehension, interpretation, choice of literature and research practice on a given topic of study" (2012:3). My research is located within the critical theory paradigm. A central aim of critical theory is the ability to reassess the dynamics between theory and practice in light of

criticisms of the positivist and interpretive approaches to social science acknowledging figures incompatible with action research. (Carr & Kemmis, 2004: 131).   Both my rationale and my research content embody a practice of critical theory. I have been prompted to examine myself and my practice in numerous forms emancipating my practice and thinking. Initially, as a vehicle for questioning the traditional role of the teacher as both the teacher and researcher and secondly as I plan to share my journey with the intention of guiding others on a similar journey (Roth, 2007).

3.5 Research Model and Framework

A brief summary of my research from Cycle One and Cycle Two is outlined below. However, a more detailed framework is included in Appendix C and D.

Date:	Action:
Week beginning January 7th:	• Share research with class • Consent forms and information letters • CF meeting re: research
Week of Jan 14th:	• Baseline Activities • Critical friends meet and review
Week Jan 21st:	• Preparation for *Fun FRIENDS*, visual art and mindfulness • Share with CF
Week Jan 28th :	• Cycle 1 (2 Fun FRIENDS sessions per week, 1 Visual Art, Mindfulness activities- 10 minutes daily) • CF –observations and written reflections • Observations • Visual Data
Week February 4th :	• *Fun FRIENDS*, visual art. Mindfulness and Interaction • Critical Friends discussion
Week Feb 11th	• Continued • NEPS teacher checklist ⎱ Surveys • My thoughts about school questionnaire ⎰
Midterm Break	• Interim evaluation of cycle 1- changes
Week of25th Feb– March 25th	• *Fun FRIENDS* , Visual art, Mindfulness and Interaction • Met with Critical Friends
April 2019	• Data Analysis • Validation Group

Figure 5: Framework for Action Research

3.6 Research Instruments

This research used an eclectic mix of qualitative data collection instruments including a reflective journal, classroom observations and analysis of visual data involving pictures of the children's work. Triangulation, using more than one instrument can support and validate findings because information is viewed from various standpoints (Cohen et al. 2011) thus giving a richness to findings.

3.6.1 Teacher Reflective Journal

Dewey (1933) describes reflective practice as an intentional and continuous way to think about our actions. The RJ journal offered my own autobiographical lens throughout this study and played a significant role documenting the transition of my thoughts and reflections from my own personal history and Whitehead's living theory (2008). This reflective process has identified ways to improve our practice (Thompson & Pascal, 2012; Toom, Husu & Patrikainen, 2014). In doing so, I intended to interpret my practices so I could develop as a person and a teacher (Zeichner, 1999 cited in Lassonde, Galman & Kosnik, 2009). In isolation, they served as a substantial data collection instrument and also enriched and initiated discussions between the researcher and critical friends. Bolton (2014) acknowledges that in order for journal writing to be proactive, to act as a source for problem solving and perspective, dialogue is essential. Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning was utilised as a structured framework for my reflections regularly, the four stage cyclical process was a useful lens for demonstrating and comprehending how reflection may unfold (Appendix K).

3.6.2 Classroom Observations

Blaxter (2010) describes observations as watching, recording and analysing events of interest, or "the natural tool of the education profession" (Burton, Brundrett & Jones, and 2011:96). Bell and Waters (2014) highlight the importance of establishing what you are looking for before commencing observations. Contrary to this, and coinciding with Froeblian ethos "simply noticing events can also provide insight into situations" (Campbell, McNamara & Gilroy, 2004:94). For this reason, observations were both structured and unstructured and participatory and non-participatory. Conversations and dialogue were recorded to the best of my ability as the child engaged in dialogue with peers during art activities and when experimenting with materials. Additionally, a structured log sheet was created during structured observations times (Appendix O). This was during *Fun FRIENDS*, mindfulness activities and morning interaction times. Structured observations have been criticised for promoting bias and limiting what is being observed. However engaging in both counterbalanced my observations. At times, I was completely immersed in the group and at the other end of the continuum I remained passive. Remaining objective throughout all observations was of utmost importance and was something that I aimed to achieve each time I observed my practice in the classroom setting. I sought for my observations to be a true account of what was occurring and not to be influence by time and distance (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010: 149). These semi-structured and unstructured observations served as a dual purpose. Firstly, to inform future planning and secondly it provided a scope for reflection in my reflective journal.

3.6.3 Visual Data Methods

Clarke et al., (2010:86) acknowledge that visual methods of data collection can provide data that word-based cannot. Samples of the children's work were collected during *Fun FRIENDS* and visual art lessons each week. Essentially, this instrument was chosen as a stimulus or basis for dialogue or discussion with the children. Both pictures of their work, observations around their work and the pupil's questionnaire was used as a baseline analysis. Furthermore, pictures of the children's work was used during research which supported Thomas and Jolley's (1998) idea that drawing was a popular activity among children, particularly because it is perceived as fun and non-threatening (Rubin, 1984). Adding to this, using samples of the children's work is a child centred method, emphasising the entitlement of children to be acknowledged as individuals of value and rights (Greene and Hill, 2005). Samples of their own work gave an insight into their own thinking, thus, another platform of expression.

 Significantly, children have the opportunity to explain their images as they understand them (Clark-Ibanez, 2007; Karlsson, 2001), minimising the power imbalance mentioned previously between the researcher and co-researcher. Ownership over the definition of resilience as it emerges from the images no longer lies with the researcher (Ball & Smith, 1992; Harper, 2002), instead the children reached their own meaning through learning about the life of Vincent van Gogh, looking and responding to his art and creating their own autonomous creations. In essence, the visual data worked as a communication tool, "to help make children heard". Please see Appendix N for further samples of the children's work. Visual Data was analysed through teacher instinct. A teacher checklist was also devised naming the art elements appropriate to the children's age and development as outlined by Lowenfeld's stages of artistic development (1947). Child friendly research

methods were used as a framework throughout the research, particularly insightful was The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods which outlines 'teaching should keep pace with the child's development' (2011:215).

3.7 Pedagogical Interventions

Pedagogical interventions initially consisted of four areas. Firstly increased interaction time, concentrating on nurturing pupil-pupil relationships and teacher-pupil relationships. Secondly, mindfulness activities were used as a self- regulation tool. Thirdly, the *Fun FRIENDS* programme was referred to in detail in the previous chapter and finally Vincent van Gogh as a stimulus for visual art lessons. Vincent van Gogh displayed resilient traits throughout his life, his story shows autonomy and perseverance and his artwork depicts this (Appendix G & H). The use these three varying interventions ensured a variety of learners were included in the research. Differentiated approaches to learning using Bloom's Taxonomy, U.D.L and Gardner's theory of M.I provided interventions designed for all types of learners and learners needs.

3.8 Data Collection Instruments

3.8.1 Surveys

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS, 2010:81-82, Appendix L) teacher checklist was completed pre intervention and again post intervention. This encouraged me to reflect upon any discrepancies in my classroom, my teaching and the children's learning including interactions with the children. Pupil questionnaires were completed with the aim of offering insights into the social, emotional and academic lives of the children I teach. I sought to consider how I was nurturing or hindering their resilience from their perspective.

It was adapted from NEPS 'My thoughts about school' questionnaire (NEPS, 2010:97-98; Appendix M). This questionnaire was completed pre and post interventions to evaluate if my new practices enhanced their resilience. This was completed with all twenty-three children in the class. To cater for all abilities, the questionnaire was adapted in an accessible language and was read aloud to ensure full comprehension. The questionnaire provided insightful data that aided planning of interventions.

3.8.2 Critical Friends

Seeking permission to include the contribution of a critical friend or "learning partner'" (Sullivan et al., 2016: 82) was paramount to my research as it added another perspective and accuracy. In doing so, it also validated my research. My critical friend was able to act as a valuable resource in discussing ideas, clarifying inaccurate assumptions and validating evidence of change in my practice. Dialogue with critical friends took place weekly and often twice a week during research cycles. Furthermore, CF contributed in reflection form by sharing their written reflections of practice during interventions. This proved to be a useful data source. Particularly poignant was conferencing with critical friends and making adaptations during the planning stages. Following from this, discussing their reflections, tracking progress and finally validating findings was invaluable. The critical perspective of CF added rigour and validity.

3.9 Sampling

While this self-study action research primarily focuses on my practices, participation and collaboration of others were also involved. Convenience sampling or opportunity sampling, as it is often referred to, was used for this study (Cohen et al., 2007). The

researcher worked with the children in my class that I teach and the colleagues I work alongside. The class consisted of twenty-three children, thirteen boys and ten girls.

3.10 Data Analysis

Analysing data involves "organising what has been seen, heard and read so that sense can be made of what is learned" (Watt, 2007: 95). Data gathered by the above instruments was analysed consistently throughout the entire project. A coding technique was employed to analyse my data and identify emergent themes. I did this by sifting and selecting…information collected into "data bits" and assigning them to a label or category that is usually called a "code" (Scott & Morrison, 2006: 31). Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. My research followed a six-step framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006).
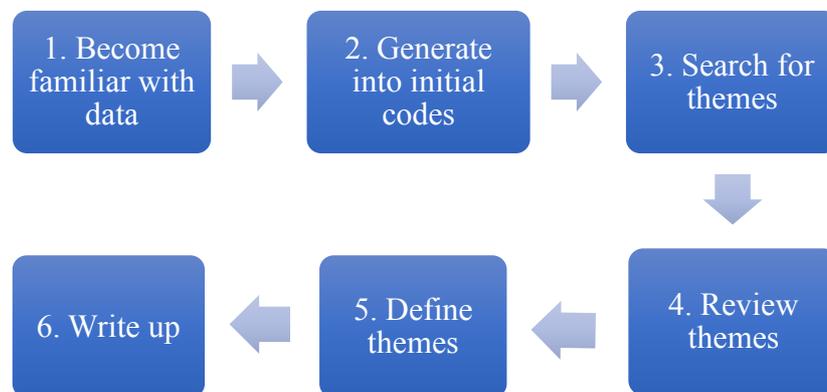
Figure 6: Framework for thematic analysis

3.10.1 Subjectivity and Reflexivity

Tucker (2011: 4) emphasises the importance of the self and makes the experience of the teacher a source for the research. The research is highly subjective. Throughout the research it was impossible to separate myself from the research as every part of me, both professional and personal, was engrossed in the journey. Kierkegaard (1974) relates subjectivity as "the ability to consider one's own relationship to whatever constitutes the focus of the inquiry" (cited in Cohen et al., 2007:17). Scott and Morrison (2006) argue that "individuals may be influenced by unconscious motivations". Mehra (2002) believes that personal beliefs and values are reflected in the researcher's choice of methodology and are an interpretation of the findings, and likewise within the choice of topic. Subjective data can question the reliability of a research project. Henceforth, data has been gathered from a number of sources and were similarly considered alongside critical friends to avoid biases in format and results.

It is essential to be mindful of the role of the researcher in the research process. Scott and Morrison describe reflexivity as 'the process by which the researcher comes to understand how they are positioned in relation to the knowledge they are producing' (2006:202). They depict that no translucent separation exists between the observer and the observed. Reflexivity is at the epicentre of a self-study. As the class teacher, I was completely immersed in every stage of the research process. The focus throughout remained on me and how my thoughts, behaviours and actions impacted on the resilience of the children I teach. Watt (2007) describes that in self-study research, the researcher's values and beliefs are deeply embedded in every inch of this project. While it was impossible to put this aside, it was important to be aware of this presence and the effect it may have had on the results. As the researcher, I could not exclude myself from the world I was investigating.

3.10.2 Reliability and Validity

Bell (2014:119) describes reliability as "the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions". The reliability of the research aims to provide consistency. Through the use of my critical friend and colleague, I intend to analyse data and discuss any findings or conclusions collaboratively in order to support the reliability of this research.

Validity is 'concerned with whether an instrument in fact measures what it is claimed to have measured' (Punch, 2014:246). Utilising my critical friend's perspectives on assessing research instruments' suitability and validity will contribute significantly to this (Samaras, 2011a). Shipman (2014) underlined critical questions in checking for quality research. These are:

- Reliability: Does the evidence reflect the reality under investigation? Has the researcher found out what they claim it is about? (Shipman 2014: ix).
- Credibility: Is there sufficient detail on the way the evidence was produced for the credibility of the research to be produced? (Shipman 2014: ix).

Essentially the questions surrounding reliability and credibility were key criteria in my research whilst my reflective journal was used to give authenticity to my research.

At all stages of the research process, the researcher attempted to ensure the collection of data was reliable, valid and credible.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

"Every person is unique and worthy of respect" (Samaras, 2011a:145), therefore at all times, the researcher must be fair, open and honest (McKernan, 2000) whilst adhering to ethical considerations of all research participants. Ethical permission to conduct the research was sought from, and granted by both the Principal and Board of Management and by Maynooth University's Ethics Committee (Appendix A). Key ethical issues include confidentiality, the researcher's attitude towards other people and anonymity. Whyte (2006) outlines the beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and fidelity principles that must be considered when conducting research with children. In accordance with The British Educational Research Association, "the best interest of the child" underpinned the primary ethical considerations of this research (BERA, 2018:6).

Diener and Crandall (1978) acknowledge four elements of informed consent: competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension. To begin with, "competence implies that responsible, mature individuals will make correct decisions if they are given the correct information" (Cohen et al., 2007:52). Participants' written consent was necessary in order to ensure that they were comfortable with the research. The adults involved were given informed consent forms documenting the research's details whilst children were distributed age appropriate informed assent forms which included "appropriate use of language, clear layout and larger than usual font" (Burton, Brundrett & Jones, 2011:57). Assent from the children was necessary to ensure they understood the research; however the children are too young to grant consent themselves and so consent from parents or guardians was necessary. A copy of consent and assent forms are included in Appendix A. Secondly, voluntarism means that participants can freely choose to take part or not (Cohen, Mannion et al, 2007). Participants' needed to be made aware in writing of their right to

withdraw from the study at any point. (BERA, 2018). No incentives were used to encourage participation. Furthermore, all relevant information about the research was shared with the children and their parents in appropriate language and to the best of the researchers' knowledge. Lastly, regarding comprehension, an information letter was sent to the children and their parents/guardians so that to the best of knowledge "all participants understand the nature of the research project" (Cohen, Mannion et al., and 2007:53).

As the researcher, I was acutely aware of the differential power relations that exist between the children and teacher. I endeavored to reduce this where possible, however 'the difference will remain' (Cohen, Mannion et al, 2007: 54). Conversations with the children around my rationale for doing this research, how I hope to learn something new that will help me be a better teacher have counteracted this. Confidentiality and anonymity will be assured to all participants. Findings are stored in a locked filing cabinet or in a password protected computer. Moreover, anonymity was secured by use of pseudonyms instead of the children's names.

3.12 Limitations

This study had a number of limitations. Firstly, the most difficult challenge for me owed to curriculum time constraints. I felt it impossible to listen to the 'internal monologue' and effectively modify my teaching behaviours wholeheartedly (Samaras, 2011a:9). Secondly, follow up investigations would be useful to determine if skills learned were sustained over time. This small sample measures my classroom because the primary focus was my practices and how I reflected and acted upon these. Adding to this, challenges concerning subjectivity and reflexivity were apparent as a result of acting as both teacher and

researcher. Similarly, underpinning my values was difficult initially coinciding with Brookfield's (1994: 208) warnings that "there can be a dark side of critical reflection". Finally, data was gathered mainly through qualitative methods. Gathering data though personal reflections, observations and interviews are arguably time consuming and tedious. Researcher fatigue and bias during the data collection and analysis process must be noted. However, critical friends played a significant role in validating processes and findings.

3.13 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the teaching and learning opportunities available to promote resilience in my classroom. This chapter has outlined the approaches and data collection methods behind the research. The aim of the research was addressed and consideration was given to both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The sample chosen was closely examined. The research instruments have been described, as has their implementation and justification for their choice. How the data was analysed has been outlined. Ethical aspects have been considered and the limitations have been recognised. The next chapter will outline the findings following data collection methods discussed here.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined how data was collected and the instruments that were used in the research. The following chapter presents both an analysis and discussion surrounding the data collected. The central aim of this study was to answer the research question: *What are the teaching and learning opportunities I can provide to promote resilience in the primary school classroom?* Gathering and analysing data was a continuous process.

Stress, the power of developing meaningful relationships, exposure to cross-curricular links that provide opportunities to develop resilience and the significance of learner autonomy in building resilience were the main themes crafted from the data. They will be discussed in further detail below. Action research is about telling a personal story of reflection and action. Personally, it has been a reflective and insightful experience that I have shared with both my class and critical friends as co-researchers. It is unquestionably a study conducted with people, and not on people (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002).

4.2 Emerging Themes

The data gathered over two four week cycles of action research was examined at length using the following data collection instruments. A baseline study was carried out at the beginning of the research to establish the current situation and set the scene for my study

using a teacher checklist, classroom observations and pupil questionnaire and baseline art activity. The three instruments used throughout the study were:

1.   Teacher Reflective Journal

Documented the transition of my thoughts, reflections, actions and interactions with the children and critical friends

2.   Classroom Observations

Semi-structured and unstructured observations of morning interaction times, *Fun FRIENDS* and visual art lessons. Observations were carried out during both cycles of

3.   Visual Data Methods

Pictures provided data that words did not. Acted as a stimulus for engaging in dialogue and opportunity for questioning.

4.   Surveys

The NEPS teacher checklist and My thoughts about School questionnaire (Appendix)were completed pre and post interventions highlighting areas of my practice requiring attention.

5.   Critical Friends

Dialogue and written reflections of C.F shared ideas, clarified inaccurate assumptions and validated evidence of change in my practice

Figure 7: Research Instruments

Upon careful analysis of the data collected, the four central themes that emerged were:
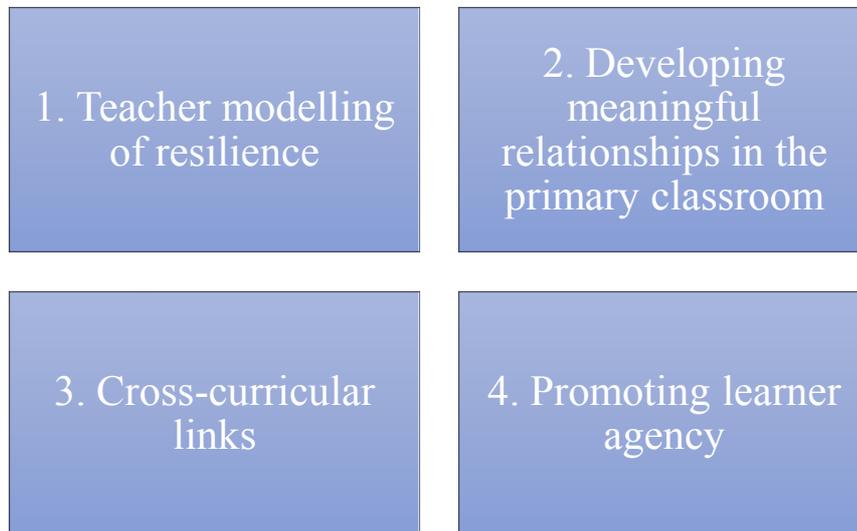
Figure 8: Emerging Themes

These will now be outlined in further detail, with reference to relevant literature.

4.2.1 Teacher modelling of resilience.

Weare (2015) advocates that stress is a significant factor in teachers' professional lives as addressed in the literature review. By looking at the data collectively, it was clear that an unconscious level of stress and a sense of complacency were having a negative impact on me and the learning environment I was creating. My RJ proved insightful indicating professional insecurities and stresses:

Source	Evidence
Reflective Journal 20.10.18	How am I still struggling to manage my time effectively compared to others who appear to manage everything so seemingly effortlessly? I was a ball of stress…definitely a living contradiction today!

Figure 9: Reflective Journal Extract 1

Thankfully, it also increased my self-awareness of my frustration and offered potential solutions:

Source	Evidence
Reflective Journal 15.11.18	Awareness of my stress is crucial, some solutions were obvious when I step back and break things down. Looking at things from a clear head and reflecting in hindsight has proved rewarding. Who is putting me under this pressure? Where is it coming from? Honestly, I think I am! The more I did, the more I felt I should do..creating an unsustainable cycle… I should have concentrated more time and energy on forming relationships with my students

Figure 10: Reflective Journal Extract 2

I came to the harsh realisation that I wasn't fully connecting outside the parameters of academia with the children. Their level of learning was consuming my thoughts and not the development of the holistic child. I had become overloaded with paperwork and the quantity of work required. This was to my detriment. Becoming too stressed resulted in a lack of productivity as my negative thoughts hindered any action. It also created an awareness of the changes I wanted to make and how I was going to achieve these set goals. Weare and Grey (2003) claim that "it is not possible to teach a competency which one has acquired, just as it is not possible to have quality in teaching in the absence of the teacher's own well-being" (Ramana, 2013:20). The RJ highlighted why I selected to research resilience and identified that self-preservation was not selfish but crucial. Data from dialogue with my critical friend further supported this view:

Source	Evidence
Reflective Journal 22.11.18	I began to recognise how important my own well-being was, looking after my own mental health would benefit others. [RJ:]
Critical Friend 26.11.18	If we are in sync with our own resilience it aids the children and their resilience By placing some attention on the person 'me' I would promote the professional 'me' and vice versa. By being negative this can turn into a bad cycle but by attending to the person it can benefit improvement.

Figure 11: Collective Data Box 1

My RJ indicated that some daily stressors, if addressed, could improve interactions with my class and mindfulness techniques were powerful tools for that. I thought, in addition to improving my interactions with children each morning, mindfulness would be of further benefit. However, this challenged me. I became more stressed trying to fit in my ten minutes of mindfulness and instead of embracing it, I felt compelled and stressed to complete mindfulness techniques, the latter defeating the purpose of the whole exercise.

Reflecting on this and prior to beginning cycle two of my action research, I decided to incorporate five minutes of mindfulness into *Fun FRIENDS* to conclude a lesson. Instead of following a particular programme, I utilised mindfulness techniques from the *Fun FRIENDS* programme such as pizza massage and milkshake breathing reducing some of the unnecessary stress I was creating. Initially, my attention focused on pupils doing the activities instead of embodying them myself, however when I embraced the exercises the children did too (Jenkin, 2014). Having been impressed with the children's ability for the various techniques quickly, we transitioned towards self-awareness activities which involved lying on the floor while listening to mindfulness' audio clips. Mindfulness activities proved particularly successful as taking time to regroup before beginning teaching benefitted us all and acted as a transition. These mindfulness activities lasted approximately five minutes however the benefits extended into subsequent activities with noticeable focus (Goleman, 2004).

There were various stages throughout the research cycles where I questioned the progress I was actually making. Was I changing? Was there an improvement? Was anything different? Critical reflection through my RJ proved that many personal and professional improvements were made throughout this process. I transitioned from finding fault in all

aspects of my teaching to focusing on specific areas of improvement, which I can control and thus act to improve. It reinforced the significance of my self-awareness and how this impacts on the children I teach. Identifying and investigating my own stresses and subsequently changing my practices benefitted both the children and I.

Source	Evidence
Reflective Journal 2.4.19	It was one thing after another today. An incident on yard followed by assembly in the hall. The afternoon had the potential to be a disaster. The children were hyper having been in the hall for songs. I felt myself getting stressed and frustrated. I had so much to do before in class support. Grow in Love needed to be completed before being sent home tonight for homework. I was beginning to snap and rush through things. I stopped, took a deep breath and decided to park our plans. Grow in Love could be sent home tomorrow instead. Instead, the children suggested to do 5 minutes Mindfulness instead before literacy in class support. This was the right thing after a hectic morning. We were all happy instead of me trying to force something. Progress!

Figure 12: Reflective Journal Extract 3

A great deal of my own stress was generated by following specific teacher plans and workbooks which I did not necessarily agree with, however I rarely challenged or acted

upon these doubts. Effective teaching requires effective planning and my planning needed critical reflection and essentially action. Additionally the RJ also made me astutely aware of how little confidence I had in myself as a practitioner. I followed plans that were given to me.

Source	Evidence
Reflective Journal 20.1.19	This morning was spent correcting homework followed by rushing to try and get a checklist completed. Was this checklist beneficial? No. I didn't think it was but the other four classes were doing it and it was something to add to my assessment folder. It looked good. In retrospect I should have had more confidence in myself to do what I feel is right and appropriate for my class. Not just go with the crowd or the plans.

Figure 13: Reflective Journal Extract 4

By reflecting upon my practice, it has made me realise I have a voice in what I deem as important to teach. It has permitted me to ask the question: "What do I want the children in my class to have achieved by the end of the year". Essentially, I discovered, through careful questioning and personal reflection, why I had become this way and what changes I could make to improve the current situation.

Research has repeatedly shown that stress is the main reason so many teachers leave their careers early (Weare, 2015; Ramana, 2013). Following careful self-evaluation, I concluded that some areas causing stress such as time constraints and curriculum overload were unavoidable. Contrary to this, however, it became clear with closer examination of my practices that whilst I was working hard I was not always as effective as I had hoped and this ignited the sequence of stress. Frequently, my energy was depleted engaging in unessential practices and therefore neglected building relationships with the children. My RJ and dialogue with critical friends helped me to identify these triggers. Once recognised, I began to work on ways of managing the stress. I concluded that much of the stress was self-induced. I was bombarding myself with daily unnecessary corrections instead of interactions. I was placing a lot of pressure on myself and the children to meet high academic standards. I ultimately decided to take a step back and instead of focusing solely on the academic development of the students, I was dedicating time to nurturing their resilience.

4.2.2: Developing meaningful relationships in the primary school classroom.

The NCCA (2004) acknowledge how children become more positive about themselves and their education when adults care for and respect them and are interested in creating positive relationships with them. The NEPS teacher checklist (2010:81-82) created a focus for areas of improvement (Appendix L). By acknowledging areas of improvement, I succeeded in creating a focus for personal change. Moreover, by improving my attitudes, behaviours and practices, I was inadvertently nurturing the children's protective factors and resilience within the classroom setting.

The checklist consisted of fifty-four statements for the teacher to consider. The questions are related to five skill areas:

- Relationship and social environment

- Learning environment

- Classroom organisation

- Teacher attitudes and behaviours

- Social and emotional teaching strategies

(NEPS, 2010:81-82)

The results showed that the main area of concern was the significance or relationships and social environment and how unaware I was of this. Noted targets for attention included:

	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently
Provision of opportunities for pupils to share personal experiences.	✓		
Seeking of opportunities to speak with pupils on an individual basis.	✓		
Provision of opportunities for pupils to express opinions/voice concerns	✓		
Inviting pupils to help with daily tasks and responsibilities	✓		
Provision of opportunities for pupils to display autonomy and make choices	✓		
Sharing your own thoughts and feelings	✓		
Expression of confidence in pupils to succeed		✓	
Celebration of achievements however small	✓		
Opportunities to provide positive feedback to pupils		✓	
Personal greeting of pupils		✓	

Figure 14: Teacher Checklist Results A

Other target areas highlighting a need for attention were teacher attitudes and behaviour:

	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently
The teacher is aware when the pupil's behaviour is 'pushing their buttons'.		✓	
The teacher is aware of managing their own responses and reactions.	✓		
The teacher is aware of their tone of voice and body language.	✓		
The teacher conveys a sense of calm and control when managing challenging behaviour.	✓		
The teacher reflects on the relationship between the pupil's behaviour and their social and emotional development.	✓		

Figure 15: Teacher Checklist Results B

Each of these areas also emerged throughout other data collected.

Source	Evidence
Reflective Journal 27.2.19	The children are really enjoying their Artwork. I just wish I could spend time on it every day. Listening to their thoughts, their rationale behind things, their opinions has given me such an insight into their thought processes, their feelings and how they relate things. I see a snippet of their personalities. The enjoyment they are getting from free play and not as directed lessons is fantastic. I feel the children are happier and so am I. The topic of Van Gogh and his work correlates well with Fun FRIENDS topics reiterating issues of feelings.

Critical Friend 1.2.19	In recent years, I have lost track of what really matters to children. I have become carried away with the ticking of boxes of the curriculum and making sure I keep on track with my colleagues.

Figure 16: Collective Data Box 2

As part of my intervention I focused on building relationships primarily by modelling positive relationship skills. This was implemented during reception period (9:00-9:20). During this time the children were welcomed into the classroom and greeted with a morning activity as an incentive for taking down homework quicker. What had been taking the children twenty to thirty minutes to do was now being done within an average of ten minutes each morning. Before now, the children were required to stay at their seats and were encouraged to not disturb the teacher as that was my time to correct homework and check reading. However, as part of the intervention, my role was now to interact with the children during this time. Literature suggests that making time in our hectic day to get to know the children fosters co-operation, a sense of belonging and pupil motivation and is arguably a powerful way in building positive relationships (Webster-Stratton, 1999). I greeted each child by name and then spent this time moving between groups, interacting with the children about home life, friends, the weekend and their hobbies. I was amazed at how much I learned about them that I am ashamed to say I didn't know before now. The children enjoyed seeing me come to their group and were often excited to show me what they were doing and who they were working with. This time spent with the children started the day in a positive way. I was less stressed as I was not trying to correct homework or

trying frantically to listen to reading. The children appeared more productive and motivated to get their homework taken down as they were eager to engage in fun, co-operative activities. Furthermore, they appeared more content in their activities as they had me nearby to praise and interact with them.

Source	Evidence
Reflective Journal 12.2.19	Child C, Child G and Child J were eager to show me their jigsaw puzzle they had completed together. They were bursting with pride as I came over to them and asked could I take a picture of their efforts for the school website. Regularly Child G would need additional time at lunch to finish taking down homework – success.

Figure 17: Reflective Journal Extract 5

Literature shows that play is crucial in the social and emotional development of the child and Webster-Stratton suggests that play builds trust and promotes co-operation in the classroom (1999), all of which aiding in nurturing a child's resilience. This particular intervention opened by eyes to the social and emotional side of the child, something I was largely neglecting.

The NEPS teacher checklist was repeated at the final phase of the research. This data highlights the obvious changes that I have made in my classroom environment. In the pre-intervention phase, twenty-two areas were targeted for attention. By comparison, this figure was reduced to six by the time the interventions were complete.
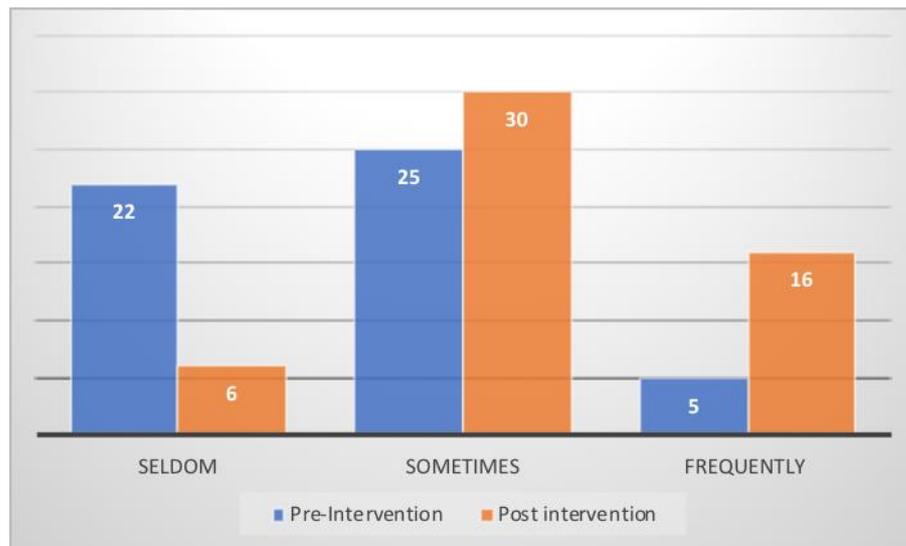
Figure 18: Areas to improve during Action Research

This is comparable to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which emulates the idea that basic physiological and safety needs must be satisfied before higher psychological and self-fulfilment needs can be achieved (McLeod, 2007). Subsequently, a sense of connectedness can be deemed as essential if self-esteem and self-actualisation are to be realised (Research History, 2016). This is further supported by Seligman et al. (2009) who acknowledges that connecting with others encourages this sense of belonging and has the capacity to act as a corrective for poor mental health while also fostering positive mental health and prevent disengagement from learning (Ruttledge, 2014; Weare, 2015). Teachers protect pupils by bolstering their well-being, sense of belonging and ultimately their resilience (Dooley &

Fitzgerald, 2012). Creating an awareness of the quality of my relationship with others through my RJ refocused my attention on the significance of building connections with others and creating stronger personal and professional networks (Wiking, n.d, cited in Hourihane, 2014). Prioritising interaction time with the children reiterated my feelings of connectedness and improved my resilience with positive results for the children's social relationships and resilience.

Data indicated that providing a holistic approach to education, one that actively fosters a sense of belonging, competence and autonomy for all children is important (Jackson, 2014; Cornhill & Mitchell, 2015) and must be embedded in to the whole school though the curriculum, the environment and the school culture (DES, 2015; Weare, 2015). By taking time every day to interact with the children made a significant difference in the overall atmosphere in the classroom. Our classroom became a place where everyone felt respected, valued and ready to learn.

4.2.3: Cross-curricular links are essential for nurturing resilience among pupils.

Particularly striking was data collected in the surveys during the pre-intervention phase where twelve out of twenty-three children (52%) viewed art as a positive subject area. Elsewhere, a further twelve (52%) said they enjoyed visual art, it made them happy or it made them happy when their teacher did visual art with them. None of the children viewed art as a difficult or hard subject exhibiting the potential for success. Literature suggests that many children express their thoughts and feelings nonverbally through a creative activity (Goodman, 2005). I began our study into Van Gogh by showing the children an image of his painting *Irises*. I asked them to interpret and recreate the image as they saw appropriate

with no assistance from me. Materials were left on the table and I circulated the room observing reactions and actions. Observations showed responses such as:

Source	Evidence
Observations 28.1.19	Child A: I don't know where to start Child K: This is impossible! Child M: Mines rubbish. I need more paper. Child C: Just give it a go Child L: I can't do it. Child F: Remember what teacher says, mistakes are proof that we are learning. Child H: When you add some colour it looks better.

Figure 19: Unstructured Observation 1

The following activity was analysed and compared to Lowenfeld's artistic stages of development (1949). Individual children were placed within one of four stages of artistic development: scribbling, pre-symbolism, symbolism and realism. Literature suggests that children should reach the preschematic by between four and six years and the schematic by seven to nine years. Results were as follows:
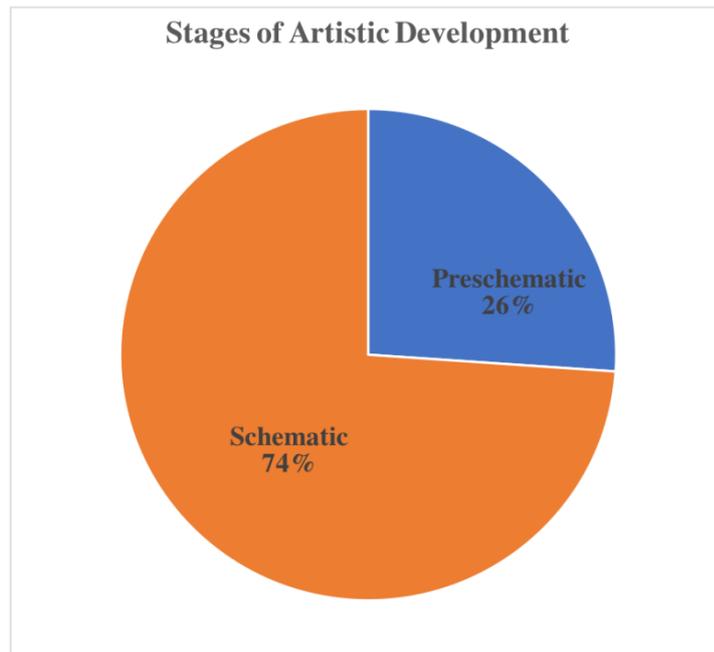
Figure 20: Stages of Artistic Development

According to this, 26% of children are beginning to develop a schema of a visual idea, they draw what they perceive as significance and the use of colour is more emotional than logical. With this in mind, criteria was noted when analysing artwork that placed an importance on colour and the most substantial object. Additionally, 74% of children demonstrate an awareness of space. Furthermore, the following characteristics can be apparent: objects are related to what is up and what is down, a definite base and sky line, items are all spatially related, colours are reflected as they appear, shapes and objects are easily definable and varying sizes are objects can be used to express strong feelings about a subject (Lowenfeld, 1947). Being aware of the children's stage of artistic development created a baseline of expectations. I was able to anticipate additional information including the environment for those within the schematic stage (Figure 21). The children were confident in their own abilities and a willingness to keep trying and persevere was created, encouraging a resilient atmosphere and culture within the classroom.

Figure 21: Pictures of work in Schematic Stage

 Various interventions were planned and implemented during action research cycles and including specific *Fun FRIENDS* lessons, followed by visual art activities which complimented the subject matter in an alternative form, as well as mindfulness activities and interaction time, all contributing to building resilience. The aim was to increase my awareness and to develop a more comprehensive understanding of resilience which could be taught to the children. Research has shown that children learn by watching how others deal with their emotions (Claxton, 2005). My aim was to become a more positive role model by demonstrating caring and positive relationship skills. Literature suggest that this contributes to self-esteem and positive emotional development, all of which essential in building resilience (Webster-Stratton, 1999).

Literature testifies that implementing a resilience building programme is highly beneficial in creating positive outcomes in schools (Weare, 2015; DES, 2015; Oireachtas Library and Research Service, 2012). There are many evidence based programmes that promote well-being for use in both the primary and secondary school such as *Incredible Years, Zippy's*

Friends, Weaving Well-being and *The Friends Programme*. These programmes aim to promote self-esteem, empathy and social skills. By equipping children with the skills required to identify, manage and articulate their emotions, these programmes build emotional intelligence and nurture resilience (Radburn, 2014; Barrett, 2012; Gordon, 2009). Data extracts within this research concur with literature that claims without appropriate teacher awareness or training, implementing such programmes may prove fruitless (Claxton, 2005; Weare, 2015). Much of the intervention records have highlighted that much of what the children learned was learned through modelling and building positive relationships.

Intervention records did indicate that *Fun FRIENDS* lessons were beneficial and fun for the children but constant reinforcement was required through cross curricular visual art connections in order for the children to utilise these skills learned. Thus, confirming Coholic's (2009) claims that the most successful art for resilience programmes tend to combine more than one strategy for example co-ordinating art with mindfulness techniques. However, there is also evidence which suggests that any participation in arts activity is likely to enhance overall well-being (Clift et al., 2009; Ings et al., 2012; Secker et al., 2007, Staricoff, 2004). The children were given various opportunities to nurture and promote resilience that were linked to the curriculum and also appealed to various learning styles.

Specific visual art lessons strived to compliment the themes covered in *Fun FRIENDS* using the topic of Vincent van Gogh: his life and his art. Art work included The Potato Eaters, Self-Portrait with the Bandaged Ear, Sunflowers and The Starry Night (Appendix H & Q). Using these collaboratively draws on each compartment of The Resilience

Framework and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs discussed in chapter 2. The response from the children showed how strong Van Gogh's impact is today and how much we can all draw from his experiences, his life story and his work. The goal of each lesson was to improve self-awareness, self-esteem and resilience which are basic building blocks of good mental health (Coholic, 2010). Kail and Zolner (2005) acknowledge that self-esteem is of prime importance for a child's healthy development. If lacking, a child is more likely to do poorly at school, have social difficulties and develop psychological problems.

Observations from the children and my RJ identified that I had become complacent in my teaching of visual art. Firstly, I provided the materials for an activity, showed them what I wanted and that was classified as my art lesson. Emphasis was placed on a pre-defined product which was achieved through a preordained process, and rarely stimulating creativity or expression as recommended in the PSC (NCCA, 1999). Before immersing in an alternative methodological approach to teaching, it was essential to gauge the children's natural abilities by analysing their work in relation to the general "stages of development" (Roland, 1990, 2006) for their age group ensuring interventions were achievable yet challenging.

As outlined in the PSC (1999), a child- centred curriculum uses guided discovery, making the children active agents of their own discovery. The possibilities and scope for dialogue provided by experimenting with a variety of materials and exploring art became apparent quickly. Lesson content aimed to consolidate means of working from experience, imagination and observations using artwork by Van Gogh as a stimulus for this. As recommended by the PSC a child must have experience with a variety of visual art

materials. Guided discovery encouraged children to notice the colour, design and structure in the environment and to interpret what they perceive in a personal way. This sense of achievement, feelings of self-worth and self-esteem are protective factors which build resilience amongst children.

Source	Evidence
Classroom Observations 5.2.19	Unstructured observations of children's dialogue Child Q: We don't do this very often. Child F: This is fun Child I: This one is a dry material, I think Child G: Look, if you smudge like this with your finger it's kind of cool Child R: The charcoal is so messy. I love it

Figure 22: Unstructured Observation 2

Cross-curricular links to promote resilience can be argued as crucial when planning for and supporting resilience. As previously outlined, resilience derives from 'ordinary magic' and findings have identified numerous opportunities for promoting it (Masten, 2001:227; Gilligan, 2000). Daily school life presents multiple occasions where resilience can be developed both formally and informally: interaction time, *Fun FRIENDS* and visual art

lessons all validating this. Through morning interactions I was able to model resilience's language and behaviours informally while developing a meaningful relationship of trust with the children all proving fundamental.

4.2.4: Promoting learner agency.

Data from my critical friends written reflections emphasised that both my colleagues understood resilience and recognised its value for empowering all. They identified both parents and teachers' significant roles in developing children's resilience, however, acknowledged that some adults do a disservice to pupils by intervening and solving their 'manageable' issues. They continued that children are more resilient than we give them credit for and they need more opportunities to deal with the multiple daily issues presented by schools. More recently, research has explored the concept that children are not only in the process of developing agency, but they can also have degrees of agency which should be nurtured and respected while children (Mullin, 2007 & Betzler, 2015). Teachers' values will dictate how these opportunities will be exploited. The importance of modelling resilience's language and behaviours and teaching it within a whole-school context were critical. The following data emphasised its importance:

Source	Evidence
Critical Friend 28.1.19	Continuity and consistency are needed across the whole school. Enabling the children to become more resilient using resilient language and skills is of utmost importance instead of becoming an enabler and solving mundane issues for the children. We are enabling them to become lax and lazy as we just want any issues solved so as not to 'waste time'.

Figure 23: CF dialogue recorded in RJ

Classroom observations, while not flawless in their entirety, proved insightful. I was particularly mindful that accounts could be perceived as "subjective and biased" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007: 186), resulting in observations being recorded as objectively as possible (Bell, 2014). Many changes I was not aware I had made came to light by analysing data collected through observations. I had moved towards giving the children more autonomy and ownership in their work particularly in visual art, allowing them more opportunities to experiment and use different materials and express and interpret scenarios as they saw fit. This created a catalyst for dialogue both amongst the whole class and in groups. The children proved so much more capable than I had imagined, the just needed the space to do it.

Figure 24: Pictures of Children's Work

Observations also highlighted to me that by providing the children with more autonomy in their learning, they succeeded in collaborative learning. They discussed with their peers, questioned and engaged building positive relationships while creating a positive learning environment. 'Mistakes' were welcomed and appreciated as their own representation or interpretation. They were acknowledged as part of the learning process, instead of being

negatively labelled and feared. Nedelcu (2013) suggests that visual data is particularly beneficial in research as it stimulates children to communicate feelings and ways of thinking and offers children the platform to try something new. Boyden and Ennew (1997) further suggest that the majority of children enjoy the art activity, images represent ideas of feelings too difficult to verbalise, that is less stressful to express themselves through images and finally that the images can be used for discussion.

Source:	Evidence
Classroom Observation: 19.3.18	Children are looking and responding to The Bedroom (1889) By Van Gough. Observations were recorded directly as unstructured. Child C: It's hard to draw the chair. Child H: I know, but just take it one step at a time. Child U: It's your own chair too. You're not to just try and copy it. Child K: Look at the shapes and start from there. Child H: Yeah, I'm going to start with the seat of the chair. It's really a square. Child G: It looks more real with some colour anyway. Child N: It needs a cushion. Child Y: The chair near the bed looks like someone was just sitting in it. Child J: You're right. The other chair is up against the wall.

Figure 25: Unstructured Observation 3

I moved away from always trying to control the outcome of activities, concentrating more on the process rather than the product. I revisited methodologies which I had lost sight of such as guided discovery in becoming 'art detectives' and experimenting with a range of different materials. I found providing the children with time to free-play with the materials allowed them to reveal the properties of different resources and regrouping to discuss as part of an interim evaluation gave me the chance to hear their thoughts and opinions whilst engaging in questioning using Bloom's Taxonomy for deeper forms of thinking (Appendix P). I strived to encourage the children to participate and lead questioning at times which they enjoyed when fully immersed in the subject matter. The children's response to Van Gogh's artwork indicated that opportunities for deeper understanding were important for their aesthetic experiences. Furthermore, their own representations of his artwork provided an insight into the children's visual meaning making of works of art. Visual data methods exposed to be not only the uniqueness of the child but also highlighted the shift in power. The children were given the opportunity to choose how they wished to portray work; they focused on what they deemed as important and in doing so, provided me an insight into their motivations and their own experiences. I was a bystander observing and encouraging their abilities under Lowenfeld's stages of artistic development as previously mentioned.

The language of resilience was integrated into our daily lives and modelled during interaction time each morning so the children were fully immersed in the language and behaviours and could adopt these then throughout the day. This increased their "bounce back" ability and equipped them to collaboratively promote it in others. The children consistently displayed how capable they were at fostering resilience when provided with the opportunity, once again showing the importance of encouraging autonomy. Confidence

increased when they used their resilience building skills independently. The following

evidence supports this:

	12.3.19	15.3.19	19.3.19	22.3.19
Child	**F**: I don't know how to do this (frustrated and crying)	**F:** I don't know how to do it but I'm going to give it a go!	**F:** I just closed my eyed and took a deep breath. This makes me work better.	**F:** Mistakes are proof that you are learning. I will always keep trying.
My response	Give it a go. I believe in you!	Mistakes mean you are learning	You read my mind. Great thinking.	I can see your brain is breaking things down into smaller pieces. You are working your muscle (brain), like going to the gym.
Children's response	**D:** Switch off your red thoughts, turn them into green thoughts. **A:** Let's figure this out. We don't want to see you upset.	**S:** Everyone makes mistakes. Even teachers! **P:** I don't give up, I keep going. I believe in myself.	**O:** You gave it a go and tried. Good work	**D:** You've got to exercise your brain to make it stronger.

Figure 26: Structured Observations

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis and discussion of data collected over two cycles of action research in order to explore both the teaching and learning opportunities in the classroom to promote resilience. The journal entries, classroom observations and pictures of children's work were carefully studied and coded as the researcher attempted to hold a "reflective conversation with the text" (Altricher, Posch & Somekh, 1993: 125). Data from my baseline phase identified that I was stressed and subsequently not promoting the children's resilience as effectively as I could. My RJ identified that acknowledging my own self-awareness was significant in reducing my own stress that was negatively impacting on the children and I. Additionally, a strong degree of data recognised the need to understand more comprehensively resilience's protective factors. Through critical reflection and dialogue with critical friends, appropriate interventions were considered and implemented which benefited everyone. They included *Fun FRIENDS'* sessions, specific visual art lessons using Vincent van Gogh and increased interaction time. Data was compared to initial findings to establish if these interventions were successful in developing children's resilience. Relevant literature, critical friends' feedback and self-reflection supported data which concluded what seemingly small changes to my practice and a cross curricular approach to interventions enhanced my and the children's resilience.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This self-study action research project was designed to explore the teaching and learning opportunities available to promote resilience in my classroom. The aim was to discover resilience building activities that can work alongside the PSC to build meaningful relationships, build self-esteem and provide autonomy in learning, all protective factors that nurture a child's resilience. My claim is that this research has allowed me to be the teacher I want to be. I have connected my values to what I know, in order to improve my practice (Kemmis, 2009).

This chapter begins with an evaluation of the research process. Critically reflecting on this, I will present a summary of my research followed by my conclusions. I will highlight the recommendations for my professional practice and school policy, including recommendations for future research. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a personal reflection.

5.2 Summary of the Research Process

Literature was reviewed under various themes: an Irish context and mental health prevalence; the correlation between positive mental health and well-being, positive psychology and resilience; early interventions' benefits; interventions including *Fun FRIENDS*, positive self-talk, growth mindset and mindfulness strategies; parents, schools and teachers' roles in promoting children's resilience and forms of assessment and differentiation. The opportunity to use visual arts to coincide with *Fun FRIENDS* became apparent. Data was collected using my reflective journal, classroom observations and samples of the children's work. The central themes that emerged from the study were:
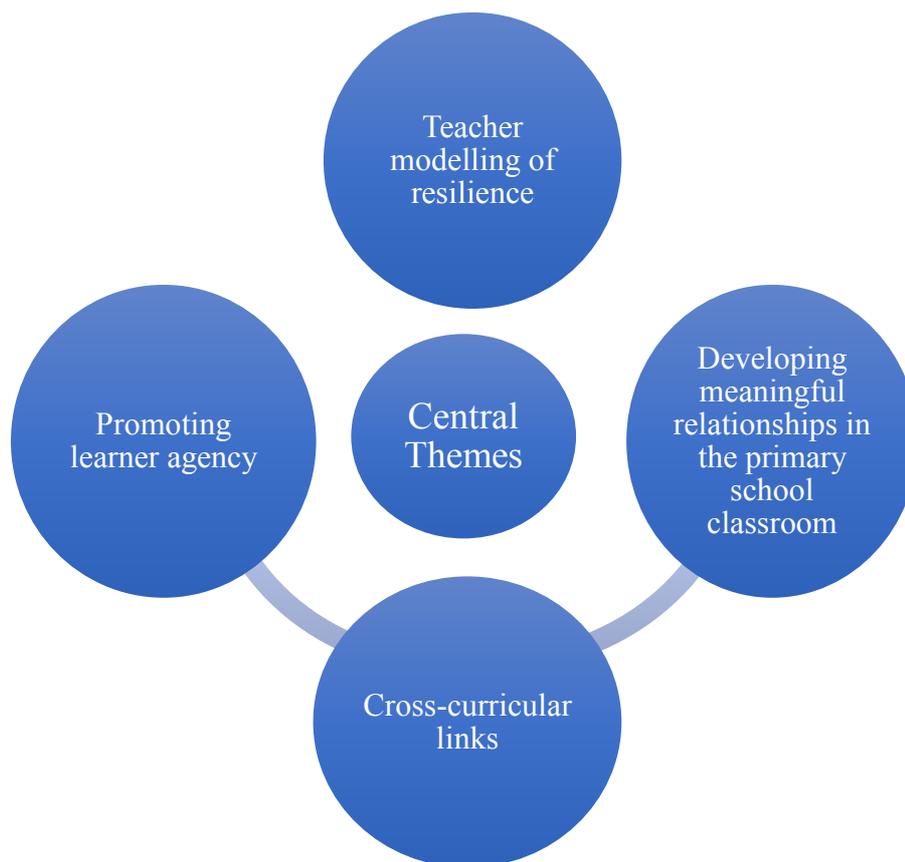
Figure 27: Central Themes in Findings

Employing self-study action research as a methodology presented new insights for my practice and also generated multiple opportunities to promote the children's resilience in my classroom (Samaras, 2011a). A living theory was developed which focused on promoting resilience by acknowledging stressors and focusing on relationship building and the explicit teaching of the skills to build resilience. On reflection, I feel the focus of my methodology could have been refined slightly. Although, my RJ, CO and visual data from the CW provided ample qualitative data, using The Child and Youth Resilience Measure [CYRM] could have been quantifiable to provider richer data.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for Professional Practice

Research findings support the claim that positive changes have been made to my practice. By engaging with literature and investing time self-reflecting, awareness was created of areas I sought to improve or change. Interventions were considered and implemented successfully. *Fun FRIENDS* training taught me a great deal regarding resilience building exercises and also the language surrounding resilience. I hope to continue administering the programme next year. Moreover, the impact of artwork by Van Gogh in engaging the children in dialogue and creativity was something I had not anticipated. Autonomy was apparent in their learning as they engaged in guided discover and became 'art detectives', such methodologies I had previously lost sight of. Increased interaction time was simple yet effective; I was unconsciously damaging relationships and the learning environment through poor time management skills and stress. The benefits of all three interventions were evident and I will further engage with these concepts to further promote opportunities to build resilience in the future.

5.3.2 School Policy

Throughout my research, the importance of a whole-school approach for resilience promotion has become apparent. It is paramount for school leaders to prioritise and nurture all staff and pupils' resilience; and increase individual teachers' potential to instigate even more positive changes (Weare, 2015). Underestimating the impact of teachers' resilience on children's resilience would be a remiss of school leadership and therefore should not be overlooked. If a teacher is struggling with stress, their resilience levels are potentially low and a teachers' ability 'to bounce back' is tested. Helping and creating a whole school policy of well-being can reduce this.

The suggested whole-school approach includes pupils, parents and staff in a collaborative way over a sustained timeframe (DES, 2015) and is similar to the School Self-Evaluation guidelines [SSE] (DES, 2017). This collaborative and reflective process of internal school review includes input from the children, staff, parents and board of management. Schools are advised to engage in self-evaluation and to produce three-year improvement plans for numeracy, literacy and one other curriculum area, resilience being a potential third area. There is overwhelming evidence that pupils learning is more effective when they are content, have inner belief, and feel teachers and school are supporting them (Weare, 2015). School leaders have a responsibility to ensure all staff members develop a comprehensive understanding of resilience's protective factors, as well as consistently monitoring and assessing the programmes' implementation (Weare, 2015). Resilience's language must be incorporated throughout the curriculum and school day and not limited to specific lessons (Clarke & Barry, 2010). A climate of supportive adults modelling resilience's language and behaviours in a caring environment must embody school culture to positively impact on the school environment.

5.3.3 Future Research

Future research would consider the following:

- Three and six-month follow-up investigations could be conducted to ascertain if skills developed were sustained over time.

- Further interventions using various artists could be explored and used, e.g. Harry Clarke, Leonardo Da Vinci.

- Further research opportunities exist within the *Fun FRIENDS'* programme

- Other cross-curricular links could be explored to promotes resilience e.g. literacy

5.4 Final Reflection

As I reach the end of this study, I am forever grateful to have identified an area of education that I am truly enthusiastic towards. Aligned with Gardner's theory of M.I. from chapter two, this research exercised not only logical and linguistic intelligence but also my emotional intelligence. I believe my values of care, compassion, relationships and knowledge embody this research and unite my teacher identity and philosophy.

I frequently reflect on my own experiences of being a pupil in school. I can never recall what result I achieved in a test. I do, however, remember how teachers made me feel. I distinctively remember frustrations, feeling that I was not 'smart enough'; I slowly began to disconnect from learning. I could not verbalise what was wrong, I did not understand it but I was losing the ability 'to bounce back'. I was older than my first-class pupils at that stage. One teacher changed this, and helped me reconnect. One teacher took an interest in me and this sparked an enthusiasm, a desire, an appreciation, and willingness to achieve more. Every child needs this, a teacher who they can connect with and by which they can

feel valued and helped. I can be that 'one good adult' through building meaningful relationships and modelling skills of resilience. By adopting a more critical stance in my pedagogy, I have developed my thinking and ultimately made myself accountable for implementing improvements in my practice in order to live more closely to my values.

"Children are like tiny flowers: They are varied and need care, but each is beautiful alone and glorious when seen in the community of peers" (Fredrich Froebel, 1782-1852).

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Appendices

	Title of Appendix	**Page (s)**
A	Ethical Approval Form	122-130
B	*Fun FRIENDS* acronym	131
C	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	132
D	Bloom's Taxonomy	133
E	The Resilience Framework	134
F	Theory of Multiple Intelligences	135
G	*Fun FRIENDS*	136
H	Visual Art lesson outline	137-138
I	Curriculum Links	139
J	Timetable subject allocation DES	140
K	Kolb's model of experiential learning	141
L	NEPS teacher checklist	142-143
M	My thoughts about school checklist	144
N	Observation (baseline template)	145
O	Semi-structured observation template	146
P	Bloom's Taxonomy	147
Q	Visual Data	148-151

Appendix A: Ethical Approval
(granted from Froebel Department, Maynooth University).

Letter 1: Consent from the Board of Management

XXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXX

Dear Chairperson,

I am writing to thank all board members for granting my career break for the 2017/2018 school year. I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to travel and experience new cultures.

I have decided to do a part-time Masters this school year. It is a self-study action research Masters through Maynooth University. I am requesting the Board of Management's permission to conduct my research within the school. It is important to note that the children are not the focus of the research, instead the self-study focuses on the adaptations I can make to my teaching to improve resilience amongst the children in my class. I will be observing and conducting appropriate short interviews and checklists with the children. I will also conduct a short-written questionnaire with parents as well as a focus group with colleagues. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of all participants. Specific interventions will be used for the class. Finally, the interviews and checklist will be repeated with the children and hopefully their resilience will have improved as a result of my teaching practices.

Participation is entirely voluntary. No additional incentives will be used other than normal classroom rewards. Information collected will be totally confidential. Names of students, parents, colleagues and the school will not be included in my research. All information will

be stored in a secure place. In the event of a disclosure of abuse, confidentiality will be waived. A copy of the study will be made available in the school should the Board of Management or any participants wish to view the document.

Finally, if permission is granted to conduct my research within my classroom, I was wondering if it would be possible to apply for study leave. I have been in touch with the INTO and they have informed me that I would be entitled to up to five days study leave at the discretion of the Board of Management. I would really appreciate if you could take this into consideration.

Thank you for your continued support.

Mise le meas,

Ciara Curran.

Letter 2: Parents' letter of consent

XXXXXXXXXX,

Dublin.

8th October 2018.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am currently studying on the Master of Education (Research in Practice) programme in Maynooth University. This requires me to conduct an action research project on a topic of particular interest to me. I have chosen to study resilience in young children because, I believe that fostering this will ultimately benefit them both now and in the future. The research will examine the changes I can make to my teaching to help improve resilience among the children in my class.

It is important to note that the children are not the focus of this research. Instead this is a self-study action research project focusing on my values and on improving my teaching practices. I intend to gather information through observing the children in the classroom, a daily reflective journal and doing checklists and short interviews with them. As this is just a small-scale study that needs to be carried out before the end of the academic year, my research cycle will commence in January. I will also conduct a short questionnaire with parents. Specific positive interventions will be implemented. Finally, the children's interviews and checklists will be repeated to assess changes as a result of my teaching practices.

Ethical and School Safeguarding Guidelines will be adhered to at all times when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University. I would greatly appreciate permission for your child to participate in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw this permission at any time. Information collected will be highly confidential. Names of students, parents, colleagues and the school will not be included in my research. All information gathered will be stored in a safe and secure location.

I would be very grateful if you and your child would participate in this study. If you require any additional information please feel free to contact me by email at ciara.curran.2019@mumail.ie .

Thanking you in advance,

Yours sincerely,

_____

Ciara Curran

Please sign and return as soon as possible to Ciara Curran

Yes, _____ (insert child's name) will participate in the study.

No, _____ (insert child's name) will not participate in the study.

_____   _____

      Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

****

***

Yes, I will participate in a short questionnaire.

_____   _____

 Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

No, I will not participate in a short questionnaire.

_____   _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

Letter 3: Children's letter of consent

My teacher goes to college. She is learning just like you. She is doing a project in our class. Please tell me if you would like to be part of helping me to be a better teacher. You can change your mind at any time.

Take some time to think about it!

Thank you,

Ms. Curran.

Yes	Yes please!
👍	I would like to help you with your work but I can change my mind later if I want to. Sign (Name): _____

Letter 4: Colleagues' letter of consent

XXXXXXXXXX,

Dublin.

8th October 2018.

Dear colleagues,

I am currently studying on the Master of Education (Research in Practice) programme in Maynooth University. This requires me to conduct an action research project on a topic of particular interest to me. I have chosen to study resilience in young children because, I believe that fostering this will ultimately benefit them both now and in the future. The research will examine the changes I can make to my teaching to help improve resilience among the children in my class.

It is important to note that the children are not the focus of this research. Instead this is a self-study action research project focusing on my values and on improving my teaching practices. I intend to gather information through observing the children in the classroom, a daily reflective journal and doing checklists and short interviews with them. As this is just a small-scale study that needs to be carried out before the end of the academic year, my research cycle will commence in January. I will also conduct a short questionnaire with parents. Specific positive interventions will be implemented. Finally, the children's interviews and checklists will be repeated to assess changes as a result of my teaching practices.

Ethical and School Safeguarding Guidelines will be adhered to at all times when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the

Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University. I would greatly appreciate permission for your child to participate in this study. Participation

is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw this permission at any time. Information collected will be highly confidential. Names of students, parents, colleagues and the school will not be included in my research. All information gathered will be stored in a safe and secure location.

I would be very grateful if you and you would participate in this study. If you require any additional information please feel free to contact me by email at ciara.curran.2019@mumail.ie .

Thanking you in advance,

 Yours sincerely,

_____

Ciara Curran

Please sign and return to Ciara Curran

Yes, I would like to participate in the focus group.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

No, I would like to participate in the focus group.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

Appendix B

Fun FRIENDS acronym

F eelings   (Talk about your feelings and care about other people's feelings)

R elax   (Do 'milkshake breathing', have some quiet time)

I can try   (We can all try our best)

E ncourage   (How to be a good friend, step plans to a happy home)

N urture   (Quality time together, doing fun activities).

D on't forget to be brave   (Practise skills everyday with family and friends)

S tay happy   (☺)

Appendix C:

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
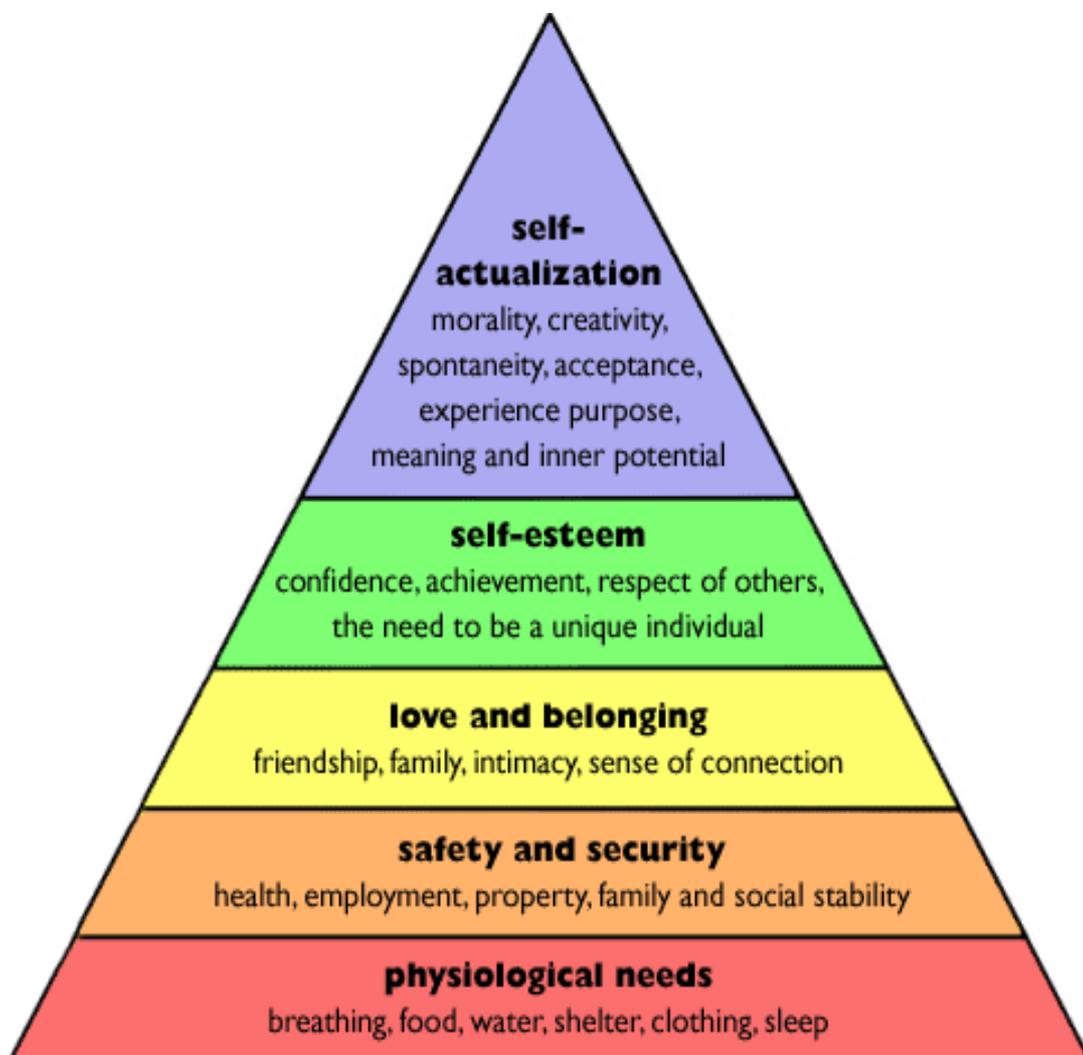
Appendix D:

Bloom's Taxonomy
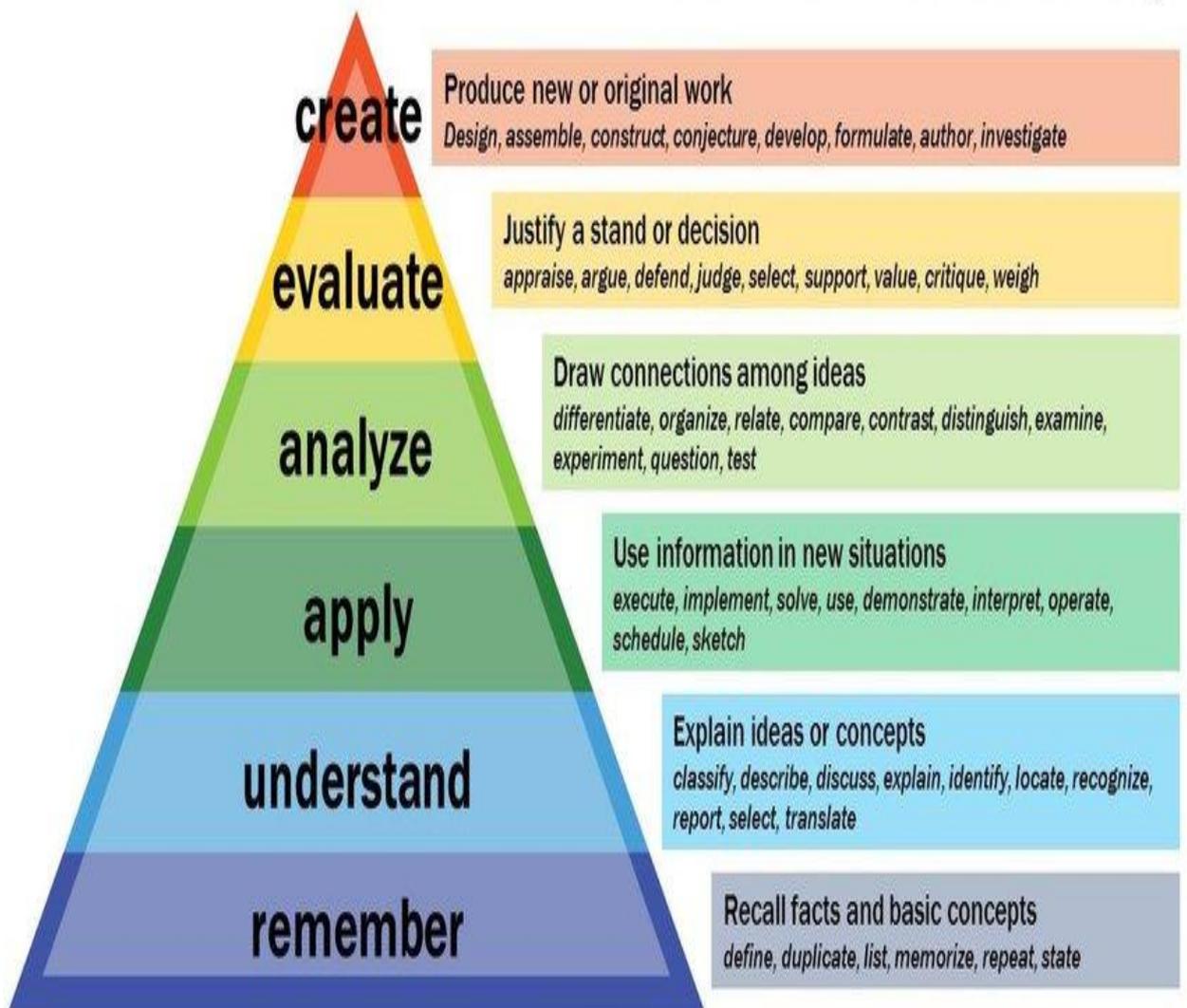
Appendix E:

The Resilience Framework (for Children and Young People).
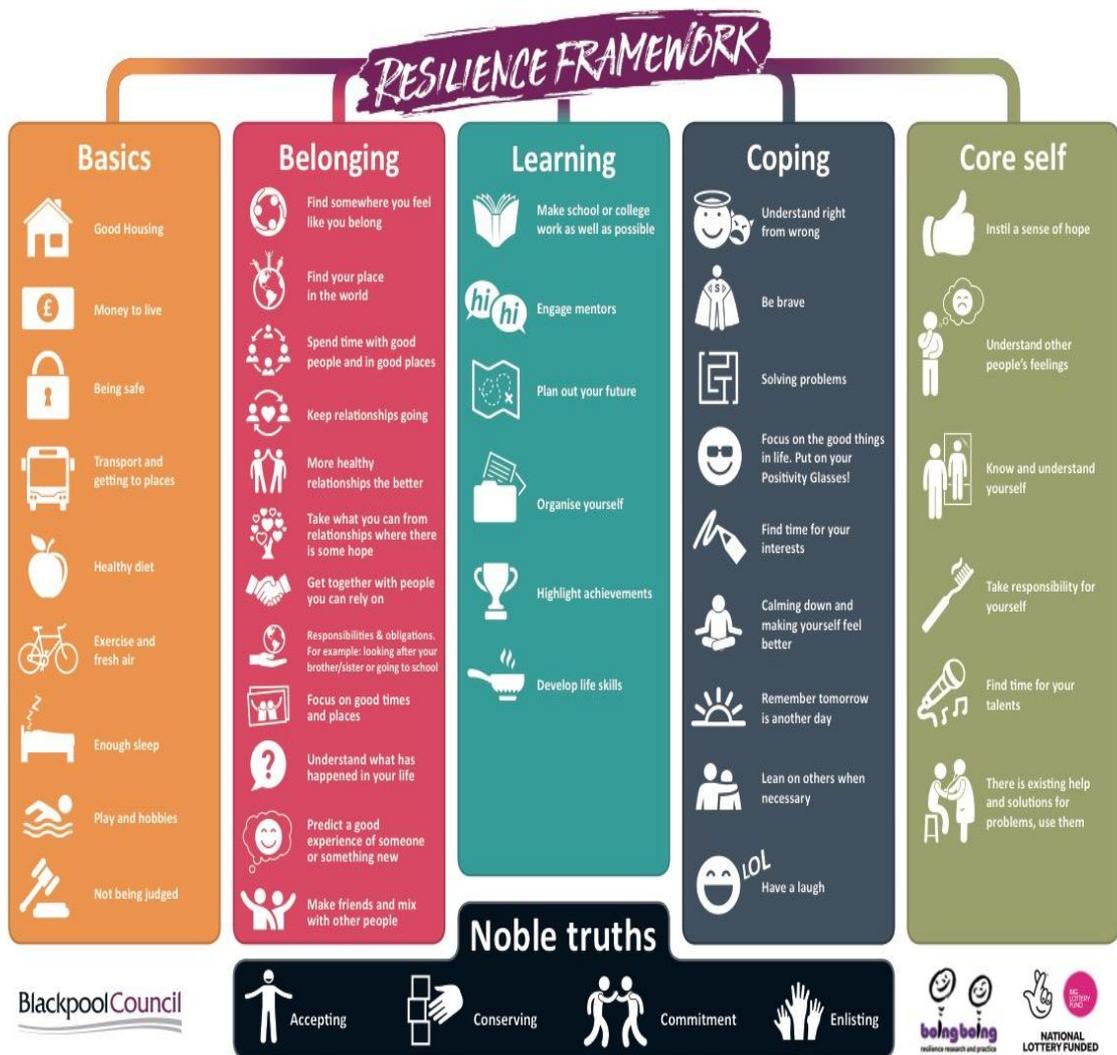
Appendix F:

Theory of Multiple Intelligences
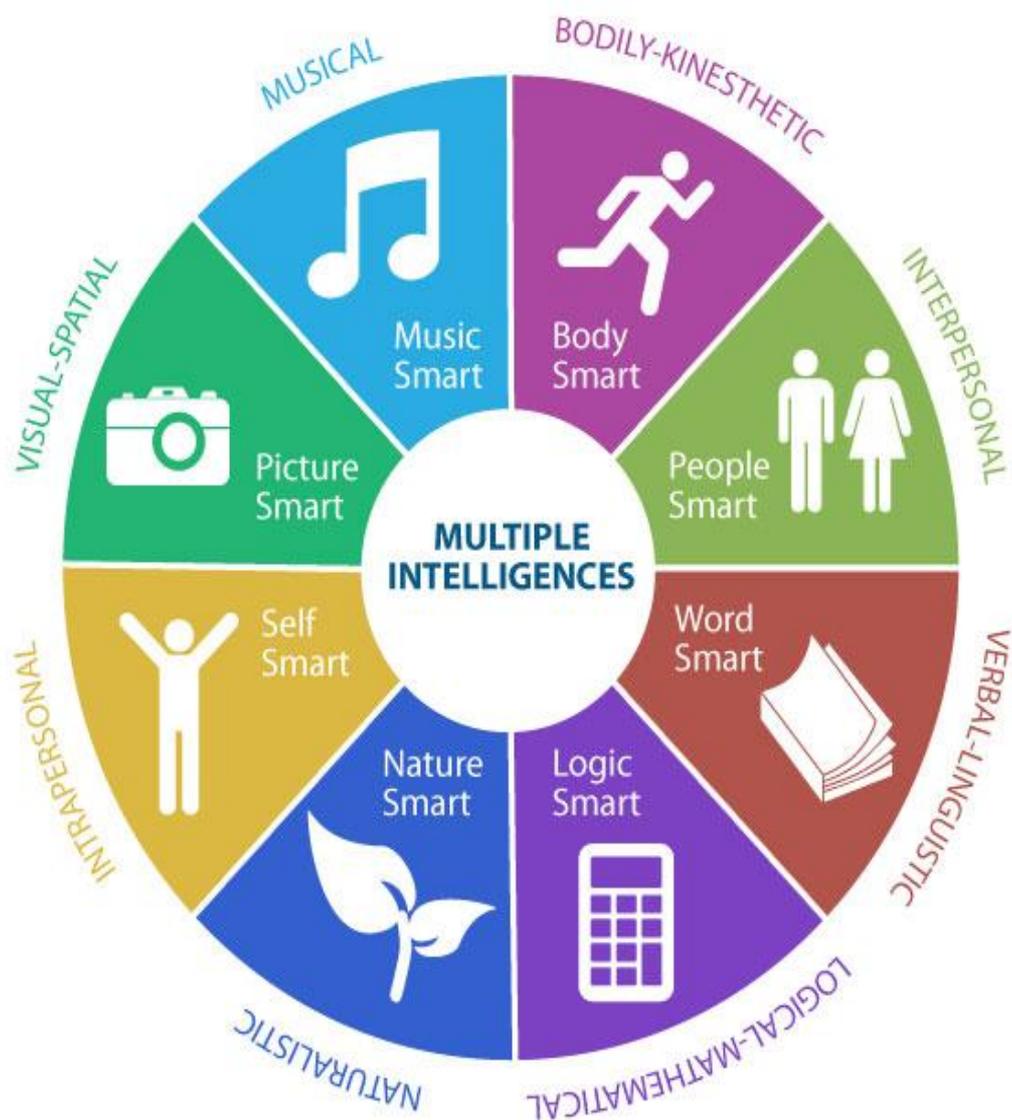
Appendix G:

My Framework for Action Research

Fun FRIENDS' (schedule of sessions which have been incorporated into S.P.H.E)

	Topic	Session	Title	Activity	Week
Acronym		1	Getting Started	Compliment circle Being brave	1
F	Feelings	2-3	My feelings Your feelings – I will help	Feelings corner game Happiness flower Helping hand	1 1 2
R	Relax	4	Our bodies and relaxation games	Milkshake breathing Relaxation activities	2 2
I	I can try	5-6	'Red' and 'green' thoughts Changing 'red' thoughts to 'green' thoughts	Feelings Vs Thoughts Car game: Stop and Go!	3 3
E	Encourage	7-9	Doing things one step at a time Steps to being a good friend Giving ourselves a pat on the back!	One step at a time Being a good friend Organising a party	3 4 4
N	Nurture	10	Nurture	Being a hero!	4
D	Don't forget to be brave	11	Don't forget to be brave	Friendship drawing	4
S	Stay happy	12	Dress up party!	N/A	

Appendix H:

Visual Art lessons using Vincent van Gogh as a stimulus for activities.

Stimulus	Session	Activity	Week	Materials	Linkage
		Action Research Cycle 1			
Vincent Van Gogh-Irises	1	Baseline Activity – no assistance provided. Look and respond to Irises on IWB as they see fit.	1	Paper Pencils Marker, twistable, pastels, IWB	S.P.H.E-feelings Fun FRIENDS-I can try, nurture, encourage
Vincent Van Gogh-Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear	2	Looking and responding to self-portrait with bandaged ear Use PSC Visual Art Teacher Guidelines as prompt questions for becoming 'Art Detectives' Allow the children to come up with their own thoughts on the image. Tell story of portrait at the end. Use materials to represent a time when we were feeling sad	2	Black and white dry materials e.g. chalk, markers, crayons, pastels, colouring pencils	S.P.H.E-feelings Fun FRIENDS-I can try, nurture, encourage
Potatoe Eaters	3	Introduce Van Gogh the artist and person to the children Look at his life Look and Respond to picture discussing colours and atmosphere created using light Recreate light in the image using neutral, gold and yellow pastels.	2		S.P.H.E-feelings Fun FRIENDS-I can try, nurture, encourage Growth Mindset
The Bedroom	4	Look and Respond Free-play Children given a corner from the image. Finish the picture as they see fit.	3		S.P.H.E-feelings Fun FRIENDS-I can try, nurture, encourage
		Action Research Cycle 2			

Sunflowers (1888)	6	Still Life Oil Pastel drawing of Sunflowers Look and Respond Freeplay	5		S.P.H.E-feelings Fun FRIENDS-I can try, nurture, encourage
Self Portraits	7	At least 30 self-portraits completed by Van Gogh. Displayed around the classroom for a looking and responding activity Children will make their own self-portraits of themselves.	6	Variety of self-portraits by Van Gogh iPads Pencils Paint/Paint brushes	S.P.H.E-feelings Fun FRIENDS-I can try, nurture, encourage
Starry Night	8 + 9	Look and Respond Free play with materials Colours and strokes used Collaborative mosaic of Starry Night	7+8	Paint Different sized paint brushes	

Appendix I:

Curriculum Links

Subject	Strand	Strand Unit	Learning Objective
SPHE	Myself	Feelings and Emotion	- Express personal opinions, feelings, thoughts and - ideas with growing confidence - Name a variety of feelings and talk about situations - where these may be experienced - Explore and discuss occasions that can promote - positive feelings in himself/herself - Become aware and be able to choose healthy ways - of feeling good about himself/herself - Recognise that individual actions can affect - the feelings of others
Visual Art	Drawing Paint and Colour	Making Drawings Looking and Responding Painting	- experiment with the marks, lines, shapes, textures, patterns and tones that can be made with different drawing instruments on a range of surfaces - make drawings based on his/her personal or imaginative life with a growing sense of spatial relationships - draw from observation - look at and talk about his/her work, the work of other children and the work of artists - explore colour with a variety of materials and media - use colour expressively to interpret themes based on his/her personal or imaginative life - discover colour in the visual environment and become sensitive to tonal variations between light and dark, and to variations in pure colour (hue) - explore the relationship between how things feel and how they look

Appendix J:

Timetable (DES)
Intervention was planned in accordance with the Department of Education and Science adhering to the suggested time allocation.

| Subject	Weekly Time Allocation (Infants)	Weekly Time Allocation (1st-6th Class)
Language 1 (English)	4 hrs	5 hrs
Language 2 (Gaeilge)	2 hrs 30 mins	3 hrs 30 mins
Mathematics	3 hrs 25 mins	4 hrs 10 mins
SESE (History, Geography, Science)	2 hrs 15 mins	3 hrs
SPHE	0 hrs 30 mins	0 hrs 30 mins
PE	1 hr	1 hr
Arts Education (Visual Art, Drama, Music)	2 hrs 30 mins	3 hrs
Religious Education	2 hrs 30 mins	2 hrs 30 mins
Assembly Time	1 hr 40 mins	1 hr 40 mins
Rolla	0 hr 50 mins	0 hr 50 mins
Breaks – Little Break	0 hr 50 mins	0 hr 50 mins
Recreation – Big Break	2 hrs 30 mins	2 hrs 30 mins
Total	**23 hrs 30 mins**	**28 hrs 30 mins**

Appendix K:

Kolb's model of experiential learning

Taken from Reflective Writing Task Two: (Curran: 2018)

"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984: 38)

The Experiential Learning Cycle
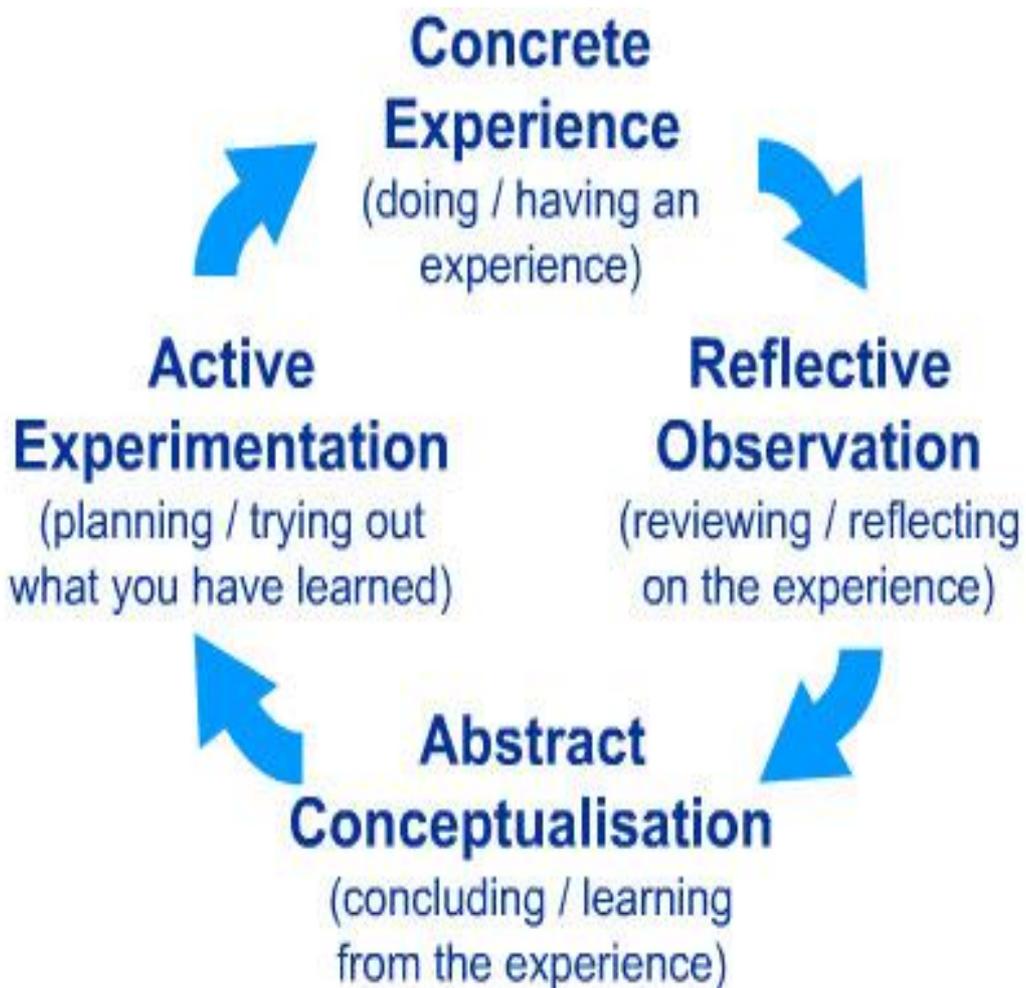
Appendix L:

NEPS teacher checklist

Teacher Checklist for Whole-class Structures and Supports

Skill Area and Indicators	1 = Seldom 2 = Sometimes 3 = Frequently			Target for Attention	
1) Relationships and Social Environment	**1**	**2**	**3**	**Yes**	**No**
Positive communication system with parents					
Inclusion of parents in school activities					
Encouragement of pupils to bring in family photographs					
Provision of opportunities for pupils to share personal experiences					
Seeking of opportunities to speak with pupils on an individual basis					
Provision of opportunity for pupils to express opinions/voice concerns					
Personal greeting of pupils					
Celebration of birthdays and other significant events					
Opportunities to provide positive feedback to pupils					
Celebration of achievements however small					
Inviting pupils to help with daily tasks and responsibilities					
Provision of opportunities for pupils to display autonomy and make choices					
Sharing of your own thoughts and feelings					
Expression of confidence in pupils to succeed					
Teaching of co-operative learning skills					
Teaching of positive playground behaviour					
Inclusion of pupils in negotiating classroom rules					
Explicit teaching of positive classroom behaviour					
2) The Learning Environment	**1**	**2**	**3**	**Yes**	**No**
Differentiation of the curriculum to cater for pupils with special needs					
Provision of flexible grouping arrangements					
Provision of balance within activities to cater for different learning styles					
Inclusion of fun activities in the school day					
Provision of balance in individual, paired and group learning					
Anticipation of difficulties which may arise in the lesson					
Access to a range of learning resources and materials					
3) Classroom Organisation	**1**	**2**	**3**	**Yes**	**No**
Provision of a pleasant, clean and welcoming classroom					
Good lighting, ventilation and temperature control					
Age appropriate displays - changed regularly					
Displays of pupils' work					
Ease of movement in the classroom - good use of space					
Consideration of appropriate seating arrangements					
Easy access to materials/books/supplies					
Clear behaviour expectations established					
Routines for greetings and farewell					
Routines for starting and finishing lessons					
Routines for asking for assistance					
Routines for tidying up					
Routines for transitions between activities					

Skill Area and Indicators	1 = Seldom 2 = Sometimes 3 = Frequently			Target for Attention	
Timetable includes balance between activities – listening, writing, oral, music, drama etc.					
Timetable reflects the needs of pupils with a range of difficulties including learning, emotional and behavioural					
Timetable includes structured breaks					
Use of appropriate praise and attention					
Tactical ignoring of low-level disruptive behaviour					
Use of distracting and redirecting strategies					
Planned approach when responding to non-compliant behaviour					
Consequences applied firmly and calmly					
Attention returned quickly when pupil behaves appropriately					
4) Teacher Attitudes and Behaviour	1	2	3	Yes	No
The teacher reflects on the relationship between the pupil's behaviour and their social and emotional development					
The teacher is aware when the pupil's behaviour is 'pushing their buttons'					
The teacher is aware of managing their own responses and reactions					
The teacher is aware when they need to seek the support of colleagues					
The teacher is aware of their tone of voice and body language					
The teacher conveys a sense of calm and control when managing challenging behaviour					
5) Social and Emotional Teaching Strategies	1	2	3	Yes	No
SPHE programme includes focus on particular needs of class and individuals					

Individualised Action Plan for Teachers
(based on Teacher Checklist for Whole Class Structures and Supports)

Key Target Areas	Strategies I will use to implement new practices and supports for pupils	Supports and resources needed to accomplish targets

Appendix M:

My thoughts about School

My thoughts about school ☺

1. The things I like best at school are:
2. The things I don't like about school are:
3. The things that I am good at are:
4. The things I find hard are:
5. I am happy in class when:
6. I am unhappy in school when:
7. I need help with:
8. Teachers in school can help me by:
9. The things my teacher does that make me feel happy are:
10. Rewards I like best are:
11. The things that I need to change are:

Appendix N:

Observation sheet used during baseline activities

Date	Subject & Content	Observation of my practice	Reflection	Action
	Morning Activities (reception 9:00-9:30)			
	S.P.H.E lesson			
	Art lesson			

Appendix O:

*Observation sheet used during semi-structured observations
(completed by Critical friend and teacher throughout research).*

Question: Date:	Observation:
1. Who is taking part?	
2. What is taking place?	
3. How routine, regular, irregular are the behaviours?	
4. How are activities being explained, organised and labelled?	
5. How do different participants behave towards each other?	
6. Who is making decisions, and for whom?	
7. What are the significant issues that appear to be discussed?	
8. Where and when does the event take place?	
9. How long does the event take place?	
10. What rules govern the social organisation of, and behaviours in the event?	

Appendix P:

Bloom's Taxonomy
(used for questioning) Adapted from *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, B.S. Bloom. Boston Allyn & Bacon (1984).

Concept	Language
Knowledge: Tell what you know or remember. - What is…? - Where is…? - Which one…?	Who, What, Why, When, Omit, Choose, Which, Name, Select, Find, Match, Name, Label, Show, Recall
Comprehension: Demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas. - How would you compare…? Contrast…? - Which is the best answer…? - How would you classify the type of…?	Compare, Contrast, Demonstrate, Illustrate, Rephrase, Show, Classify
Application: Use what you learn in another way - How would you use it…? - What would result if…? - What other way would you plan to…?	Apply, Build, Choose, Construct, Develop, Make, Use of, Organise, Plan, Solve, Model, Identify
Analysis: Look at something closely to find out more about it. - Why do you think…? - What inference can you make…? - What is the relationship between…?	Analyse, Discover, Dissect, Infer, Examine, Survey, Test for, Relationships
Synthesis: Put ideas or parts of things together. - What ways could…? - Why do you think…? - Imagine…?	Build, Combine, Compile, Create Design, Formulate, Imagine, Invent, Predict
Evaluation: Tell if something is right or wrong, good or bad. - Do you agree / disagree…? - Why do you think…? - Decide if…?	Criticise, Decide, Defend, Evaluate, Recommend, Agree, Appraise, Opinion, Disprove

Appendix Q:

Visual Data

Samples of pictures of children's work during Fun FRIENDS and Visual Art
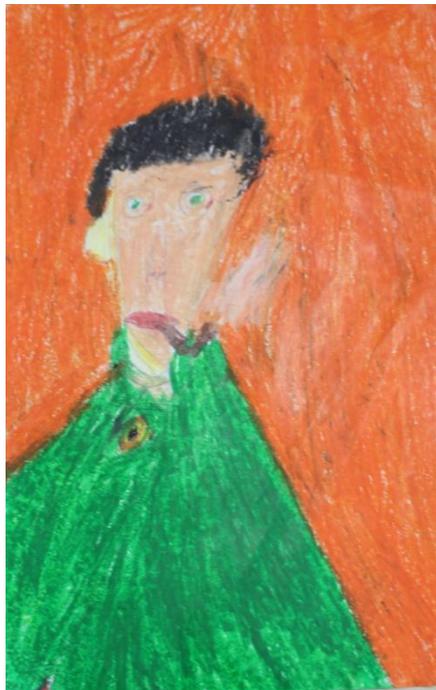
Fun FRIENDS- happiness flowers

Lavender pillow making

Milkshake Breathing

The Chair by Vincent van Gogh

Fun FRIENDS- positive ways of channelling upset or anger