The Experience of Migrant Students in an Irish Second Level School

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ABSTRACT

Immigration to Ireland in the late 20th and early 21st century has transformed Irish society from being a largely mono-cultural to a more intercultural society. This study is concerned with the experience of migrant students in a second level school. It explores the experiences of a small number of migrant students who completed five years of second level education in a provincial Irish town. The students came from a range of countries in Eastern Europe and Africa.

This is a one-school insider case study where the principal is the researcher using qualitative interviews with students and staff to build a picture of intercultural education with its strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with students in the year or two after they completed school. Teachers' experiences were also analysed using questionnaires and interviews. The portrait that emerges is that of a school in transition with a vibrant and complex intercultural student population.

Themes emerging as significant from the research include the school curriculum, bullying and racism, relationships with teachers, the role of parents, the experience of socialisation and schooling and pedagogical responses. These complex issues are discussed in light of student experiences, teacher comments and insights from literature.

Recommendations are made for a more inclusive curriculum, for celebrating the resource that is an intercultural classroom, for a pedagogy of cooperative learning, peer education and action research by students and teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this work to the staff and students in the school of this study, especially the students who volunteered to be interviewed by me and to all teachers who work on the margins of society and seek to make this world a better place.

"Our job is to figure out ways to help people take over their own lives"

Myles Horton

CHAPTER 1

TOWER OF BABEL – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THIS RESEARCH

Aim of this Research

The aim of this research is to investigate the experiences of newcomer students to an Irish second level school through the lens of interculturalism, to record how they perceived the school in all its aspects- social, curricular, pedagogical and to discover how to improve practice and make recommendations for future practice in Ireland. Its focus is on the qualitative experiences of eight young people whose families migrated to Ireland in the 1990s and 2000s and who spent up to five years in secondary school before sitting their Leaving Certificate examination in June 2012. This was a time of key changes in Irish society and education with regard to migration and interculturalism. Emergent research themes are concerned with the quality of their education, their experience of interculturalism and inclusion, the relevance of their curriculum and learning, issues of recognition and the extent of in-school and out-of-school racism and bullying, their relationship with teachers and the role their parents played in their education. The research was conducted as partial requirement of an Education Doctorate programme (2010-13), with empirical research carried out over the course of the academic/school year 2012-2013 in one second level school where I was principal (1994-2013).

The methodology used was qualitative in nature, with in depth interviews conducted with eight students, recording their experiences of the five years of second level schooling with

these themes arising from analysis of the narratives discussed in these conversations. The themes that arose from these student interviews were also studied from the vantage point of teacher perspectives in the same school, elicited by means of teacher questionnaires. These findings were further examined through in depth teacher interviews with three key teachers in the school who are experienced in inclusive issues and in an interview with an educational administrator in the local education authority of the school. The outcome is the exploration of findings based on the young peoples' experiences and teachers' reflections, with discussions and recommendations for improvement of intercultural education in the school context. Although the findings will reflect the experience of students in one case study school, it is hoped that they will resonate with other schools and contribute more generally towards improving intercultural education nationally in terms of curriculum relevance, pedagogy, parental involvement, dealing with bullying and racism and the role of schools in the socialisation and integration of migrant students. This is particularly pertinent, given the limited scale of qualitative empirical research which exists on this topic (Allemann-Ghionda, 2009).

The School Setting

The school at the centre of this research is a second-level VEC school[1] with DEIS status[2]. There were 557 students enrolled in September 2012 of whom 40 per cent were international students from 27 different nationalities, 10 per cent were traveller students, 20 per cent had

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[1] VEC is a Vocational Education Committee – a local education authority in charge of state public education arranged on a county basis. In 2013 there were 27 VECs which were rationalised and amalgamated into 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) on 1 August 2013 http: www.etbi.ie
[2] DEIS stands for Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools – a targeted programme of the Department of Education and Science to address disadvantage .http: www.education.ie

special needs and 80 per cent had medical cards. Seventy eight of these students were PLC[3] students taking four courses at PLC level – Business Studies/Secretarial, Childcare, Art Portfolio Preparation and Information Technology. The standard curriculum was taught with a core curriculum of Irish, English, Maths, History, Geography, Physical Education, Religious Education, CSPE[4] and SPHE[5] at junior cycle with optional choices from Business, Science, French, Home Economics, Woodwork, Metalwork, Art, Music and Technical Graphics. At senior cycle the core curriculum consisted of Irish, English, Maths PE and SPHE and students chose four subjects from Biology, Physics, Home Economics, French, Art, Construction Studies, Engineering, Business, Accounting, Religious Education and Design and Communication Graphics. Students also presented in the following languages during Leaving Certificate 2013 – Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian and Portuguese.

The school participates in the School Completion Programme[6] (SCP) with 80 per cent retention to Leaving Certificate. The SCP provides a Breakfast Club (8-9am), Homework Club (4-5pm), a full-time project worker for student support, a part-time project worker for school attendance and also targeted interventions for at-risk students such as golf, boxing, zumba, swimming and a summer programme. The school also has a Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) programme[7] with a full-time HSCL teacher who also has a post of responsibility for looking after the needs of migrant children.

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[3] PLC stands for Post Leaving Certificate Course – a course in Further Education that can lead to employment or further and higher education. The courses are usually (but not always) of one year duration and are accredited by FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council) http: www.qqi.ie
[4] CSPE is Civic, Social and Political Education. http://www.ncca.ie/en/
[5] SPHE is Social, Personal and Health Education. http://www.sphe.ie/
[6] School Completion Programme is a programme of targeted interventions to help at risk students stay in school. It has been in operation since 2002 and is run by local management committees represented of primary and secondary schools with other agencies such as the Education and Welfare Board, the Health Service Executive, the Gardaí and parents. It gets an annual grant from the Department of Education and Skills to cover staffing and activities. Its primary focus is on DEIS schools. It currently operates in approximately 300 primary schools and over 100 post-primary schools. http:www.tusla.ie/scp
[7] The Home School Community Liaison programme was established in 1990 and expanded rapidly from 200 onwards. Its aim is to involve parents in their children's education and to build links between the home and the

The school has an EAL teacher with a dedicated EAL room. The EAL programme[8] has been significantly reduced in recent years as a steadily increasing number of migrants have a good command of the English and indeed Irish languages. At one stage there were three full-time EAL teachers.

The school is situated in a market town in the Leinster region of Ireland and is one of four second level schools – the other three being an all-boys voluntary secondary school and two convent all-girls schools. A new co-educational VEC school opened for first years in September 2013 on a Greenfield site on the other side of the town. This is situated in a relatively new owner-occupier or rented series of housing estates that were a feature of the Celtic Tiger era (O'Toole, 2009; O'Brien, 2014).

The school in this study has traditionally served an urban working class community with a significant rural catchment as well. It is surrounded by public authority housing and receives a disproportionate number of disadvantaged, traveller and special needs students. This disproportionate stratification is common in Irish market towns where apparent free "choice" in second level provision is stratified by cultural and social trends (DES, 2007; Kitching, 2010; Lynch, 2005). It should be pointed out that one of the other three voluntary secondary schools has traditionally catered for traveller girls and has significant numbers of international students (about 15 per cent).

The school in this study has 45 teachers and 10 special needs assistants (SNAs). Most of the teachers have been employed in the past 10 years as school enrolment grew from 350 in 2000

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school. It targets the most marginalised children and their families and works at both primary and second level in DEIS schools (Conaty, 2002).

[8] EAL stands for English as an Additional Language and extra teachers were appointed to schools to teach English to students whose native language was not English and who had difficulty speaking English. Teaching resources were given for two years to teach student who was deemed eligible.

to 557 in 2013. The school's ethos is open, democratic and inclusive and its mission

statement explains that it is committed to quality education at second level and post-leaving

certificate level. It also seeks to enrich students' lives and empower them for life's

challenges and this is undertaken in a caring atmosphere of good order and discipline and in

partnership with parents. The mission statement was drawn up in 1999 after consultation

between staff, parents and the Board of Management.

Background context of this Study

The circumstances that form the setting for this study are that I was principal of this DEIS

second level school for 19 years from 1994 – 2013. Initially the school had a mix of

predominantly working class children from an urban and rural catchment. It had a large

Repeat Leaving Certificate cohort (up to 90) of mainly middle-class children who wanted to

improve their points to gain access to third level. This was the high water mark of the 'points

race'[9]. The school also had one post-leaving certificate secretarial class. A significant

number of teachers were wedded to their roles and quite resistant to change. There were high

rates of student drop out and teacher burn out (Le Compte and Dworkin, 1991).

Enrolment was falling and reached an all-time low in 1998. The viability of the school and

its capacity to provide a comprehensive curriculum were called into question. However,

matters began to improve gradually in part due to an expanding urban catchment and in part

due to a trickle of migrant students. Increased participation by travellers, more special needs

students entering mainstream education and better retention rates also resulted in rising

numbers. Overall national retention levels to Leaving Certificate rose from 84.7 per cent for

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[9] Points race in the Irish education context refers to the competition among students to get enough points from
their Leaving Certificate scores or grades to enable them to pursue the third level course of their choice. Points
rise or fall in response to supply and demand.

students who entered secondary school in 2001 to 90.1 per cent for those who entered in 2007. For DEIS schools the figures are 68 per cent to 80.4 per cent in the same period (DES, 2014). A knock on effect of these developments was the employment of a new cohort of younger teachers selected and inducted by the principal and the VEC. This also had the effect of giving the principal the opportunity to put his "stamp" on the school in the light of his world-view which will be discussed and analysed in Chapter 2.

The trickle of migrant students became a torrent after 2002 with large numbers of students enrolling from Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa especially Nigeria. From being a largely mono-cultural school in 1994, the school became a latter day tower of Babel by the end of the noughties. How the school and its teachers and students managed this transformation is the background context to this study.

The Irish societal context of migration

Increased globalisation combined with the push and pull factors of poverty, war, famine, labour shortages, poorer life chances pushing people on the one hand and better employment opportunities, living standards and chances pulling people on the other hand – all these factors have resulted in massive migration movements towards the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. The countries with the highest number of immigrants as percentage of their population internationally are Australia (23.8 per cent), Canada (19.1 per cent), Luxembourg (32.4 per cent), New Zealand (19.4 per cent) and Switzerland (23.8 per cent) (OECD, 2006). In the European context, political changes such as the end of the cold war and the accession of the former Soviet Bloc states of Eastern Europe to the EU have also had a major impact.

Ireland's traditional pattern of high levels of emigration was different to this, although there was always a continuous small stream of returning Irish nationals mainly back to Ireland as migration is not always a one way process. Figure 1 (CSO, 2012, p. 26) shows the number of Irish nationals returning from 1980 – 2010 and also non-Irish nationals. The number of Irish nationals peaked around 2000 whereas the number of non-Irish nationals peaked around 2006. What is noticeable about this graph is the dramatic rise in non-national migration levels in a relatively short space of time in the mid-2000s. It is within this demographic context that this research is based.

Figure 1:
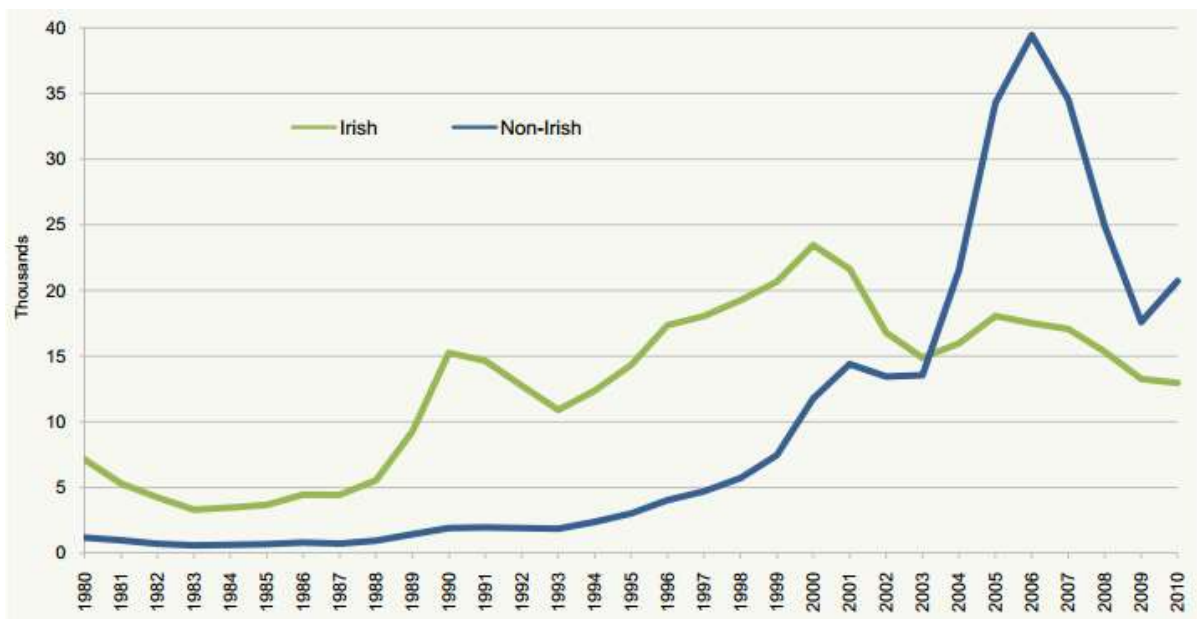
This is the time period when the students at the centre of this study and their families settled in Ireland. There were 199,206 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland in 2011 who had arrived in Ireland since 2004. The corresponding number for Irish nationals who had arrived in

Ireland since 2004 was 112,766. These numbers put huge pressure on public services and infrastructure such as education, housing and transport.

Where were these people coming from? The majority came from the UK, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia in Europe; from Nigeria and South Africa in Africa; from India and the Philippines in Asia. The US and Brazil were the majority from the Americas. There are significant pattern changes between 2006 and 2011. In all Census 2011 recorded 182 languages being spoken in Ireland. Figure 2 (*ibid,* 37) below shows the population of non-Irish nationality in 2006 and 2011 with the percentage changes between these two years.

Figure 2:

Nationality	2006	2011			Actual change 2006 - 2011	Percentage change 2006 - 2011
	Persons	Persons	Males	Females		
EU	284,440	386,764	193,408	193,356	102,324	36.0
Belgium	910	1,071	545	526	161	17.7
Bulgaria	969	1,759	887	872	790	81.5
Czech Republic	5,159	5,451	2,876	2,575	292	5.7
Estonia	2,272	2,560	1,043	1,517	288	12.7
France	9,046	9,749	4,824	4,925	703	7.8
Germany	10,289	11,305	5,011	6,294	1,016	9.9
Hungary	3,440	8,034	4,211	3,823	4,594	133.5
Italy	6,190	7,656	4,309	3,347	1,466	23.7
Latvia	13,319	20,593	9,112	11,481	7,274	54.6
Lithuania	24,628	36,683	17,470	19,213	12,055	48.9
Netherlands	3,990	4,313	2,322	1,991	323	8.1
Poland	63,276	122,585	63,382	59,203	59,309	93.7
Portugal	1,798	2,739	1,589	1,150	941	52.3
Romania	7,696	17,304	8,812	8,492	9,608	124.8
Slovakia	8,111	10,801	5,663	5,138	2,690	33.2
Spain	6,052	6,794	2,727	4,067	742	12.3
Sweden	1,742	1,713	690	1,023	-29	-1.7
UK	112,548	112,259	56,374	55,885	-289	-0.3
Other	3,005	3,395	1,561	1,834	390	13.0
Rest of Europe	15,760	16,307	8,003	8,304	547	3.5
Russia	4,495	3,896	1,746	2,150	-599	-13.3
Ukraine	3,122	3,343	1,612	1,731	221	7.1
Moldova	2,165	2,881	1,431	1,450	716	33.1
Turkey	766	1,029	750	279	263	34.3
Other	5,212	5,158	2,464	2,694	-54	-1.0
Africa	35,326	41,642	20,535	21,107	6,316	17.9
Nigeria	16,300	17,642	8,067	9,575	1,342	8.2
South Africa	5,432	4,872	2,366	2,506	-560	-10.3
Mauritius	641	2,844	1,591	1,253	2,203	343.7
Congo	1,184	1,770	867	903	586	49.5
Zimbabwe	1,448	1,537	672	865	89	6.1
Sudan	1,099	1,470	836	634	371	33.8
Somalia	874	1,178	625	553	304	34.8
Ghana	759	1,158	545	613	399	52.6
Egypt	743	1,055	678	377	312	42.0
Algeria	848	1,047	719	328	199	23.5
Other	5,998	7,069	3,569	3,500	1,071	17.9
Asia	46,952	65,579	33,637	31,942	18,627	39.7
India	8,460	16,986	9,110	7,876	8,526	100.8
Philippines	9,548	12,791	5,542	7,249	3,243	34.0
China	11,161	10,896	5,431	5,465	-265	-2.4
Pakistan	4,998	6,847	4,489	2,358	1,849	37.0
Malaysia	2,979	3,295	1,608	1,687	316	10.6
Bangladesh	1,876	2,319	1,422	897	443	23.6
Thailand	754	1,381	347	1,034	627	83.2
Iraq	480	1,081	571	510	601	125.2
Saudi Arabia	40	1,029	620	409	989	2472.5
Other	6,656	8,954	4,497	4,457	2,298	34.5
America	21,124	24,884	11,431	13,453	3,760	17.8
USA	12,475	11,015	4,752	6,263	-1,460	-11.7
Brazil	4,388	8,704	4,408	4,296	4,316	98.4
Canada	2,343	2,384	987	1,397	41	1.7
Other	1,918	2,781	1,284	1,497	863	45.0
Australia	4,033	2,849	1,445	1,404	-1,184	-29.4
New Zealand	1,756	1,394	783	611	-362	-20.6
Other nationalities	7,984	4,098	2,220	1,878	-3,886	-48.7
Multi nationality	2,358	840	402	438	-1,518	-64.4
Total	419,733	544,357	271,864	272,493	124,624	29.7

Historically the Irish experience of migration has been emigration from the 18ᵗʰ to the 20ᵗʰ centuries (restarting with the economic collapse of 2008). Therefore, when the tables were turned during the short-lived "Celtic Tiger" of the late 1990s and early 2000s, this brought a new dimension into Irish social, cultural and educational life. The town which hosts the school at the centre of this study saw rapid expansion from a population of about 10,000 in 1990 to close to 30,000 by 2013. Much of this population surge was accounted for by relocations from Dublin but also by immigration from Eastern Europe and Africa (especially Nigeria).

These sudden population changes put pressure on infrastructure and services – including educational provision. As the DEIS school was the smallest of the four schools in the town and had vacant places, it received a disproportionate number of immigrant children. Enrolment policies and practices and a perception that two of the other schools were "full" or "hard to get into" as well as some students and parents reporting that they were made to feel welcome at the school all contributed to Blackthorn College becoming the school of choice for most immigrant parents and their children.

Research questions

The questions posed by this research are framed within the broader context of migration outlined above and seen through an intercultural lens – what was the student experience of school-goers from a minority community, how did the young people perceive their new environment and community, how comfortable did they feel and how well did they integrate in their new school setting, how can we enhance their school experience and make recommendations to improve practice in Ireland? My questions and concerns grew from

observing daily school life and asking myself and other teachers and colleagues whether we are doing things properly, why certain things appear to be working and others not working and how all these changes fit in to an evolving education system and society. Having worked in disadvantaged schools all my professional life, I wanted to explore how migrant students fitted in to such a school and what benefits (if any) they brought to and received from an education in such a setting.

Rationale for this study

As Ireland becomes an increasingly intercultural society, its schools and education system will reflect this fact. It is important that we integrate our newcomer students and their families into our society. Newcomer students need to understand and respect our society and we need to understand and respect theirs. It is important that we do not make the same mistakes that we have made in the past in relation to other minority groups or as other European countries have and create an outsider underclass with ghettos and a parallel society. The Irish have been very successful in integrating into other societies although our record is not without difficulties and struggle. Perhaps we can "give something back" as we deal with immigrants to our shores. On an educational level, newcomer students bring great diversity of experience, language, culture to us and this may be a useful and productive resource for our schools (Byrne, McGinnity, Smyth, Darmody, 2010). As Miles Horton put it: "My job is to provide opportunities for people to grow … to provide a climate which nurtures islands of decency, where people can learn in such a way that they continue to grow" (Horton, 1990, p. 130). My particular interest was to give voice to the experiences and perspectives of these newcomer students. In working with students on this research, their attitudes, ideas and experiences will be respected and recorded at all times, analysing the insights that we can

glean from their experiences of school life at this time of significant social change and

critique our school system to build better schools more responsive to the needs of students .

> Students' perspectives about their schooling experiences are a relatively new and
> growing field of inquiry. This kind of research is especially significant in
> multicultural education because of the inherent student-centeredness of the field.
> Thus, listening to what students have to say about their experiences and attending to
> their suggestions can result in a more critical conception of multi-cultural education
>
> (Nieto, 2004, p. 181)

Contribution of this study to knowledge

Intercultural education in all its guises and manifestations is a growing phenomenon in an

increasingly globalised world with high migration patterns. There is a huge literature

internationally in this area relating to history, policy, practice, pedagogy, religion, race,

inclusion, language, curriculum and assessment. In Ireland there is a small but growing body

of research addressing various issues in intercultural education.

This study is amongst the first in Ireland to study the experiences of migrant children in a

second level school during this era of key change. It is conducted by a school leader who was

the principal/researcher and thus brings a specific viewpoint to the fore- not that of an

outsider looking in or that of a teacher looking out but from the heart of school management

working in a school with high numbers of students from migrant backgrounds. It is my hope

to make a modest contribution to the literature and praxis of inclusive education from the

perspective of a practitioner working and researching in this context. As Macbeath (2014, p.

35) put it: "Research in education has none of the glamour of its counterparts in medicine,

science, or exploration of space. It cannot claim to save lives, to identify the very origins of

life itself or pave a way for inter-planetary travel". However it can affect change and bring

about personal and societal transformations and these have been my aims in educational

practice which will hopefully infuse and inform this research. Throughout this research I have used the term intercultural in preference to multicultural where possible as the latter term can have pejorative meanings depending on social, geographical or political context.

Thesis structure

Chapter 2 provides and explains the conceptual framework. This is an insider study and my ontological and epistemological stances as a researcher are explored. I outline my experiences as a young teacher in a new community school, a researcher on a health education project, being principal of a small rural vocational school and later as school leader of a large urban vocational school serving disadvantaged areas. Formative passions for history and literature are discussed, as are my readings in education. These experiences and interests affect the way I think and colour this research project.

Chapter 3 provides a literature review of the issues involved in multicultural and inclusive education. It draws on studies from Ireland, Britain, Europe, the US and further afield to provide a brief history of multicultural and intercultural education, to identify the main issues in the various countries and their relevance to the Irish situation, including racism, equity, teacher education, parental involvement and inclusion. National and local authorities have a role to play in promoting a balanced population mix and devising policy that is useful to explore. However it is at the school level that inclusion and the curriculum need to be addressed and implemented in practice by school leaders, teachers and parents.

Chapter 4 describes the methodology used to elicit the views of students and teachers. The reasons for the qualitative approach are outlined and the role of the researcher is discussed. I

show how I recruited my interviewees, why I chose qualitative research methods, how I conducted my interviews, how I addressed the insider issue, what the ethical implications were and the scope and limitations of the methods I used.

Chapter 5 presents the data obtained from the empirical research. It summarises this information under the thematic headings of curriculum, role of parents, bullying and racism, relationship with teachers and the process of socialisation and schooling.

Chapter 6 is an analysis and discussion of the findings of the previous chapter, seeking to reach conclusions about the issues raised in this research. It discusses students' experiences of their schooling, identifying how the existing curriculum and teaching methods can be adapted and enhanced. The impact of broader social issues such as the interpersonal issues of bullying and racism are discussed, as are parental involvement, and the social processes of schooling and socialisation.

Chapter 7 gives a summary of the conclusions reached, discusses the limitations of the study, identifies areas for future research and makes recommendations for good practice in schools for the future.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline and discuss the development of my conceptual thinking that forms the basis of this research. This is grounded in my experience as teacher, principal, administrator and educational practitioner in a DEIS school as I outline below. In addition, this thinking draws together my disciplinary training and readings on education, history and other readings that have influenced me in life. I have drawn on these readings and ideas to develop an epistemological position based on pragmatism which is influenced by the ideas of Bourdieu, Dewey, Habermas, and Marcuse. I have refined and distilled these through the application of these ideas in the school setting. Much of this emergent thinking about my epistemological position has been shared and discussed with my fellow course-participants during the last few years. Through this process of thinking, reading, discussion and reflection, combined with the experience of working in a school setting, I have developed my approach to research which is outlined in this chapter. I outline these ideas in the following sections of this chapter and consider their methodological implications, concluding with an afterthought based on an influential experience with some of my students a few years ago which gives a key insight into my research rationale.

The formative influence of my personal practice

I entered teaching in the 1970s during an economic downturn and was very fortunate to work in a new community school[10] with a vision of pastoral care (Collins, 1980) and a teaching staff full of commitment, enthusiasm, energy and idealism. My views were coloured by a left-liberal, humanistic psychology with a practical and ideological framework supplied by Douglas Hamblin and Leslie Button (Hamblin 1978; Button 1974). My work and my beliefs meshed together to form a unity of purpose that was fulfilling and self-actualising.

Working in this Greenfield school which had been just established in 1975 with purposeful leadership and colleagues energised by a commitment to social justice and equality of opportunity, I became aware of the possibilities of education and the inequalities that prevented full participation by marginalised groups. It was a privilege to observe students from all backgrounds achieve their potential by providing the right encouragement and supports and I learned the importance of expectation and motivation. My job was "to provide opportunities for people to grow … to provide a climate which nurtures islands of decency, where people can learn in such a way that they continue to grow" (Horton, 1990, p. 130).

The tedium of examination work and the excitement of future possibilities led me to secondment work on a regional basis with the Health Education Bureau and the Shannon Curriculum Development Centre (1980-82). I worked as a researcher and trainer with five

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[10] The community school was first proposed by the Department of Education in a memorandum dated October 1970 and published in the Winter 1970 edition of the journal *Studies* vol. LIX no. 236 and unauthored. The memorandum proposed *inter alia* a rationalisation of second level education through the amalgamation of small secondary and vocational schools into new community schools under a joined management board comprising nominees of the religious trustees and nominees of the local VEC. They were to become the norm for new schools in Greenfield situations where new suburbs were growing. Their philosophy is outlined in their Deed of Trust and can be described as progressive, comprehensive, co-educational and inclusive (Studies, LIX 236, 1970; Coolahan, 1981)

second-level schools and developed with them a health education programme for Junior Cycle students. On my return to teaching 1982-89 I worked as a trainer in health education methods and a teacher of history.

From 1989 to 1994 I worked as principal of a small rural vocational school and from 1994 to 2013 I was principal of the case study site for this research, Blackthorn College – a medium range vocational school in an urban market town setting. It was a 500 + second-level school serving a disadvantaged area with 80 per cent of student families on medical cards (DEIS school), 40 per cent international students, 25 per cent special needs, 50 traveller students and four PLC programmes. Supports included the Home School Liaison Programme (HSCL), the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), the School Completion Programme (SCP) and the JCSP Library Programme. These supports were intended to broaden, deepen and improve the regular programmes of Junior and Leaving Certificate as well as school retention, personal development, literacy, numeracy, parental involvement and career expectation and aspiration.

All three schools that I worked in had high levels of disadvantage whether calculated by social class, level of parental education, number of one parent families, unemployment, poverty, number with medical cards, participation in free books scheme or numbers from the travelling community. All three schools qualified for disadvantaged status with the Department of Education and the case study school, Blackthorn College, qualified under the DEIS programme. This stands for Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, a national initiative, established in 2005 in order to bring together the various supports outlined above and to target these supports to achieve positive outcomes for students and schools.

The main insights I have gained from this professional work are the need for good leadership, a motivated and committed staff, an ethos and vision of inclusion, a celebration of diversity and the involvement of parents. Central to meeting these needs is a school culture of respect and high aspirations. Underpinning these needs is a philosophical belief system that is tested by praxis and is grounded in the study of history, literature and education.

However, in observing the aspirations, motivations and career paths of my students, I began to question the fairness and relevance of the system of which I was an integral part. I also saw how educational credits through examination success and formal qualifications were essential for my students to realize their potential and take their place in a very unequal society. Whereas I believed anything was possible, I could see great waste and futility in the education system but did not have an integrated view of how things could be analysed and improved for the betterment of all.

The influence of History as a discipline on my thinking

My primary degree is in history and I was most fortunate to attend UCD towards the end of a golden period of historiography and to work under the humane genius of Dudley Edwards from whom 'I never experienced anything but generosity from beginning to end' (Clarke, 1988). Here I learned intellectual rigour, empathy, reliance on original sources and an understanding of history as a continuous revisionist enterprise searching for the truth in the context of the historian's viewpoint and experiences. The historical method also helps to put philosophical and sociological ideas in context and can reveal deeper meaning and relevant application when viewed with the historian's lens. My post-graduate degree in education concerned developing a retention policy (Condon, 2001) for use in a disadvantaged

secondary-school. Here I learned the need for qualitative and quantitative research, the empirical method and the rich harvest that can be reaped from an in-depth study of one's own institution and listening to the voices of young people.

Placing these young people and their school and society in context brings to mind the historiographical approach of Braudel (1980, p. 4) who sees time in terms of geographical time, social time and individual time. In terms of the *longue durée* of European history and migration, this research is but a tiny miniscule narrative of a particular social and cultural history of individuals at the start of the 21st century. Nevertheless I hope it may be of some value in recording the experiences of young people and the response of their teachers and school to their experience of schooling during this key time of societal transition. Braudel looked toward a Modern Humanism as "a way of hoping, of wishing men to be brothers one with another, and of wishing civilisations, each on its own account and all together, should save themselves and save us". (Braudel, 1980, p. 217)

More recently Cannadine has challenged us to be very wary of intellectuals, historians and politicians who assert a binary, Manichean, us- and- them view of the world. The claims of religion, nationality, class, gender, race and civilisation "are rarely as homogenous, monolithic, or all encompassing, or as naturally belligerent and as adversarily entrenched, as their leaders and apologists, propagandists and historians like to claim" (Cannadine, 2013, p. 259). A consideration of the intersectionality of factors is adopted throughout this research. This historical perspective has also influenced how I approach this study. We tend to pay more attention to the problematics of society and education in this bigger picture analysis and often do not devote attention to the positive stories or small successes of ongoing daily life. "This is partly because the deeds and attitudes that exemplify our common humanity tend to

be to historians [and educationists] what good news is to journalists – the default mode of human activity, a quotidian reality that rarely merits headlines, being somehow either unworthy or uninteresting" (Cannadine, 2013, p. 262). This is not to say that I possess naïve optimism but that I will reflect the everyday lived experience of my school, its students and teachers, in its entirety of positive and negative aspects, with critical rigour throughout this research.

Other ways of being in the world – the contribution of literature to my thinking

As well as the study of history and education, I seek enlightenment from literature especially the novel and poetry. The novelists I most admire are Joyce, McGahern and Brian Moore. The poets that have become my lifelong friends are Austin Clarke, Louis Mac Neice and W.B. Yeats. Other writers that challenge and inspire include George Orwell, Seán Ó Faolain, Colm Toibín and Paul Durcan.   I agree with Marcuse (1978, p. 7) that art can induce "the transcendence of immediate reality (which) shatters the reified objectivity of established social relations and opens a new dimension of experience: rebirth of the rebellious subjectivity." Marcuse's picture of the administered society dominated by consumerism, technology, false needs and restricted language resonates for me with contemporary society with its apathy, instant gratification and ubiquitous technology particularly in social media. He was critical of both left and right and simplistic solutions to societal problems. What art, literature and education can offer us is "a chance of breaking with the familiar, of inducing in us an awareness of other ways of being in the world" (Brookfield, 2010, p. 202). Eisner has echoed these insights remarking "teaching is a constructive activity whose efforts result in forms that can provide what the fine arts are expected to provide: a heightened consciousness and aesthetic experience" (Eisner, 1998, p. 66).

My experience both as a history teacher and as a school leader in dialogue with students, teachers and parents has convinced me that art, literature, historical study can open windows of opportunity for deep thought and reflection on all aspects of our personal and social lives. A chance encounter with a student, parent or teacher can end up with a discussion on music or art or history that can reframe both participants' point of view and possibilities for action.

Joyce's exploration of the stifling paralysis and oppression of early 20th century man in *Dubliners*, Mc Gahern's celebration of nature and community in *That They May Face the Rising Sun* and *Memoir*, Moore's unrelenting pursuit of clarity from *The Feast of Lupercal* to the *Statement* – all these writers transcend immediate reality and search for a truth about humanity. On another level Orwell's crusade for the 'truth' is still relevant: "a scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect?   And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?" (Orwell, 1962, p. 152). I believe in plain, clear prose no matter how complex the subject under discussion is to communicate effectively with the reader.

The poets Yeats, Clarke and Mac Neice were both intensely private and lyrical and also public men commenting on societal issues. Clarke's treatment of Catholic and societal oppression in *Unmarried Mothers*, *Burial of an Irish President* and *Three Poems about Children*, Yeats's hymn to aesthetics in *Sailing to Byzantium* and Mac Neice's magnum opus *Autumn Journal* on the public and private spheres, responsibilities, civil society and human decency and optimism as Europe faced the abyss – these works inspire me in my public role as principal and my less public one as educator, advisor, motivator and truth seeker in a

rapidly changing society. Mac Neice's honesty, empathy, sense of public duty, lyricism,

historical understanding and above all his humanity and positive attitude at a time of great

strife and change impel me forward as in

> What is it we want really?
> For what end and how?
> If it is feasible, obtainable
> Let us dream it now

<div align="right">(Mac Neice, 1966, p. 152)</div>

To summarise, the readings in literature which colour my research and personal outlook and

my experiences as teacher and school leader have greatly influenced how I see things. My

approach has been liberal, inclusive and hopefully emancipatory. My values have been

Christian, socialist, communitarian and humanistic. From history I have a belief in rational

problem solving, reliance on evidence and a certain republican sense of public duty and

equality grounded in the time-frame of a developing democracy that is approaching its 100th

anniversary depending on where one is situated. From literature I have a sense of the

importance of aesthetics, of narrative story-telling, of the minority or exceptional point of

view and of striving to tell the truth about ourselves and our society. These are the influences

that shape my ideas of knowledge, inquiry and education as I embark on this research.

An eclectic epistemology

As can be seen above I am an eclectic pragmatist eager to learn from life and literature,

practice and theory in order to make my life and my work meaningful and worthwhile. The

"measurement men" (Macbeath, 2014, xii) have a story to tell when they assess examination

results, attendance and retention rates, progress to third level and so on but they do not tell

the whole story. "Instead of mapping culture on to an epistemico-ontological hierarchy

topped by the logical, objective and scientific, and bottoming out in the rhetorical, subjective and unscientific, we should instead map culture on to a sociological spectrum ranging from the chaotic left, where criteria are constantly changing, to the smug right, where they are, at least for the moment, fixed" (Rorty, 1999, p. 180). The whole story of education consists of "trying to figure out ways to help people take over their own lives" and "making it possible for the students to be themselves" (Horton and Freire, 1990). Or as a student of Dewey put it "acquisition of skills, possession of knowledge, attainment of culture are not ends: they are marks of growth and means to its continuing" (Fairfield, 2009, p. 77). It is not possible to reduce the skills and dispositions that one learns in school and in life to a narrow positivistic paradigm.

As a pragmatist I believe certainty is unlikely when we produce knowledge, that our findings are provisional and contestable and that "we should give up the idea that knowledge is an attempt to represent reality. Rather, we should view inquiry as a way of using reality" (Rorty, 1999, p. 33). By this I mean that the work of this dissertation is an attempt to describe the experience of newcomer students and to learn from our inquiry lessons that may be useful in the future.

The modern world presents us with hopes, challenges and difficulties that need to be addressed in school as preparation for life and living in the present or as Dewey put it in one of his most famous quotes "education is not preparation for life, education is life itself" (Dewey, 1938).

In reflecting on the issues in education in a fast-changing school landscape at national and school level, I have found it very useful to use a number of lenses eclectically to analyse and

gain a deeper understanding of the intercultural school especially Blackthorn College which is the school at the centre of this study. These lenses are carefully considered and selected for their appropriateness in explaining and understanding the practices and dynamics of interculturalism in this specific context. These lenses have guided my thinking throughout the research process. The first lens is the sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu which addresses the issue of reproduction in education and helps to explain the backdrop of educational inequality which exists in a town with a "choice" of four secondary schools where one of them is deemed "disadvantaged status". The second lens is that is that provided by critical theorists such as Habermas in unmasking the forces at work in capitalist society in the modern world and the emancipatory potential of education. Finally using a social constructivist lens in an applied and contextualised fashion, I hope to add to our knowledge of the experiences and issues that confront young migrants as they settle in to a new society.

The lens of reproduction

The work and ideas of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) have been very influential in the sociology of education and in our understanding of the processes at work in schools and society. He sought to overcome the "absurd opposition between individual and society" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.31). He studied the extent to which the individual is influenced by their background and upbringing and the subtle ways the "system" can include and exclude the individual. The "system" is of course constructed by individuals and groups designed for the benefit of those who have the most capital. Capital can be economic (money), social (networks of friends and family), cultural (dispositions of mind and body reflected by the books we read, music we listen to, art we appreciate and validated/institutionalised through our degrees, diplomas, certificates and awards). These compete in a kind of marketplace or

"field". Individuals have *habitus* that are "the product of the internalization of the structures of the social world" (Bourdieu, 1989, p.18) or *habitus* can be described as "an internalized mental, or cognitive, structure through which people deal with the social world" (Ritzer, 2011, p.223). The value of Bourdieu's thinking is that it has enabled me to see more clearly the forces at work in school and society. It helps to explain how certain groups and individuals can command choice of school, type of work, examination success and pathways to power and influence whereas others are excluded as if this is the natural order of things. It also helps to explain the "mind-set" of people, especially young people, in their behaviours and attitudes and expectations with regard to school and society.

Bourdieu's sociological theories highlight how education can act as a key force for reproduction in society. Observing enrolment patterns in the town in this study, one is struck by the traditional pecking order in school choice and how the more middle-class schools fill up quickly and tend to have no vacancies by February of the year of pre-entry (O'Dowd, 2007), while vacant spaces continue in the DEIS school throughout the school yea. As a result migrant students tend to cluster and be over-represented in the DEIS school. However, there is diversity within this group, with migrant skilled professionals such as doctors who are often longer established in the community tending to know "the rules of the game" and ensuring their children comply with deadlines and attend open days and participate in other events that may ensure admission to the school of their choice (Lynch and Moran, 2006). Newly arrived migrants, on the other hand, usually do not have a choice as all places in the other schools have been allocated and they then enrol in schools such as Blackthorn College. Often lacking economic capital (as they are coming from a poorer country and tend to get initial employment at low pay), their social capital may be lacking due to dislocation. However, they frequently bring cultural capital as in positive dispositions towards education

and society, high levels of parental support, possession of books and artefacts and holding credits and qualifications from their native land (Bourdieu, 2010, pp. 74-75). This reflects the complexity of the resources of capital in educational reproduction and how students of similar abilities and aptitudes, while following the same programme of instruction in the same school, can have quite differing educational and social outcomes.

The interplay between migrant and Irish students and the ease or difficulty that migrant students have in settling in to school, in accessing the curriculum, the attitude of their teachers and the involvement of their parents were fruitful avenues of exploration and analysis throughout this thesis using the thinking tools that Bourdieu provided.

The educational playing "field" in Ireland is very uneven and those who benefit most are, like those in Bourdieu's France, "those already possessed of social and economic advantages [as] the purpose of the school system (is) the production and maintenance of elites" (Thomson, 2008, p. 76). Even teachers can be complicit in this, without ever realizing or reflecting on processes in front of our very eyes as we can be willing agents "primarily through practices of co-operation entrusted to teachers …"recognising its own" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 181). For this reason, Bourdieu's work has been very influential in Irish educational studies (Bryan, 2009; Devine, 2010; Hannan and Boyle, 1987; Lynch, 2005). His approach to the social forces in society opens a rich seam for investigating access, equality, school choice, enrolment policies, teacher attitudes and pedagogy, parental and societal involvement in education. Bourdieu's emphasis on habitus and social capital also has implications for social distinction and reproduction in areas such as social enrichment by means of encounters with persons of significant social capital, visits to museums, art galleries, the cinema and many social spaces that middle class children take for granted. These spaces "stimulate…and

captivate (a child's) imagination; arouse his curiosity… give him a chance to admire, in his own good time, things which are way beyond his ken; and most important of all, give him a feeling of awe for the wonders of the world" (Bettelheim, 1990, p. 148).

The challenge, it seems to me, is to identify the social forces at work, reveal them in an open and accessible way in order to make recommendations for a fairer, more equal system of education. As Bourdieu is not a determinist, there is plenty of scope for suggesting improvements based on his theoretical framework and empirical findings, and his ideas have been formative in shaping and developing my thinking throughout this thesis.

Critical Theory's emphasis on reflection and emancipation

Critical Theory aims to dig below the surface of daily life and uncover the assumptions that keep us from a true and full understanding of how the world works. For me, the insights of the Frankfurt School are particularly important in illuminating the power dynamics of the everyday experience in modern society. The challenge to ideology, the contestation of hegemony, the unmasking of power, the overcoming of alienation, and above all the learning of liberation constantly enrich my understanding of the place of education in contemporary life (Brookfield, 2010). We need to reflect on the issues at work in today's world and in today's education system to seek improvements rather than reflecting on a theoretical tomorrow. "The concept of modernity no longer comes with a promise of happiness. But despite all the talk of post modernity, there are no visible rational alternatives to this form of life. What else is left for us then, but at least to search out practical improvements within this form of life?" (Habermas, 1994, p. 107). It is this search for practical improvements that guides me in both theory and practice. My belief is that "Theory would be informed by

practice, whereas practice would be shaped by theory. In the process, both theory and practice would be enriched" (Ritzer, 2011, p. 288). Practical improvements are what make teaching relevant, rewarding, worthwhile and exciting and part of the "collective search in which those present are prepared to contribute their best ideas to date and to learn from the critical appraisal of fellow learners" (Hogan, 2009, p. 46). This resembles Habermas's ideal speech situation of "full, free and equal discourse" (Brookfield, 2010, p.228) whereby men and women can openly discuss and seek rational remedies for society's ills, and this can happen in the classroom as much as in the *piazza.*.

The relevance of Habermas's ideas can be elucidated by contextualising their progress through the history of West Germany from the conclusion of World War 2 to German unification in the 1990s. Adenauer's project of *Westbindung* – integrating West Germany into the west was on shaky ground. Many former Nazis held office and the revelations at Nuremburg were a shock to him. How can you build a healthy public sphere and civil society when "nearly half the university professors who found positions after the war owed their careers to the Nazis" (Specter, 2010, p. 47)? The backdrop of the Cold War, the Great Refusal and student movement in the 1960s, the Euromissile crisis in the 1970s and the *Historikerstreit* (historian's quarrel) in the 1980s all influenced Habermas' views on the public sphere, legitimising of institutions, civil disobedience and truth telling regarding the Holocaust. Habermas is very rooted in Germany but Germany and the route to civil society is very much a European project. These ideas resonate with the development of Irish society since independence as in our ambivalence towards authority, the legitimacy of our institutions and our tendency towards civil disobedience as in the Troubles or our more recent water protests. This is an aspect of historical and social interaction that I would like to

explore at a micro-level of school experience for Irish and international children, drawing on the insights of Habermas and other critical theorists.

Habermas's theory of the lifeworld "as the background rules, assumptions, and common sense understandings that structure how we perceive the world" (Brookfield, 2010, p.240) helps in understanding and analysing where young people see themselves in school and society and this in turn is reproduced and refined through communicative action which "requires taking yes/no positions on claims of rightfulness and truthfulness" (Habermas, 1987, p 321) in everyday life. Habermas sees this lifeworld encroached on by the "system", controlled by media institutions, advertising and government propaganda. Habermas sees these threats to the lifeworld as threats to democracy and civil society and the experiences of migrant students in these contexts is worthy of exploration.

Also worthy of exploration is my own lifeworld as it impacted on my professional practice and on my role as researcher. It is difficult, but necessary, to stand back from my *habitus,* my personal history, my professional experiences and my eclectic world view which I am seeking to explain in this chapter. As a school principal who sees himself as progressive, cultured, committed to democratic ideals, I need to stand back and ensure that my personal views and my identification with the school do not cloud my thinking of all that is happening in a very busy, dynamic school with students coming from worlds and backgrounds so different from mine.

Critical Theory in an Irish context

Irish education has seen major change in the last decade – better funding, resource teaching, special needs assistants, in-service training, curriculum change, improving retention levels in secondary schools, multi-cultural education. These changes brought new challenges and enrichment for teachers, students and schools as institutions. However issues and challenges remain and will no doubt intensify with the economic down-turn and its associate effects on resources, health, child welfare and the wider socio-economic results in society. In the light of this, the issues I intend to address are integration into school and society, the relevance of the curriculum, the role of parents, the problems of bullying and racism and how the teachers managed. I intend to address these issues from various perspectives gleaned from a literature review and observation of practice through the lens of critical theory.

The ideological frame which seems most evident in Irish education and society is the dominant neo-liberalism of the Western world, with public services like education eroded by market-driven logics and performative cultures (Lynch et al. 2012). Countertrends to this are always evident with neoliberalism's effects also mediated slightly in terms of institutional initiatives such as DEIS schools with targeted programmes such as the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, School Completion Programme, Behaviour Support Classroom and resources for Travellers and special needs students. These programmes are under threat and, in the case of Travellers, have been abolished or severely curtailed in recent years under the austerity drive. Applying Gramscian ideas of hegemony and critical theory, one can easily identify an oppressed group (such as Special Education Needs students, Travellers or EAL students) being targeted for discontinuation of a service on economic grounds. Compliant

principals, teachers, teacher unions expressed dismay/opposition/disbelief as the process continued and tried to mitigate the harsh effects but ultimately felt powerless to act.

Moving from a specific to a more general case, the issue of Travellers reveals this to be a more complex one than one that can be resolved through economic resources alone. On the one hand there is the prevailing ideology which problematizes their relationship with and participation in society in terms of their socio-economic contribution, integration and participation issues, negative media coverage, issues of recognition and stereotyping (Lentin and Mc Veigh, 2002). On the other hand, Travellers' organisations emphasise their human rights as a minority group and recognition issues of Travellers as a cultural and ethnically distinct group (Pavee Point, 2007). This is further complicated by difficult living conditions, high levels of unemployment, poor housing and health, internal feuds, patriarchy, and violence leaving Travellers as an ethnic minority group with a complex history of inclusion and exclusion within Irish society (Helleiner, 2000). If hegemony describes "the way we learn to love our servitude" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 94), then a study of Irish travellers in education would yield a rich harvest of insight about the complexities of inclusion. However this is outside the scope of this study but it is worth consideration given that the school in this study had a 10 per cent traveller population whose presence were an integral feature of school life and a key imperative in its practices of inclusion.

Disadvantage in its broadest sense can be described as "the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevents students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools" (Government of Ireland, 1998, pp. 31-32). The longer term effects of this on civil society and the economy give rise to concerns about social isolation, alienation, crime and participatory democracy. Habermas's ideas of communicative

action, critical reflection, discussion and learning democracy have a direct relevance on the way forward for Irish society. In my experience, the Home School Community Liaison Scheme as envisaged by its founder (Conaty, 2000) and practised in my school is a key initiative in engaging parents on the periphery of society (DES, 2005; DES, 2006; The Home School Community Liaison Scheme in Ireland, 2006). As discussed in the previous section, Habermas' critical theory, in particular his model of communicative action highlights the importance of communication in democratic action and identifies processes where institutions such as schools can become open, inclusive, democratic organisations in order to fulfil their roles in empowering children and their families. This is education with a moral purpose.

Critical theory acknowledges the impact of social forces constraining education. These include broader social and economic forces such as unemployment, poverty, emigration, substance abuse and family break-down. Their effects in schools are likely to be resignation, resistance and mental health problems. This is not to paint too bleak picture as there will always be robust students, families and indeed teachers. When inducting new teachers to my school, I always refer to the two central issues of motivation and aspiration. One has to be realistic. You do not break down resistance that has been ingrained for generations easily. Critical theory gives a framework which enables us to focus on how social forces constrain and enable education in a way that is sensitive to broader power dynamics and ideological forces shaping society.

Critical theory, education and democracy

Critical theory demonstrates the complex relationship between democracy and education. Habermas's theoretical framework demonstrates how the life-world is increasingly invaded

by the systems elements of power and capital. In this context, it is increasingly difficult to practice and find relevance in daily democratic processes and structures of education. For example in curricular terms, Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) was introduced as a Junior Certificate subject in 1994, but it still only takes up one period per week and has no follow on to the Leaving Certificate. This timetabling and status of CSPE denigrates the significance of its democratic content. The broader institutional landscape of schools is unknown to most people outside the education sector, such as their interaction with local government, school boards of management, education and training boards and other local bodies in this broader civic and democratic system.

The role of democratic processes such as that of the Student Council is evolving but is often dependent on the individual good will of teachers and principals rather than being a recognised part of the school system. These are all core parts of the democratic structures and processes developed in Irish schools which are necessary for education. Nevertheless as pressure for funding and resources escalates in the coming years, mobilisation of Parents Councils, Student Councils, Boards of Management, the wider community of teachers and parents will need to engage with politicians and bureaucrats to ensure delivery of a proper, decent and fair education service. Theoretical models such as Habermas' give us a useful means to explore these processes.

Critical theory also highlights the importance of the societal context. The need for tolerance, inclusion and mutual respect in a democratic society has been long recognised and championed. The *cause célèbre* of the Stephen Lawrence murder trial in Britain resulted in much soul searching and many recommendations for change. Stephen Lawrence was a young black man aged 19 when he was murdered while waiting at a bus stop in 1993 in a

racially motivated attack in south London. It took twenty years before two of the perpetrators were convicted in 2012. The Macpherson inquiry concluded that there was institutional racism in the London police force. Recommendation 67 of the Macpherson report urged "that consideration is given to amendment of the National Curriculum aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism, in order better to reflect the needs of a diverse society" (Macpherson of Cluny, 1999, p. 382).

It has been my experience that students from different ethnic backgrounds working side by side in school, engaging in social activities inside and outside the classroom, participating in sports and other extra-curricular activities contribute towards social cohesion, richness of experience not to mention friendships. This interaction is more likely to occur in a school setting than in the various neighbourhoods that make up the school catchment area. The potential of the education setting for democratic engagement is essential for educational researchers to consider, enabling a grounded exploration of how theoretical models such as communicative action operate in specific contexts.

As Eisner puts it "variability, not conformity, is the hallmark of the human condition" (Eisner, 1998, p. 185). It is my contention that this variability and diversity in the relatively closed and safe learning environment of schools can contribute towards good social interaction and a sense of belonging in an inclusive school (Murawski and Spencer, 2011, Topping and Maloney, 2005). It is the focus of much of this research. Eisner's insight "diversity in education breeds social complexity, and social complexity can lead to a richness in culture that uniformity can never provide. What democratic cultures need is unity in diversity: both are necessary" (Eisner, 1998, p. 206) underpins my approach as I believe that

all groups must have a sense of belonging to society and sense of recognition in society if democracy is to work properly.

Interculturalism has impacted on Irish schools in different ways as outlined earlier. Migration and settlement patterns, restrictive enrolment policies and often ignorance of rights and the system have led to clustering of newcomer students in many DEIS schools in the Irish context (Devine, 2010; McGorman and Sugrue, 2010). On the positive side this has led to linguistic diversity, different histories, cultural enrichment and changing pedagogies (NCCA, 2006). On the negative side there has been racism, alienation and disconnectedness affecting young people and their families (iReport.ie, 2014).

Education can be an important catalyst for change as "Schools play an essential role in introducing culturally diverse students to the dominant culture of their communities …. Optimal cultural introductions can enrich bicultural students' learning, language and problem-solving opportunities; allow them to engage in effective social inter-actions in both the dominant culture and their family culture; and enhance their opportunity for life success" (Zubia and Doll, 2002, p.37).

Perhaps citizenship education "with its basis in human rights and responsibilities, equality and participation, if reflected in all areas of school life, can provide a very helpful framework for schools seeking to respond positively and effectively to cultural diversity, and seeking to help students develop into adult citizens of a truly intercultural society" (Gannon, 2004, p.81).

The lifeworld of young people

The lifeworld of a young immigrant school-goer can be very fragmented due to language comprehension difficulties and the place of the immigrant family in the public sphere. I noted with interest that non-Irish students and families during the 'big snow' in December 2010 did not listen to local or national radio, did not watch RTE television news or other programmes and appeared to rely on word of mouth and the internet for news about school closures and other matters. I noted erratic attendance patterns in school and telephoned or asked personally of approximately twenty students on their return to school. Where is their public space and how does it intersect with 'Irish' public space? Can schools do more to integrate and prepare immigrants for civic society? There appeared to be no direct route of communication to migrant families to replace local radio, parish bulletin or national news that had worked in similar situations in years gone by. This example highlights the changed nature of our society and the need for an educational system to respond to these complex demands.

These migrants also have to adapt to the complex teen culture of contemporary society. Teenage culture continues to evolve and take on new guises, with motivation, aspiration, resistance and conformity interweaving in complex patterns in teenage life. The prevalence of Facebook, Twitter and other social networks can give rise to a cyber world secret from parents and adults where peer-pressure, bullying and an almost parallel universe can exist (Campbell, 2005). On the other hand, information technology can be a power house for learning and alternative viewpoints (Livingston, 2005).

Automaton Conformity, as described by Fromm, whereby the individual loses his or her individuality and is subsumed into an unthinking world in a consumerist society, is evident in contemporary teenage and adult culture. To confront this is a major challenge for educators. Marcuse's emphasis on privacy, detachment, isolation and the value of art and literature brings a different dimension towards educating young people in personal autonomy and responsibility (Marcuse, 1964). It is perhaps apposite that a leading character in one of the best Irish novels in recent years is known as the Automator (Murray, 2010). He is the principal of a somewhat dysfunctional school well up the league tables where issues such as peer pressure, motivation, substance abuse, curriculum relevance, information technology, family breakdown are given a sometimes wry but also insightful treatment.

Marcuse's (1964) emphasis on detachment, privacy, memory and distance are still very relevant as methods for overcoming alienation and engaging with society. In education we tend to be in the solution-business with career tracks, learning plans, curricula, fences to jump over, exams to be passed, grades to be achieved, and norms to be conformed to. As principal I was only too aware of my duties and responsibilities to ensure that all these targets are met. Instead Marcuse's way might result in more listening, dialogue, student centred activities and active participation in social events in the school. Perhaps the reforms envisaged in the new Junior Certificate will lead us in this direction.

From a knowledge point of view, Habermas challenges me to unpack the life world that I exist in and reflect on how it intersects with systemic elements. It asks me to stand back and unravel the complexity of ideas, issues and assumptions that cloud my thinking and acting in the work situation. Marcuse challenges me to seek answers in 'roads less taken' like

literature, music, art that may yield knowledge on the intercultural school, while retaining the critical lens which critical theory offers us.

Conclusion

My belief is that theory should inform practice and practice inform theory to their mutual benefit. Education is a practice and a noble one at that with a moral purpose. Society needs an education system that reflects its values and core-beliefs and passes these on to the next generation. Education needs to be self-critical and dynamic or else it will atrophy into a bureaucratic procedure for cultural reproduction. As an educator, I need to continuously question my assumptions of theory and practice in order to ensure that I am engaging creatively with the world in which I work and live. Education has social and civic dimensions that need to be addressed at macro and micro level. Can it do more to foster inclusion, civic awareness, rights and responsibilities, a sense of connectedness? Schools are at the heart of Irish communities with over 3000 primary and approximately 740 second level schools for a population of 4.2 million; schools tend to be small by international standards (Lynch *et al*, 2015). Hence Irish schools are interwoven into a wider social and cultural context of community-based groups such as the GAA[11], the ICA[12], the churches, professional organisations and local clubs. This local community context is important to consider in the Irish context in terms of the inclusive potential of the life-world and public sphere in Irish society.

Education can be emancipatory and I see evidence every year as young men and women are equipped to realize their potential in higher level, further education and sometimes in

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[11] GAA is the Gaelic Athletic Association which is represented in every parish in the country and promotes and regulates Gaelic Games (Football, Hurling, Camogie). It is Ireland's largest sporting body.
[12] ICA is the Irish Country Women's Association

employment. However there is a large group who fail to connect or who see second level education purely as a rite of passage or who get academic results which do not reflect their potential or humanity.

Marcuse has re-engaged me with the potential of the arts – literature, poetry, drama, music, and art – to be a force for liberation. They transcend the daily grind and can bring about Joycean epiphanies or moments of insight or heightened awareness that can enable the recipient to dream new dreams, open new doors and connect with what is truly human in us. For me this is the essence of education – enabling people to transform their lives, to envision a different reality, to strive to change the world and make it a better place for themselves and their families. This is where the arts come into their own – imagination and critical thinking emancipating people if they so choose. This artistic gaze lends itself to a research agenda. "We do research to understand. We try to understand to make our schools better places for both the children and the adults who share their lives there … in the end our work lives its ultimate life in the lives it enables others to lead" (Eisner, 1998, p. 129).

The critical approaches outlined above of Bourdieu's work on reproduction and the critical theorists insights about education are lenses that I will use in order to interpret and narrate the experiences of migrant students and their families in order to give greater depth, relevance and understanding of their journeys. This is contextualised in the Irish policy and educational landscape. In our increasingly fractured and globalised world, we can expect to see more and more migrants and it is the intention of this study to learn new ways and gain new insights to enable schools to best serve the needs of migrant students and help build a caring, tolerant society.

Taking into account all of the above learning from literature and from my educational practice, there are a number of implications for my research approach. As my place of work is my research field, I need to be aware of my strengths and limitations as a participant in the research setting. As Freire put it "I do not think that anyone can seriously engage in a search for new knowledge without using his or her point of view and historical location as a point of departure" (Freire and Macedo, 1995). I will need to be able to stand back from my beliefs and practices and be open to new ideas and practices that I may not even have thought of. I need to be able to explore the life world of migrants and I may need new language and perspectives to enable me to see their world with empathy and understanding. I believe there is a role for an artistic gaze in exploring attitudes, beliefs and experiences. I believe that the best approach to my research questions is through a qualitative, humanistic methodology that is open to an appreciation of the experiences of young people and not uncritical of the institution in which they found themselves. I need to listen with respect and empathy in order to come to an understanding of their lives and experiences in a multi-cultural school.

Afterword

A few years ago I went on a school tour to Poland. Our group was a typical group of 15 to 16 year old Irish girls and boys with an eye for adventure and the good things in life. We visited Krakow and did the usual rounds of churches, shops, royal palace, salt mines, Jewish quarter and ghetto, and then there was Auschwitz.

We walked through the buildings with our tour guide, observed the depravities depicted in photographs and artefacts and then went up the remains of the railway platforms at Birkenau. There was a group of Jewish young people conducting a service and then a young man sang a

lament sean-nós style. My own group had dispersed and I stood alone observing, feeling

almost intrusive but no one seemed to pay any notice to me. Then it struck – a feeling of

grief, solidarity, place in history, ineptitude, guilt and the realization of the enormity of the

crime. This was no 'text' or aberration or footnote to history: this was evil. As I returned to

our bus, little was said and gradually the students conversed in their normal banter and good

cheer.

I felt a huge responsibility that day and in the months that followed I read voraciously

everything I could get my hands on. I suppose this was my way of 'coming to terms with'

Auschwitz. However as a principal I encouraged teachers and students to get involved in the

Crocus Project (a Holocaust education programme). We now have a Star of David flower

bed in one of our public spaces in the school. Last year we were honoured by a visit to the

school by Tomi Reichental, one of the few Holocaust survivors in Ireland.

As this cohort of student moves on and a new group of students and teachers replace them, I

would like to leave some legacy of our visit, some understanding of racism and intolerance,

some recognition of the need for men of goodwill in civic society, some celebration of

inclusivity and interculturalism. This is part of my motivation for engaging in this research to

better understand the complexity of interculturalism in a 21st century Irish School.

Sometime later, re-reading Louis Mac Neice's collected poems I was struck by his late poem

Thalassa which summons his comrades to a noble task although their wills are fickle and

their values blurred. It strikes a very positive and affirming note and was fixed on the wall of

my office while I remained school leader. I consider the poem to be a call to action in both

my personal and professional lives.

Run out the boat, my broken comrades:
Let the old seaweed crack, the surge
Burgeon oblivious of the last
Embarkation of feckless men,
Let every adverse force converge –
Here we must needs embark again

Run up the sail, my heartsick comrades:
Let each horizon tilt and lurch –
You know the worst: you wills are fickle,
Your values blurred, your hearts impure
And you past life a ruined church –
But let your poison be your cure.

Put out to sea, ignoble comrades,
Whose record shall be noble yet:
Butting through scarps of moving marble
The narwhal dares us to be free:
By a high star our course is set,
Our end is Life. Put out to sea.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

While the previous chapter outlined the conceptual framework which was developed over the course of this research, this review of selected literature on intercultural education explores themes that are relevant to the experiences of the students as they settle in to a school in a fast changing society, it explores what schools offer and it considers recommendations for good practice. The opening section identifies a key challenge revealed by this literature. Subsequent sections contextualise this research within the international and national context of migration changes and how this impacted on the local contexts of schools. One point that should be noted from the outset is that it is easy, when researching one's own institution, to assume that other schools have similar practices, procedures and contexts. However in the Irish second-level sector, some schools have small minorities of migrants (5-10 per cent) while others have much larger cohorts and are usually DEIS schools (Smyth *et al*, 2009; Kitching, 2010; Devine, 2011; DES, 2007). The situation in the primary sector is that migrant children are currently concentrated in a quarter of schools (Irish Times, 24/02/2015; Smyth *et al*, 2009). In dealing with intercultural education in Ireland, we are therefore dealing with a great variety of school settings with intersecting social, economic and cultural aspects.

This chapter is guided by an understanding of intercultural education as "education which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all areas of human life. It sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, customs and worldviews, and that this breadth of human life enriches us all. It is

education, which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination, and promotes the values upon which equality is built" (DES/OMI, 2010, p. 2). This chapter therefore reviews the general patterns and variations revealed by research on the international and Irish context of intercultural education, before localising these in the specific context of this research. Key themes that emerged in the general review of literature about interculturalism, ethnicity and inclusion include the centrality of relationships in the student experience, the importance of socialisation in the school setting, the role of the school in responding to change, the reality of racism and also curricular and pedagogic issues, the role and readiness of teachers and parents, and the complex intersections of these issues within specific class, ethnicity, family, and institutional contexts as we observe them in practice in a specific school and community setting . These themes are clearly evident throughout the international literature but take a specific shape in the Irish context which is relevant for interpreting research findings as this chapter explores. What this chapter seeks to do is identify the formative influence of the local context, consider broad aspects of international research and experience relevant to this study. It defines what is meant by an inclusive school and examines what is involved in school socialisation, teaching and learning, considering the issues of bullying and racism and discussing the place of teachers, parents and the curriculum. It seeks to locate intercultural education in an international context drawing on specific insights from the UK experience and then move towards an exploration of Irish studies, before concluding with a discussion of the relevance of these studies to the school at the centre of this study. Whereas there is a very large literature on interculturalism in North America and Britain, it tends to concentrate on general issues such as race, culture, identity, language, social class and gender (Banks, 2009, 2010). In this literature review, I have acknowledged these issues but concentrated on local studies in Scotland and Ireland as they shine most light on the school in this study. Scotland and Ireland share a colonial past, have

experienced recent cultural change and have far less experience of immigration than Britain, North America and other developed countries. The Scottish education system is also similar to that in Ireland.

The formative influence of the local context of intercultural school experiences

There has been a notable rise in the number of studies of migration and intercultural education in Ireland and elsewhere (Devine, 2011; Bryan, 2010; Curry *et al,* 2011; Domnwachukwu, 2010; Parazzoli, 2013; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007; Byrne *et al*, 2010; Lyons and Little, 2009) and in official reports and guidelines (MEPESS, 2005; OFSTED, 1999; OECD, 2007, 2010; NCCA 2006; Macpherson, 1999; DES/OMI, 2010).. These studies reveal the broad sweep of what is occurring in intercultural education policy and practice.

However, Allemann-Ghionda (2009) identifies a significant gap in the literature in terms of the lack of empirical research, especially qualitative case studies - which contextualise experiences in the local settings of school. She asserts that there is clear evidence to indicate that intercultural education (or similar concepts) does not pervade the normal routine of schools in Europe. She contends that this is not simply an issue for teachers or students but a systemic failure caused by "education systems that are highly selective and organised to a differentialist, segregating agenda [which] reproduce social and ethnic selection to such an extent that ideas like intercultural education or the inclusion of diversity in the curriculum are neutralised by structures" (Allemann-Ghionda, 2009, p. 142). It is hoped that this research study becomes part of an increasing number of qualitative case studies to critically examine the gap that Allemann-Ghionda identifies, thereby enabling Ireland to take its place as "a new laboratory for the study of migration" (Barrett and Duffy, 2008), with specific reference to

the role that school can play in ensuring smooth transitions and positive experiences for students, teachers and society generally.

Aspects of Interculturalism

As we observe globalisation and mass migration and their impact on education systems today, there are a number of common themes that overlap and influence what happens in schools. These include social reproduction and class (Bourdieu, 1990, Banks, 2009, 2010), the lifeworld of young people and their socialisation(Cushner, 2006, Howe and Lissi, 2014), racism and recognition(Honneth, 1996, Zurn, 2015, Devine *et al,* 2008, Lodge and Lynch, 2002), and the relationships teachers have with their students (Smyth and Darmody, 2009, hooks, 1994 , Nieto, 2010).These themes will be interwoven with the literature discussed to illustrate their importance for intercultural education and for the development of an inclusive school.

The Inclusive School

As I progressed through this research project, broad reading about interculturalism, diversity and ethnicity in the school context has led me to crystallise my thinking about the inclusive school. It is timely to consider the vital importance of inclusion given what the empirical research and literature have exposed. A distillation of my thinking about the values of an inclusive school derived from literature and theory is presented below and has acted as a guide throughout the research process.

Reference to diversity and inclusivity in the literature (Soudien, 2009; Joshee, 2009; Oslar and Sharkey; Meyer, Bevan-Brown, Park and Savage, 2010; Howe and Lisi, 2014) is often in the context of diversity in the general school experience or in a specific focus such as special needs education. Diversity in this sense expresses the sense that "the mission of the school is decidedly not to bring everyone to the same place but, rather, to increase the variance and performance among students while escalating the mean for all. The reason I believe this is an important aim for schools in a democracy is that the cultivation of cognitive diversity is a way of creating a population better able to contribute uniquely to the commonweal" (Eisner, 1998, p. 50).This is echoed in reports which argue that successful integration of newcomer students is essential for social cohesion (Eurydice, 2004; OECD, 2006).

Parents and students need to feel valued, respected, recognised and included in all their dealings and interactions with the school to ensure that the school culture is as inclusive as possible. However we "grow up in our culture with the belief that our cultural system is 'natural' and 'rational' and superior to those of others. Intercultural understanding disappoints this narcissistic belief by making us realise that things which appear irrational and inhumane from our perspective are rational and humane from the others perspective … this narcissistic disappointment is an essential pre-supposition for tolerance" (Bredella, 2003, p. 226). Literature and previous research guides our thinking about how we build and keep inclusive schools. What are the hallmarks of inclusive schools? More importantly, do they work? Crandell *et al* (2008) argue for a supportive school climate that would consist of

- Valuing students primary language and cultures
- Making high expectations concrete

- Having school leaders who make the education of ELLs[13] a high priority

- Having staff members committed to empowering ELLs through education

- Enacting policies and programs that promote positive inter-group relations, such as conflict resolution, community building: anti-prejudice programs: and curriculum about scapegoating, racism and exclusion

- Building strong relationships to support parent and community involvement

- Valuing diversity

This school climate needs to be backed up by and implemented with strategies that implement and give life to the goals outlined by Crandell. Cole (2008, p. 2) describes these strategies thus,

- They tend to be inclusive, not exclusive

- They work best in context with other ideas and concepts, not in isolation

- They often focus on students working within social situations rather than alone

- Their activities, techniques and goals are interactive and interdisciplinary, realistic rather than esoteric

- Possibly most important, they empower students to be actively involved in the processes of their own learning, rather than passively receptive

These strategies or variations of them are worked out in the school setting and have informed my research focus throughout this study. My research is guided by Cole (2008, p. 20) who suggests that "teaching multi-culturally across the curriculum is more than simply an attempt

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[13] ELL means English Language Learners

to combat racism. The more important aim of studying human cultures in all their diversity is to understand what it is to be human".

Reflecting on the above in the context of the whole school process, what are the characteristics of a model of best practice in an inclusive school? I have adapted Murawski and Spencer's work (2011) to visualise the inclusive school in diagram 1 below. This has guided me throughout the research process.

Diagram 1:

The sense of community relates to a vision and values that affirm, recognise and respect all. Leadership involves instructional leadership as well as shared responsibility. High standards are expected from all according to their interests and abilities. Collaboration and co-operation are a feature of school life whether that is teacher to teacher, teacher to student, team teaching or peer-teaching. Changing roles and responsibilities involve active participation by all and a willingness to change practice and roles within the school. The array of services involves inter-agency work co-ordinated in areas such as mental health, community services and

guidance. Partnership with parents means involving parents in all aspects of school life –
policy making, school events and especially making parents feel welcome in school. For
example, the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme has been very effective in
this area in the school of this study.

Flexible learning environments can be supported by Individual Education Plans (IEPs),
providing alternative pathways in blended learning programs and using accessible ICT
supports. Strategies based on research make the school a learning organisation willing to
carry out research and implement the findings as they relate to specific programmes, methods
and subjects in the school. New forms of accountability mean a move towards less reliance
on standardised tests and high stakes examinations and more emphasis on student needs and
achievements. Access policies mean all areas of the school are open and accessible, although
access is also a state of mind and part of the culture of a school as explored throughout this
research. Continuing professional development helps meet teachers' needs and assists
teachers in their professional tasks of identifying issues that need attention and possibly
further training. It is my experience that CPD needs to be teacher led, practical and relevant
to the needs of the school. "Theory plays a role in the cultivation of artistry, but its role is not
prescriptive, it is diagnostic" (Eisner, 1985, p. 91). It is when we, as professionals, look at,
assess, discuss and engage with research findings and theory that we can make decisions
regarding our practice in the staffroom, classroom, corridor and school-yard where so much
socialisation occurs.

Students' experiences of socialisation and schooling

When we explore students' experiences of social and school life, the literature identifies a mesh of socio-cultural complexities as students adjust to different social and cultural worlds. Arriving in Ireland and enrolling in a second level school within a few days or weeks, as many migrant students do, are major events in a young person's life. The ways in which they and their parents are received, inducted, introduced to peers and teachers, assigned to classes are all parts of the socialisation of young migrant students.

Much of the existing studies and literature tends to look at the migrant's experience from the top down in terms of school structures, policy and institutional features, assessing pedagogy and teacher attitude rather than locating the experiences of students and learning in the heart of the school and educational setting (MEPESS, 2005, 2.5). Hence it is essential that the whole process of socialisation and schooling is investigated as a core part of the school context and culture from the perspective of students. O'Brien highlights how "the climate and culture of schools, what they teach, and how they organise and assess, and the sets of relations between students and staff need to be problematized" (2008, p. 170). This problematization will enable us to build a fuller, deeper picture of interculturalism in the school context. This supports Allemann-Ghionda's (2009) call cited at the outset of this chapter to qualitatively study the social and cultural context. As she contends, this is key to understanding how social and cultural reproduction occurs. It is not simply linear, top-down or bottom-up; it is deeply situated and must be contextualised in its educational and social setting. As Devine argues "learning is not simply a cognitive event- it is also a social process that is embedded in the relationships we form with one another" (2010, p. 133).

As part of this qualitative documenting, the social context and relationships within the school need to be explored. This will enable analysis of the position and role of migrant students in the social network and culture of the school. To what extent are migrant students made to feel welcome by all involved in the school such as the principal, secretary, caretaker, teaching staff and fellow students? Fellow students can play an important role in ensuring that migrant students feel welcome and included (MEPESS, 2005, 8.2.2). Networks of peers are often relied on for coping with a range of issues from dealing with racism to feeling confident enough to take part in activities and "foreign students' sense of belonging increased with the proportion of foreign students at the school" (Smyth *et al*, 2009, p. 45). Indeed, their *field* can be a lot smoother due to the presence of others with similar experiences and *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977).The school can be seen as a space where students meet, greet, interact and learn from each other as well as learning through the formal curriculum. Good practice for the education of migrant students has been identified as being present in schools which have a culture of critical reflection, where inclusion and diversity are reflected in the curriculum and school organisation, where there is strong school leadership with a vision and commitment to addressing inequality and raising achievement and all round high expectations (Brind *et al*, 2008, p. 46). This is vital in a broader social and cultural context where many migrants, including students, experience bullying and racism as explored in the following section

School responses to bullying and racism

Bullying has long been recognised as a feature of school life in Ireland and elsewhere (DES, 1993; Safe School Action Team, 2006; Lyons and Little, 2009; O' Moore, 2010; Sadker and Zittleman, 2010) and it can often be tinged with racism in an intercultural school setting

(Byrne *et al*, 2010, pp. 271-288). Racism as an issue in schools has received attention from both the European Union and the Council of Europe (European Communities, 1997; ECRI, 2007). This is hardly surprising given Europe's catastrophes in 20th century Germany and the Balkans, the current migration crisis and the continued progress of far-right xenophobic political parties across Europe.

Racism can be defined as a feeling of superiority, hatred and disrespect towards people of different skin colour or ethnic origin (Howe and Lissi, 2014, p. 399) and it can be further divided into "old racism" articulating prejudice and discrimination on the grounds of assumed (genetic) inferiority of one group over another and "new racism" framed with an emphasis on cultural differences between ethnic groups and the impending threats such difference can make to national solidarity and cohesion (Devine, 2010, p. 16). Disconscious racism meaning "an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs) that justifies iniquity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given" has also been identified as important by King (2004, p. 73).

Understanding how racism occurs on an institutional level and individual racism is also vital for this research. While public discourses of individual experiences of racism are clear, understanding the reproductive power of institutional racism on ways in which institutions such as schools, police forces, and hospitals can develop harmful policies and practices that marginalise or victimise minority individuals and groups is key. "The major difference between *individual racism* and *institutional racism and bias* is the wielding of power because it is primarily through the power of the people who control institutions such as schools that oppressive policies and practices are reinforced and legitimated" (Banks, 2010, p. 400). The

school exerts a powerful influence on a young person's growth and development and this must be studied as an institution located within and reproducing societal forces and contexts. Schools can develop unhelpful practices, structures and cultures over time without consciously realising them. Student, teacher and parents' awareness of these issues require attention. The broader societal culture of racism that is revealed in educational research reports racism as a frequent, even daily occurrence for many black minority students inside and outside the school institution (Hampton, 1998; MEPESS, 2005; Bryan, 2010). OFSTED recommends specific investigations in to playground behaviour, actions that take place on the way to and from school and responses to serious incidents such as violence. These require not only active but proactive responses such as playground strategies, safety strategies and conflict resolution strategies (OFSTED, 1999).

White privilege is a significant aspect of the complex social reproduction which surrounds migration. It is "an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious" (Zinga and Gordon, 2014). It is a feature of Western societies and refers to access to resources, status and recognition which often leads to a denial of racism (Devine, 2011; Howe and Lissi, 2014). As in Scotland, so in Ireland we can remain ignorant or be oblivious to issues of racism (MEPESS, 2005; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007). However, "the avoidance of race talk in schools and being 'colour mute' may be related to the fear of being perceived as a racist, a fear that the teachers who are reluctant to address race are trying to safeguard against it … even when avoiding talking about race, we are talking about it" (Hooks and Miskovic, 2011, p. 194).

Schools have a vital role to play in addressing and combatting racism as they communicate the dominant "message systems" of society (Devine, 2010, p. 17) and the norms, practices

and traditions (school culture) socialise the students attending them and prepare them for adult life. Literature in the area of racism suggests that schools should observe and reflect on what is happening in all areas of the school- the classroom, on the corridors, in the canteen and on the way to and from school (DES, 1993; Howe and Lisi, 2014).

Schools need to develop clear policies and responses to deal with bullying and racism. " If children are to learn in an atmosphere free from humiliation, abuse and oppression, schools must move from inconsistent and piecemeal reactions to separate incidents of bullying towards developing a consistent set of procedures which everyone in the school knows, understands and trusts" (Tattum and Herbert, 1993, p. 189). It is my experience that this consistent set of procedures is best arrived at after consultation with students, teachers and parents.

The role of teachers in an ethnically diverse context

The ways in which teachers interact with their students, approach and adapt the curriculum, respect, encourage and hold high expectations all have an important impact on student outcomes and their general experience of schooling. If there is no teaching without learning (Freire, 1998, p. 29) then teachers have a great opportunity to learn and explore with their students. "Viewing the world from the perspectives of their students and becoming aware of the complex knowledge, norms and ethos in their communities and cultures will help educators to create a school culture that validates and legitimises the cultures of their students as well as enriches their personal lives" (Banks, 2009, p. 29). While these values are important for all teachers, the specific background and context is essential to understanding how teachers respond to intercultural issues. As noted at the outset of this chapter, Irish

society generally and more particularly the teachers in the school of this study had no prior training in inclusion or cultural diversity and were therefore quite unprepared for the sudden influx of migrant students. This is typical of many Irish schools at this time with teachers adopting an *ad hoc* approach to the new situation in which they found themselves (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007, p. 73; Devine, 2011, p. 87).

Irish teachers had little preparation for teaching in an inclusive context. The quality of initial teacher education of teachers for working in schools with diversity is an important issue. The National Comprehensive Centre for Teacher Quality and Public Agenda report (2008) found that whereas 76 per cent of new teachers said that teaching in ethnically diverse classrooms was "covered" in their teacher training programmes, more than half still felt unprepared to teach students from diverse backgrounds. Pre-service training (ITE) and in-service provision (CPD) in intercultural education are generally seen as ineffective and marginal in that they tend to be add-on or stand-alone courses which often do not transfer into practice once teachers are back in their school culture and routines (Hawley and Irvine, 2001, p. 259; Gonsalves, 2008, p. 24; Conaty, 2002, p. 64; Smyth *et al*, 2009, p. 171).

Nieto (2009, p. 89), drawing on the work of Villegas and Lucas (2002), Zeichner (2003) and Cochran-Smith, Davis and Fries (2004) contends that "including a course in multi-cultural education in the teacher education curriculum is not enough. Instead … teachers need to develop the knowledge, awareness, dispositions, and interest to become effective teachers of all students, particularly those who have been least served by the public schools". Diversity in the teaching profession is also key with Sleater (2004, p. 176) who argues that there is a role for intercultural teacher education but that it cannot substitute for making the teaching

profession itself more diverse, which continues to be a very pertinent issue for the largely homogenous Irish teacher education profession (Teaching Council, 2012; Drudy *et al*, 2005).

These views on the expanded role of the teacher in an ethnically diverse society challenge traditionally trained teachers to reflect on their pedagogical styles and outlooks because "let's face it; most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teaching reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe were universal" (hooks, 1994, p. 35). The sudden arrival of a highly diverse classroom certainly makes teachers think about intercultural issues, and reflect outside of their usual *habitus,* and there have been many calls for improved CPD for teachers in these situations (MEPESS, 2005, 4.5; INTO, 1998, p. 51; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007, p. 151). This was echoed in many other areas of diversity with calls for greater pluralism in response to special education needs, sexuality and social background also emerging (Lynch and Lodge, 2002; Rose and Shevlin, 2004; Drudy, 1993).

The need for changes in pedagogy has been highlighted by Cummins (2000, p. 261) who critiqued traditional and progressive pedagogies and concluded that what is needed in classrooms for effective teaching and learning to take place is a transformative pedagogy with the following components reflected in curriculum and pedagogy:

- They are grounded in the lives of our students
- They are critical
- They are multicultural, anti-racist, pro justice
- They are participatory and experiential
- They are hopeful, joyful, kind and visionary

- They are activist – seeking to empower students to make changes

- They are academically rigorous

- They are culturally sensitive

(Adapted from Bigelow *et al*, 1994)

The relational aspect of the teaching role is also vital to consider. The need for good pupil-teacher relationships in school to enhance good teaching and learning is well documented – "the attitude of one teacher can put the child off education for life. And one good teacher's good attitude can build that child's future for life" (MEPESS, 2005, 8.3.2) The trauma and burning sense of injustice that can remain from bad school experiences (Macbeath, 2014, p. 182) is persistent – "I cannot remember her name, but the remark of one of my first teachers that it was rude to speak Spanish in the classroom still stings" (Nieto, 2010, p. 155). The complex, changing role of the teacher, especially in the area of intercultural education deserves close attention when we move from desk to field, theory to practice. Teachers are challenged to reassess their opinions and dispositions, their cultural norms and practices in the light of the transformed class group in front of them daily.

The role of parents in a pluralist context

The importance of the role of parents is an accepted tenet in modern education (NCCA, 2006, p. 33; Conaty, 2002). Depending on parental educational qualifications and social capital, involvement with the school varies (Bourdieu, 1990; Payne, 2009; Mulkerrins, 2007). Banks reports that "there can be culturally based reasons for parental non-involvement. Parents report being reluctant to engage with professionals because of majority-culture ethno-centrism, negative cultural-stereotyping, insensitivity to cultural and religious beliefs and

family traditions, a propensity to lump different ethnic groups (e.g. all Polynesians) together, and discriminatory practice" (Banks, 2010, p. 349). On visiting various schools I often observe a monochrome, mono-cultural reception area with photographs of sporting success and famous alumni. My own experiences recall teachers sometimes reporting frustration with parents due to difficulties in understanding accent. Eye aversion in some cultures can be taken to indicate lack of interest or lack of respect when the opposite is the intention. Some teachers can adopt stereotypical attitudes. A lack of awareness is often the cause of misunderstandings, cultural gaps and simplified generalisations, but they do not make for good parent-teacher relationships.

Literature reveals that "exclusion of culturally diverse parents from participation in their children's schooling" (Cummins, 2000, p. 46) can occur for a variety of cultural, language, institutional and structural reasons. In addition, class-based stratification can have an impact with middle class parents more likely to possess the social capital and cultural competences to become more actively involved in their children's education and school activities. Irish research evidence shows that "Middle-class parents are the most likely to become involved, activating both social and cultural capitals through their focused participation in volunteering, fund raising, and collaborating in a range of school activities" (Devine, 2011, p. 108), which is also echoed internationally.

Literature reveals the complex intersections of class, ethnic and gender divides in parental involvement in education (Walters, 2012; O'Brien and Flynn, 2007; Howe and Lissi, 2014) and " unsurprisingly, youth arriving from families with lower levels of education tend to struggle academically, while those who come from more literate families and with strong skills often flourish" (Suarez-Orozco, 2009, p. 62). School social structures are often

perceived as uninviting with parental involvement tending to be restricted to an annual parent-teacher meeting and membership of a parents committee which can be devoted to fund raising and other activities peripheral to education. Nevertheless, a study of black, middle-class parents in England showed that nearly one third of participants were, or had been, involved with a governing body or active in parent-teacher organisations (Vincent *et al*, 2012, p. 339) and had a keen interest in schooling. This reflects the diversity and interconnectivity between these categories with class, ethnicity and gender combining into a complex mesh of prevailing factors influencing parental involvement in their children's education.

The Curriculum

The formal curriculum of the Irish second level school comprises of Junior and Senior cycles of academic programmes. It is the primary agenda of interaction between students and teachers. It is mainly an academic system with some vocational study streams dominated by the terminal examination of the Leaving Certificate which determines access to higher education (Lynch and Lodge, 2002; Coolahan,1981). The Leaving Certificate cycle consists of the core subjects of English, Irish, Mathematics, SPHE, CSPE, PE and a choice of subjects from French, History, Geography, Engineering, Construction Studies, Technical Graphics, Art, Business, Accounting, Home Economics, Biology, Physics and Chemistry. There are summative formal written examinations in all subjects except SPHE and PE. Students of EU countries may also take their native language at Leaving Certificate level but there is no formal curriculum. Some of these subjects lend themselves to adaptation to an intercultural curriculum more readily than others, with the role of the teacher identified as central in this process (NCCA, 2006).

This structure of the Irish curriculum can be usefully viewed through the lens of an intercultural curriculum which should include activities and teaching that:

- Help students navigate from the familiarity of their own culture to learning about other cultures

- Promote positive ethnic identity

- Involve increasingly more frequent and positive relationships among students who are different from one another

- Build students' personal knowledge of their culture and the cultures of other people

- Help students to use their knowledge of other cultures to better understand and resolve social problems, and, ultimately, to lead lives as multicultural persons

(Howe and Lisi, 2014, p. 193)

This thesis documents how students have experienced this in an Irish context. As explored later in this chapter, Irish empirical studies paint a picture of an educational system and curriculum which struggled to catch up with the rapidly changing migration patterns (Devine, 2011; Kitching, 2010; Bryan, 2008, 2009).

These characteristics can find expression in both the formal curriculum of subject instruction and in the informal, or hidden, curriculum of school ethos, traditions, relationships, celebrations, playground activities, extra-curricular events and in school structures and behaviour codes as explored in subsequent sections of this chapter with a central role being played by the teacher.

Locating intercultural education in an international context

Given the levels of global population movements, the impact of migration is of central concern for educators, policy-makers and researchers internationally. This section reviews a range of international studies and reports which indicate important findings for this Irish case study to consider.

During the first decade of this century it is estimated that over two hundred transnational migrants were living beyond their countries of birth and that "where capital flows, migrants follow" (Suárez Orozco, 2009, p. 62). Immigrants today are a heterogeneous population defying easy generalisation. In terms of education, many migrants are highly educated but often end up working at a lower level in the host country where they settle. Equally, groups which do not have high levels of recognised educational qualifications find educational advancement difficult especially if they fall in to the triple-lock involving race, poverty and linguistic isolation (*ibid,* 67). In the Anglophone countries, the achievement gap in standardised testing, school retention and progression to third level is an aspect of African-American, Latino and Native American youth experience in the US (Howe and Lisi, 2014, p. 7) and among black, Pakistani and other groups in the UK (Richardson, 2005; Tomlinson, 2009, p. 129). The challenge for educators is to construct a school system and curriculum that can respond to the needs of diverse student populations. "It is slowly being understood (in the case of the UK) that the task of government and educators is to construct a system sustained by common political and moral values, which still recognises diversity and has the trust and understanding of all groups. What is now needed is political courage and leadership, and educators who look beyond a narrow National Curriculum to a global, intercultural curriculum which can prepare the next generation both with marketable skills

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and with knowledge and understanding of their multicultural, inter-dependent world"
(Tomlinson, 2009, p. 131). In practical terms, pedagogical strategies such as team-teaching,
co-operative learning, extended teaching time, collaboration, an individualised curriculum
and the importance of high expectations were identified by an EU funded project (EU, 2011,
pp. 10-14). The discussion above gives an insight into the diversity of migrant experience and
the difficulty of generalization when we refer to intercultural education. In the light of this, it
is instructive to look at the experiences of our closest neighbours in the UK who have a long
history of migration and interculturalism in education.

Insight from the UK experience of Interculturalism

The Scottish parliament, in its first term of office (1999-2003), decided to address the issue of
social exclusion in Scotland. The Scottish Executive Education Department commissioned
research that was published as Minority Ethnic Pupils' Experiences of School in Scotland
(MEPESS) in 2005. The Scottish experience is close to the Irish one in that there was a
"legacy of widespread denial of racial inequality and discrimination … and a belief that
racism was not an issue north of the border" (section 1. 1). In addition, there are similarities
between the two education systems with Scottish Highers roughly equating with the Irish
Leaving Certificate.

The aims and objectives of the MEPESS were to:

- Identify key factors relating to ethnic diversity which promote or restrict
  inclusion

- Examine the experiences of minority ethnic pupils in terms of educational attainment, particularly in school activities, personal and social skills

- Establish pupils' and teachers' perceptions of minority ethnic pupils' educational achievements, experiences and expectations

- Establish the factors which affect minority ethnic pupils' achievement and attainment

- Determine the impact on minority ethnic pupils of different teaching and learning styles, curriculum provision and assessment systems

The research was carried out in 24 schools (three primary, two secondary and one special school across four education regions) and involved 1055 questionnaires, 81 individual interviews with teachers, 96 pupil interviews and 38 parent interviews. The methodology used was semi-structured interviews, focus groups and the use of postal questionnaires and quantitative data. The findings are interesting and relevant to the situation in Ireland as is the focus on student experiences (as will become evident in later findings and discussion chapters).

The report found a paucity of data regarding student attainment and recommended staff development for key school staff about the purpose and importance of ethnic monitoring. It suggested support for teachers to develop curricula and methodologies to help them work in a culturally and ethnically diverse manner. It urged staff development for all staff to help them handle racial incidents in school. The MEPESS report, in commenting on its research, states that such studies based on listening to young people and observing them is rare, which is also true in the Irish context.

In this context, "all of the participants, without exception, had experienced everyday racism" (7.6.2) and many felt a "gulf between themselves, who know everyday racism from first-hand experience, and their teachers who cannot know, are disbelieving, or unwelcoming about the reality of their lives in school and outside" (7.10.2). Hence they called for education for citizenship programmes, for improving home-school-liaison with minority families and the need to consider how teachers can be supported to work confidently and competently with a range of equality issues within an anti-discriminatory human rights context (6.8). The employment of more teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds was seen as important as was the need to consult with students and parents on these issues (7.11.3 and 8.6.1). The report pointed to inconsistencies among schools relating to individual teacher confidence, the levels and relevance of teacher training and school leadership (9.6) and the importance of good, respectful relationships (8.3.2).

This MEPESS report challenges the education system to provide better support and training for teachers, to include the voice of students through dialogue and consultation, to address head-on issues of racism, to include parents and families and to prioritize the needs of minority students in school policies and practice.

South of the border a study of one secondary school in greater London found that younger white students rarely drew on racist discourses while interacting with minority students (Virdee, 1999). This study also found that racism played a greater part in the lives of older minority students than younger ones, especially when authority figures were absent. While there was a relative absence of racism in school, it was much more prevalent on journeys to and from school (as will also become relevant in the findings of this research).

The OFSTED report Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils (OFSTED, 1999) addressed the issues of good practice in multicultural schools. This was published in the same year as the MacPherson report addressing issues raised by that report. Harmonious race relations are seen to require a wide range of purposeful and constructive strategies, positive behaviour management policies with plenty of time in school for issues to be discussed and resolved, regular and appropriate in-service training, a multicultural and anti-racist curriculum, close links with parents and the community, student organisation which takes account of ethnic and gender balance, the boosting of student self-esteem, books and materials which avoid stereotypical and inaccurate images, school social events aimed at bringing together different life experiences and staffing that reflects the ethnic make-up of the school and community.

Schools which successfully challenge racism and create conditions for good social and educational outcomes for all ethnic groups are schools where the teachers know, understand and respond to what is happening among pupils (OFSTED, 1999).

Migration Nation

As already noted, Irish society has seen major changes since the 1960s including joining the European Union (EU) in 1973, ongoing changes to its economic and social structures, migration shifts, increasing urbanisation, massification of school education and competition in a global economy (Ferriter,2004). One of the most significant changes for this study was the mass immigration evident for the first time in Irish society in the "Celtic Tiger" take-off of the 1990s, following decades of emigration (DES/OMI, 2010; CSO, 2012). The countries of origin of these new migrants of the 1990s were largely Eastern Europe (after the fall of the

Berlin Wall and accession of these countries to the EU) and Africa, with smaller groups from South America and Asia. Migration trends identifying countries of origin have already been detailed in Chapter 1, noting that the school in this study largely reflects the migration trends mentioned. The majority of students in this case study school came from Polish background followed by Africans (largely Nigerian), Lithuanians, Romanians and others from Eastern Europe and South America. This context of rapid change is key to understanding the dynamics of this case study.

These students found themselves in a country, education system and school that had done little to prepare for their arrival but had to quickly adapt to their needs and expectations. Their families settled in rented accommodation dispersed around the town while their parents were employed mainly in services and construction industries. Their children attended a variety of the town's nine primary schools but were largely clustered in an older parish school and a newer Educate Together school. When it came to second-level education, the majority attended Blackthorn College for a number of reasons – it had available spaces, it accepted students during the school year, it was co-educational and it gradually earned a reputation for "looking after" international students. This over-representation in Blackthorn College, a DEIS school, is consistent with experience nationally and internationally.

Dimensions of multicultural education

From the foregoing perspectives on inclusion, literature on multiculturalism gives us important insights into practices in schools and classrooms. The close relationship between the concepts of interculturalism and multiculturalism means that insights from both are relevant for this study (Alleman-Ghionda, 2009). However, it must be noted that this research

is guided primarily by the concept of interculturalism as defined as a process that " respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all parts of human (and)…challenges unfair discrimination and promotes the values upon which equality is built" (NCCA, 2006, p.1). Interculturalism as a concept focuses our attention more clearly on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships that are at the heart of inclusion and cultural relations, and so is adopted as the guiding concept for this research. However, literature on multiculturalism has a long tradition and offers some useful insights which are discussed below.

Schools reflect the communities and societies in which they operate and "the inequality that exists within society is reflected in the curriculum, textbooks, teacher attitudes and expectations, student-teacher interactions, languages and dialects spoken and sanctioned in the schools, and school culture" (Banks, 2009, p. 13). Bearing this in mind, Banks proceeds to define multicultural education as seeking to provide students with educational experiences that enable them to cherish their community cultures and acquire the skills, knowledge and cultural capital to function effectively in the national civic culture and community. In addition, multicultural education has a global dimension seeking to help students become global citizens with cosmopolitan attitudes (i*bid, 14*). These aspects are also significant for interculturalism as used and defined throughout this research.

In practical terms, Banks (2009) has developed a useful typology of the dimensions of multicultural education. These dimensions include five elements of content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy and an empowering school culture. Content integration concerns how teachers use examples and content within their subjects allowing that some subjects lend themselves to more ethnic and cultural examples than others. Knowledge construction helps students understand and investigate how the

cultural identities and positionality of researchers need to be considered when assessing the validity of knowledge claims. Prejudice reduction seeks to help students develop democratic racial attitudes and understand how ethnic identity is influenced by school context and the attitudes and beliefs of dominant groups. This prejudice reduction is greatly influenced by the theory developed by Allport (1954, p. 79) with Banks outlining key characteristics of intergroup relations between groups - the individuals experience equal status, they share common goals, intergroup cooperation exists and the contact is sanctioned by authorities such as parents, teachers and administrators. An 'equity pedagogy' occurs when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate academic achievement by diverse racial, cultural, gender and social class groups. An empowering school culture is one that is inclusive in terms of grouping, labelling, sports participation, relationships between staff and students and is consistently evaluating and planning its strategies and programs to achieve its objectives. Combining the ideas of Banks (1999, 2009), Nieto and Bode (2012) and Bennett (2011), Howe and Lisi (2014, p. 19) identify several goals which are important in a multicultural curriculum:

- Teach to eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of intolerance.
- Create an equitable education system in which all students can achieve to high standards.
- Use content and processes that meet the needs of diverse students.
- Recognise bias and the importance of teaching from multiple perspectives.
- Prepare all students to live and work in a global, multicultural world.
- Instil in students a sense of civic responsibility and social consciousness.

These goals reflect the characteristics of the inclusive school discussed above and it can be argued that they are implicit in the ethos, culture and practice of a modern Irish school that adheres to a broad philosophy of liberal multiculturalism. The relationship between aspiration and practice as seen through the views of students and teachers will be a focus of this research as well as the extent to which these goals are realized in the everyday life of the school. "As international pupils constitute a very diverse group, the topic of integration of these pupils into Irish primary and secondary schools merits further research" (Darmody, 2007, p. 338).

Researching the Irish setting

The literature documenting the experiences of Irish schools and students during the last two decades is crucial to understanding the context of this research. There have been three major case studies (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007; Curry *et al*, 2011; Parazolli, 2013), a number of key analytical studies mapping this in recent years (Bryan, 2008, 2009, 2010; Byrne *et al*, 2010; Darmody *et al*, 2014; Kitching, 2010; Devine, 2011) and official reports (NCCA, 2006; Lyons and Little, 2009; Equality Authority, nd; DES/OMI, 2010; OECD, 2009; INTO, 1998; Smyth *et al*, 2009). These case studies and research reports are worth examining to identify the evolving picture of the migrant experience in Irish schools and society in the past two decades. It must be noted that many of these studies focus on primary level, reflecting both the gap in publishing academic research and the demographic profile of Irish education at the time of completing the research, where the influx of migrant students impacted initially at primary level. Many of their findings are worthy of consideration for the second level sector through which these students are now progressing.

Mc Gorman and Sugrue completed one of the earlier published case studies in 2007 which was funded by the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education and Science focusing on inclusion in a rapidly changing and diverse suburb of Dublin. Despite its focus on primary education many of its insights are relevant to the second level context where students progress and to intercultural education generally. It questions the assertion that we Irish do not carry "colonial baggage" as there are myriad "subtle and less subtle ways in which inequalities are created, maintained and perpetuated" (p. 17). This echoes questions raised by Garner in a more general sense as to "how to construct a tradition of anti-racism for ourselves" (2004, p. 253).

Teachers' and principals' perspectives were elicited by means of focus group and meetings. Teachers were quite positive in their approach but had concerns about differing cultural approaches to gender roles, discipline and corporal punishment. Principals were concerned with a large number of issues which included enrolment policies, white flight, housing policy, resources, racism, absenteeism and lack of preschool experience. These issues are also relevant to the community that is at the centre of this research. Mc Gorman and Sugrue's research highlighted how exclusion and ghettoization were exacerbated by a wider social combination of housing and school enrolment policies. Principals interviewed were acutely aware of the consequences of enrolment policy implementation for diversity in their own schools, the knock-on effect on adjacent schools and the contradictions inherent in current legislation that are inimical to a policy of equality and the spirit of an inclusive school (p.129). The selection criteria discussed included "first come, first served", chronological age, membership of a religious denomination and language-based competency (Irish). Children were also interviewed in a focus group. "Their experience of school and community life has been one where multi-culturalism is the norm, where cultural and ethnic

differences are a given, and therefore normal" (p. 98). They had a positive outlook in relation to their school and community and were an important resource in the classroom and "providing an appropriate climate is created and fostered, they have potential to become significant architects in the construction of cultural richness and diversity" (p. 94). Bullying with a racist twist was also experienced, calling for the need for it to be addressed explicitly. Different experiences amongst migrant students were evident, with "African immigrants are more likely to be subjected to racist comments than Eastern European minorities" (p. 106). Seven parents were interviewed from various national groups. The single biggest barrier to parental involvement was identified as the "lack of English language among newcomer parents" as well as a range of cultural factors at play (p. 101). Understanding school policies, institutional practices and culture was a difficulty which can result in enrolment problems and lack of parental involvement. This can also be due to newcomer families "having enough going on to be getting on with in their everyday lives" (p. 123). Many of these trends are echoed in the findings of this research.

The report makes several recommendations for action which are relevant for this research. One is for ongoing continuous professional development for teachers to build their professional capacity to deal with a variety of issues from inclusion to racism to discipline and cultural understanding. School policies for racism and anti-racism are recommended. More information is needed for parents about schooling, parenting, and diversity to encourage more active participation and prevent "white flight" (p. 153). Finally it recommends "a more proactive approach to community development including allocation of housing and rental support … to avoid ghettoization, isolation and exclusion" (p. 156). The insights of this research come closest to the experiences of the school at the centre of this study and I will return to them in the final chapter.

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Curry, Gilligan, Garratt, Scholtz (2011) cover similar ground in their study to McGorman and Sugrue with a very specific focus on children's experiences. Seven inner-city Dublin primary schools were studied and the research "was based on a detailed examination of the micro-dynamics of the interaction between children" (p. 20). In total 343 children were interviewed along with their teachers with the largest numbers coming from 6th, 4th and 2nd classes roughly corresponding to ages 12, 10 and 8 respectively (p. 7). The research indicates that migrant children "living in Dublin's north inner-city have positive attitudes towards school, often do comparatively well academically and tend to come from families with traditional values emphasising the importance of education, respect for authority and responsibility to the family" (p. 85). Observing students in the school yard at break time the authors note that "a tendency towards separation is clearly marked, but on the other hand, cross-community peer groups also occur frequently" (p. 97) and for some migrant boys "football seems to offer an avenue of social inclusion and even prestige" (p. 98) They note that many migrant children "tend to be academically orientated and unused to the kinds of 'rough' neighbourhoods in which they find themselves living" (p. 91). The researchers found a "definite strand of racial bullying" (p. 124) and although they were reluctant to generalise on the question of bullying and racism they conclude that "the finding that a number of children are experiencing severe remorse over their skin colour is perhaps one of the most important findings from the present research … such children represent the victims of racial bullying" (p. 162). The authors note that "quite serious examples of racial bullying were seen to slip under the radar" and report that they "encountered no success stories in terms of managing bullying issues which had been resolved by anyone other than the children themselves" (p. 178).

Regarding the task of reducing prejudice and distance between children of different ethnic groups the authors recommend three strategies for schools using cooperative learning, multicultural curriculum and social-cognitive skills training (p. 168). Cooperative learning is defined as more than traditional group work requiring teacher training and planning whereby each participant can achieve their learning goal if, and only if, the other group members achieve theirs. The authors concede that the evidence of multicultural curricula on the attitudes of majority children is not overwhelming but recommended as a preparation for life in a multicultural society. Social-cognitive skills training is seen in terms of general social skills training in empathy, perspective taking and thinking about prejudice and as a result, "narrative story telling rather than the use of factual information is the dominant tool" (p. 172).

Noting that "the presence of academically ambitious migrant children has changed the tenor of many schools and classrooms" and that "this development … would be impossible to engineer and is something which should be viewed as a great opportunity for schools in historically disadvantaged areas" (p. 191), the authors recommend a range of measures to include:

- Some use of cooperative learning.
- A limited amount of multicultural curriculum.
- Social cognitive skills training.
- An extension of anti-bullying policy to cover racial bullying and a tightening up of the enforcement of that policy (p.179).

A more recent ethnographic study of two second level schools in Dublin 15 (Parazzoli, 2013) paints a bleak picture when comparing the experiences of migrant students in a progressive ETB school in a middle-class area with those of students in a DEIS ETB school less than three miles away. Using a Bourdieu-type lens, the author describes "how the kind of neighbourhood where the schools are situated can affect the schools' priorities and ethos, teachers' motivation, students' performances, parents' participation and the funding of extra-curricular activities" (p. 67). She suggests that the students in the DEIS school are disadvantaged by poor discipline, time-wasting, continuous disruption and in some cases by a "lack of respect" (pp. 119-121). The DEIS school is described as having a prison atmosphere at times and having "a courtyard strewn with empty coke cans and plastic bottles" (p. 126). The other school in the study is better able to meet the needs of migrant students due to its emphasis on high academic standards, the excellence of its language support and overall *habitus* of a middle-class catchment area. She concludes that what is needed are more resources for language support, a drastic review of the curriculum permeating all subject areas (not the add-on approach), more teacher training with specific emphasis on cultural, citizenship and racist education, a rectification of the existing inequalities between schools leading to more democratic access and the rooting of educational research back to schools to allow for reflection and implementation of improvements. As the schools in the above study are about twenty miles from the school at the centre of this study, the issues raised need careful reflection and analysis through comparison and contrast with each other. This may result in building a broader, deeper picture of what goes on in schools and serve to show what can go wrong in schools that are unable to plan to meet change or are overwhelmed by forces of social deprivation and disadvantage.

Devine (2010) has provided very valuable research based on extensive work in 11 schools in the Greater Dublin area. She has interviewed principals, teachers, parents and students and has reflected her research through the lens of the work of Bourdieu (using the concepts of habitus, field and cultural capital) and of Foucault (using the concepts of dominant discourses, dividing and classifying practices and bio-power). Drawing on Bourdieu, Devine considers the significant role of capitals (economic, cultural and social) in mediating educational opportunities and life chances in a society marked by significant inequalities (p. 37). Echoing Suárez-Orozco (2009), educated parents tend to know the "rules of the game" and their children are more likely to flourish. Using Foucault's work she examines the dominant discourses relating to cultural and ethnic identity. She notes that "migration is seen as a process that needs to be 'managed'" (p. 35) and contradictions are identified in the implementation of policy as, for example, in community national schools which may end up serving the migrant community rather than the whole community because of patterns of settlement and housing policy. This can occur when the new community national school is situated in an area of high migrant settlement or, in an older area where it is the newest school and therefore receives all those who did not meet the enrolment criteria of the more established schools.

Devine charts the evolution of the Irish education system from a monocultural ethic of Catholic nationalism from the foundation of the state in the 1920s towards a more diverse and fragmented provision nowadays. The biggest change noted is in school provision with the growth of Educate Together schools in the primary sector and expanding enrolment patterns at secondary education in community and vocational schools.

She tracks how migrant children are consistently clustered in marginalised communities and vocationally oriented schools, noting that parental choice is not simply a matter of personal preference for schools with a defining curricular or religious ethos but is also embedded in classed and socialised patterns of sorting and selecting (Devine, 2010, p. 50). Devine, drawing on Shapira (2010) suggests that migrant children do less well when they are in such schools and there is a further layer of inequality being built on the structured class inequalities in Irish education (Devine, 2010, p. 44; Darmody *et al*, 2014, pp. 129-151; Kitching, 2010, pp. 213-229; Byrne *et al*, 2010, pp. 271-288).

The attitudes of teachers and principals are discussed with teachers tending to have an occasional *'ad hoc'* attention to diversity, with a tendency to 'exoticise' the culture of minority children and a 'no problem here' viewpoint predominating. Migrant students were seen to enrich the school experience and teacher attitudes were most positive when migrant children dovetailed with their own habitus in terms of both culture and class. Words such as 'bright', 'diligent', 'nice', 'interested', 'good at languages' and 'willing to learn' were used referring to students from Poland, Russia, Ukraine and Romania whereas more circumspect views were held about Latvian and Lithuanian children indicating the complex nature of discourses and attitudes about ethnicity and diversity.

Devine noted a tendency to compartmentalise diversity as an 'additive extra' to the work of the classroom teacher rather than as an essential piece of classroom practice. Teachers also felt racism was not a problem in their school and identified any incidences they had witnessed as isolated and individualised.

The role of the principal in 'leaderful practice' relating to teachers and parents is developed. The effective principal is seen as more than a manager towards a role that is critically reflective and "whose practice is underpinned by strong commitment to social justice" (p. 58). This involves courses, seminars and helping teachers reflect on their classroom practices and also the need for representation of minority ethnic groups on school staff. For parents this involves making them feel welcome in the school through initiatives such as coffee mornings and art classes and formally through the Parents Association and Board of Management. Significant differences were evident across schools in Devine's research in terms of actively working towards an inclusive school culture that sought to critically reflect upon and engage in and with cultural change (p. 82).

Noting that it is the school which sets the parameters for parental inclusion and involvement in Bourdieu's terms the 'rules of the game' (p. 109), Devine notes that deeply embedded patterns of marginalisation persist. Highly educated migrant parents are most likely to be involved in some form of school activity dynamically building social and cultural capital through the networks, knowledge and skills they developed in coming to Ireland (p. 112). Their challenge was not learning how to play 'the rules' of the game but rather discerning what the 'rules' in Ireland were and how they should find out about them.

There was also the influence of economic factors in terms of "the reality of their everyday lives …across their capacity to become actively involved in their children's school" (p. 115) especially if they were lone parents. The positioning of parents with respect to their children's school and education was also influenced by cultural/ethnic/linguistic background.

Devine concludes that 'through their action/inaction schools (especially the principal, but also teachers and reception staff) foster cultures of inclusion or exclusion that has implications for levels of engagement by different groups of parents in the school, as well as the nature of engagement itself' (p. 122). Most parents in one school were not aware that they could serve on the school board. Devine warns against 'assumptions of tolerance' and 'leaving the door open' suggesting more direct strategies are needed to engage migrant parents while acknowledging that many schools with immigrant populations are already struggling with marginalised and fractured communities.

Regarding children, Devine notes that migrant children 'have' to go to school and 'integrate' in a way which their migrant parents do not (p. 135). They find out what it means to be 'Irish', how to belong, be recognised and 'bond and bridge' networks to help support their social and school lives and broader integration into society. Boys had to manage a tension between a hegemonic masculinity centred more on sporting prowess than on academic success. Girls had to position themselves in relation to contrasting constructs of femininity in terms of appropriate 'rules' for dress, freedom to roam (especially after school) and contact romance relations with boys. The positive attitude of migrant children towards learning Irish is noted both in terms of teacher approval and its cultural and symbolic value in negotiating 'Irishness'. Students also critiqued the absence of a broader focus in subjects such as history and geography. I will address the issue of curriculum in discussion with the students in this case study school and return to these identity issues in chapters six and seven.

Racism is an issue 'which was something all of the children were keenly aware of, most especially in their out of school lives' and 'confident, assertive minority ethnic children were especially at risk of racial abuse because in their 'attitude' they have queried (and resisted)

their minoritised positioning' (pp. 146-147). They may have crossed a boundary where they are expected to be 'invisible'.

Devine concludes that 'a one size fits all approach to diversity in schools is not sufficient. Neither is 'diversity' about and for immigrant children, rather it is embedded in all children's lifeworld in school and should be taken as narrative in itself' (p. 151). She feels that 'Recognition is key …to the children's educational well-being – in terms of visibility as persons with a voice to be heard and expressed, as well as in being validated, monitored and meaningfully supported in their efforts at work and play in school.' (p. 151)

Devine's overall conclusions are that schools can make a difference and she particularly emphasises the importance of leadership and a vision of education for participative democracy. Because schools are important civic spaces comprised of those who are gatekeepers of knowledge, opportunity and change, Devine argues for a deep commitment to democracy in education on the part of all engaged in the education process. Devine's overall approach has influenced my discussion and analysis and its relevance will be apparent in later chapters.

Devine also looked at teacher responses to immigration and increasing ethnic diversity in Irish schools in other work. She noted the impact of migrant students in schools with a predominance of students from a working-class background, with "migrant students … mentioned as having a potentially positive impact on the more 'deficient' working-class students" (Devine, 2005, p. 61). This may also be because DEIS schools often have difficulty maintaining enrolment levels and hence do not have the waiting lists or restricted enrolment policies of other schools. This certainly was the case of the school in this study

that migrant students, 40 per cent of the school population, had a positive impact not only on their peers and teachers but also in terms of broadening subject choice, providing more engaged students for extra-curricular activities such as team sports, musicals and so on and enabling management to recruit new young, energetic teachers. Devine reported that "teacher responses were complex and underpinned by a feeling of ambiguity and insecurity about what they were doing. In all of the schools … there was mention of the need to develop more inclusive practices, coupled with an uncertainty over how best to proceed" (2005, p. 65). Whereas teachers are more than likely to subscribe to their Code of Professional Conduct and be "committed to equality and inclusion and to respecting and accommodating diversity including those differences arising from gender … religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, membership of the Travelling community and socio-economic status" (Teaching Council, 2012), it is quite another matter to identify professional needs and a major challenge for CPD providers and schools to make available the training and in-service programmes to meet these needs.

Bryan's research (2008, p. 48) reiterates these findings by suggesting "that intercultural education is in fact, more likely to reproduce, rather than contest racism and racist ideologies". She reaches this conclusion after critical discourse analysis of official documents and textbook materials in a variety of subjects. Using the lens of Bourdieu's concepts, she identifies symbolic violence against migrants and concludes that "there is a clear need to re-narrativise the story of racism and migration in a way that places marginalised groups at the centre, rather than the periphery of the intercultural" (Bryan, 2010, p. 268)
The extent to which students feel marginalised or "other" or are excluded from the school programme is therefore an area of concern for investigation in this study. Other aspects of Bryan's work (2010) are even more relevant for this research. Again using critical discourse

analysis of policy documents and an ethnographic case study of a second level in Dublin, she contends that the NCCA guidelines constitute an "add diversity and stir" approach to the curriculum and that intercultural interventions are often "token gestures that risk confirming the 'other' status of migrant students in the eyes of the majority Irish student population" which she identifies as WHISCS – white heterosexual Irish settled Catholics. Drawing on Devine (2008), Molcho *et al* (2008) and Smyth *et al* (2004) she writes that "within schools there is evidence to suggest immigrant students are more likely to have experienced bullying than their non-immigrant counterparts" (Bryan, 2010, p. 260). As outlined and discussed in later chapters, experiences of bullying form a key component of the findings of this research.

These are serious assertions regarding policy and practice which need to be part of the focus of this research. It should be pointed out that the school at the centre of Bryan's research was "located in a middle-class suburb of Dublin" and had a 10 per cent total of international students. This contrasts with the school at the centre of this research which is a DEIS school with 40 per cent international students in a market town location with a rural hinterland. The interplay of class, location and numbers may result in different outcomes to those identified in Bryan's study, indicative of the vital importance of locating research studies clearly in their qualitative settings.

Also noteworthy is the Trinity Immigration Initiative English Language Support Programme survey of 85 English language support teachers between September 2007 and June 2008. "Lack of appropriate teacher training pre – as well as in – service" was identified as the single most significant deficiency in the Irish second level system "closely followed by a lack of English language teaching materials that take account of the different curriculum subjects"

(Lyons and Little, 2009). This is relevant in terms of findings of this research about curricular and pedagogical supports.

Overall, these empirical studies highlight the implications of demographic migration shifts for Irish schools. Patterns of settlement and housing strategy combined with enrolment policies determine the make-up of schools with a predominance of migrant students often attending DEIS schools. These students make a positive contribution to the schools they attend and this is recognised by their teachers. Reacting to this, teachers identify a need for CPD to enable them to teach effectively and not just to be "adding on" extra material for their multicultural classroom. Racism is an issue that is often hidden but is very real for black students especially and co-operative learning and curricular adaptation are seen as ways to tackle this and provide for a positive multicultural learning experience.

Policy responses to diversity and inclusion in Irish education

The experiences of migrant students and schools revealed by these empirical studies needs to be set within the broader context of state policies. The Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-15 (DES/OMI, 2010) published in 2010, is key Irish Government policy for this period which charts the direction, goals and actions required. Its origin partly lies in a Government commitment at the World Conference against Racism in Durban (2001) to develop and implement a National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR). One of NPAR's ten actions for the education sector was the development of an intercultural education strategy. It seeks to 'support and improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education for every learner in our schools' (Johnston and O'Brien, 2000, p. 59). This policy development occurred in the context of the rapid demographic change described in earlier sections.

Within these policy perspectives, intercultural education is defined as 'education which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all areas of human life. It sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life.... and world-views and that this breadth of human life enriches us all' and also 'it promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination and promotes the values upon which equality is built' (DES/OMI,2010,2).

International and national contexts are explained by referencing international conventions and agreements and national constitutional and legal provisions. Relevant in the Irish policy context is the influence of top-down rights-based initiatives, beginning with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and moving through EU and Council of Europe concerns. Their formative influence is evident in domestic legislation such as the Education Act (1998) and the Equal Status Act (2000) which has shifted policy attention from the general to the specific, from lofty aspirations to statutory regulations in seeking to ensure tolerance and inclusion in increasingly diverse societies.

Research findings and consultations in the Intercultural Education Strategy recommend CPD for teachers in EAL and diversity, support a whole school approach and encourage the involvement of parents. I refer to these issues throughout this research in order to ascertain what can be achieved in practices at school level. The strategy emphasises how intercultural skills need to be developed across the education team. Students need language support to access the curriculum. Indeed every teacher is a language teacher and this approach implies a shift in the perception of the second level teacher from a teacher of subjects towards a teacher of children. This remains a central challenge for the second level system generally and for its teachers. This approach supports the Code of Professional Practice for Teachers with its

emphasis on respect, care, integrity and trust (Teaching Council, 2012, p. 6). Devine notes that the Intercultural Education Strategy is "important and timely [but] it needs to be counter balanced by an equivalent focus on broader state level policies (including economic and social policies) which impact on schools' capacities to change" (2011, p. 163). This is a vital point for researchers and policy-makers to consider.

In terms of relationships, a partnership approach is favoured between teachers, parents, students and communities. Effective communication is needed and data needs to be continually gathered and monitored to provide for evidence-based policy and decision making (p. 43). These issues were also highlighted in reports by the INTO (1998) and OECD (2009) publications indicating their importance.

The Equality Authority has been active in seeking to promote an intercultural society in Ireland over the last number of years (Equality Authority, n.d.). Its document Building an Intercultural Society has a section on education which recommends the following – to develop school planning to include an explicit anti-racist and intercultural dimension, to develop evaluation procedures regarding these, to increase resources and supports, to enhance community education, to develop fair admission policies and codes of behaviour, to ensure representation of minority groups at all levels and to implement the NAPS recommendations in relation to minority ethnic groups. All of this was to be achieved in the context of the NESC Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues. This framework consists of four equality objectives – redistribution, representation, recognition and respect (p. 6). However the Equality Authority itself and local organisations and groups that had been funded to promote these objectives have all been subject to massive reductions in funding in recent

years, raising questions about current State support for equality issues including interculturalism.

These policy responses were in part reactions to the changing demographic profile of Irish society and also responses to international obligations. Their enactment need to be located within the broader context of European and global settings, which is explored in the following section.

Literature versus experience

Whereas most of the literature discussed above is written in a scholarly, reflective prose, the personal experience of writers such as hooks and Nieto illuminates the experiences of minority students in a more profound way than discursive reports, articles, theses and books. The research in this thesis is coming from the inside out, rather than the outside in: coming from within the school through the experiences of eight students primarily in conversation with their former principal about their experiences building towards ideas for improved practice. This literature review has enabled the researcher to locate the research on a broad canvas of educational discourse and will give perspective to later findings, discussion and recommendations.

Complexities and contradictions

As later findings and discussion chapters reveal, there is a complex interplay of different aspects that impact on intercultural experiences. Central to these are the complex interplay of

ethnicity with age, gender and class issues. We need to be mindful of the complex social and personal experiences that students and teachers bring with them to school every day.

"Teachers do not simply deliver the national curriculum and enact positive discipline policy, they also confront contextual encounters such as dilemmas over levels of distribution of resources, acts of violence and aggression, complex patterns of interpersonal and group relationships, power struggles for control and dominance, disputes over achievement, and issues about what constitute 'really useful knowledge' for different groups of students. All these multifaceted dilemmas are imbued with gender, ethnicity and social class" (Reay, 2006, p. 292).Good curriculum planning and delivery can affect such matters positively and there are "clear grounds for arguing that educational experiences that are directed towards personal development and discussion of global development, poverty, discrimination and ethnicity issues may have an impact on reducing reported levels of social distance" (Tormey and Gleeson, 2012, p. 170).

Ethnicity, class and academic achievement intersect in specific ways in Irish education. Irish research documents how migrant students are often over represented in DEIS schools (Byrne, 2010, p. 275) due to the mix of settlement and enrolment policies. Broad trends document how migrant student attainment is lower in such educational contexts, with Devine noting that migrant children do less well academically in such schools (2011, p. 44), teachers may have lower expectations (*ibid., p.* 88; Darmanin, 2003) and they experience more racism and bullying (*ibid, p.* 146; Russell, 2011, p. 55). However, these trends are not reflected in all literature with some studies reporting that many migrant students do extremely well in schools and their parents often have high expectations compared with non-migrant parents in the same school but "this is perhaps unsurprising, especially as research has consistently

documented that [many] economic migrants adopt middleclass values towards education often regardless of class position" (Reay *et al*, 2007, p. 1048). This is further complicated by the intersection of class, ethnicity and gender. Gender is a significant limitation of this current study as noted later (due to the lack of participation by African female students in particular) but it is one which is very relevant. This raises the broader issue of the influence of different research methodologies, sampling frame and measures of attainment being used. This gives some sense of the complexities and varieties evident in the complex mesh of factors which intersect to influence students' experiences of education.

The contradictions and complexity outlined above briefly indicate how interculturalism is a complex and dynamic area of different political, social and educational discourses which must be considered. Interculturalism has so many dimensions – national, local, cultural, ethnic, demographic, personal and educational – and is interlinked in so many complex ways. The study of one aspect is impossible without taking into account all the other dimensions as they vary in context so that an intersectional approach can possibly yield most insights (Hancock, 2007). This echoes once more Allemann-Ghionda's (2009) call for more qualitative research which is cognizant of the local settings and intersectionality of intercultural experiences in schools.

Conclusion

The purpose of this concluding summary is to bring together the ideas and foci of the literature and briefly connect them with practice in the classroom and school setting to remind us that "we do research to understand. We try to understand to make our schools

better places for both the children and adults who share their lives there … in the end our work lives its ultimate life in the lives it enables others to lead" (Eisner, 1998, p. 129).

Research indicates that migration and settlement patterns are here to stay and with increasing globalisation and free movement of labour within the EU, we are likely to have intercultural classrooms in front of us into the future (Castles, 2009; OECD, 2007). We need to find out "what works" and to plan ahead, listening to the voices of young people and communities who are most affected. Empirical research indicates that there is a challenge to local and national authorities to ensure a balanced migration and settlement pattern (Devine, 2010; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007). These migration and settlement patterns will be replicated all over the developed world with schools in a prominent position to ensure integration, social harmony, and educational progress. Researchers note that the curriculum can be adapted and used to enhance diversity and understanding and the informal or hidden curriculum is just as important in the lives of the students (Banks, 2010; Nieto, 2009; Smyth, 1999; NCCA, 2006). The formal instruction in the school through subject disciplines is often what students tell us they "do" at school but their social interactions with friends and teachers and the wider community are just as important in terms of their personal and social development.

Research highlights how teachers play a pivotal role in delivery of intercultural inclusive education and the importance of building a positive, respectful atmosphere. They need additional resources and adequate pre-service and in-service training, must have high expectations and be flexible in delivery of programmes (Banks, 2009; Nieto, 2009; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Davis and Fries, 2004; Domnwachukwu, 2010; OECD, 2009a; Darmanin, 2003). They need to be flexible and innovative and to cultivate good relationships with students (MEPESS, 2005; Hooks, 1994) in order to provide the optimum atmosphere for

inclusive schools (Bredella, 2003; Murawski and Spencer, 2011; OECD, 2009b; Cole, 2008; Crandell, 2008).

As literature reveals parents have a key role to play although it can be difficult to devise appropriate structures and channels and to change attitudes of the part of both teachers and parents. Research highlights a variety of social, economic, linguistic and cultural reasons at play (Banks, 2010; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007; NCCA, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, 2009; OECD, 2009b).

Research with students indicates that racism and bullying are behaviours that need to be addressed in a direct, robust way especially in the case of African students (Lyons and Little, 2009; Safe Schools Action Team, 2006; King, 2004; Banks, 2010; Bryan, 2008; Russell, 2011). There is a tendency for schools to be "colour-blind" (Gilborn, 2010) or in denial (MEPESS, 2005) or unaware of white privilege (Hagge, 1998; Zinga and Gordon, 2014) and there is a need for schools to be proactive in countering bullying and fostering well-being (Tattum and Herbert, 1993; O' Brien, 2008; O' Moore, 2010). It is important to bear in mind that racism can be an almost daily experience for many African students.

Studies highlight how schools are social spaces and the ways young people interact and the opportunities they are given to become involved in formal and informal school activities need to be investigated to ensure optimum conditions for learning.

The experiences of Britain, Europe and the United States (as reflected in their histories and educational literature) can be used to affirm good practice, warn of possible dangers and share the values of good intercultural education.

Irish education can be seen in the context of liberal multiculturalism when reading the official literature (NCCA, 2006; DES/OMI, 2010) and also in the context of neo-liberalism (Devine, 2011; Bryan, 2008). I would support Banks' (1999) approach and the critical multiculturalism approach of Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), in seeing possibilities in practice for confronting racism and intolerance, for achieving high standards, for challenging the status quo and for preparing all students to live in a global, multicultural world. These approaches must acknowledge the broader systemic context, structural impediments and power dynamics within which schools are located, and which require action on systemic, societal and socio-political levels (Banks, 2004; Devine, 2010; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007).

In policy terms, the intercultural education strategy of the Department of Education and Science is a laudable exercise in setting broad goals and general aims. However there are significant structural and implementation issues which constrain these objectives. We must keep in mind the core role of policy which should be to support and enable practice on the ground in individual schools that will make a difference (Devine, 2011). The interplay of social and economic forces such as housing, school choice, income distribution with broad education policy at national and local level and the reality on the ground, in the classroom and on the streets with issues of race, class and gender for students and teachers is a complex arena that demands multiple approaches in both understanding and defining (Hancock, 2007) and in applying solutions (Reay, 2006; Tormey and Gleeson, 2012; Bryan, 2009).

Using the above reflective summary as a lens for observing the school at the centre of this study, certain questions arise. How do migrant students, with differing experiences and aspirations fit in to a DEIS school which is serving a disadvantaged community with a disproportionate number of special needs students? (Parazzoli, 2013). What do they bring to

the school in terms of social capital and how does the school respond? Are the teachers in this school preoccupied with behaviour and special needs issues to the detriment of "mainstream" and migrant students' ability to access the curriculum and learning? (Devine, 2011). Are migrant families stratified into areas of   rental or local authority housing adjacent to a "sink school" with consequent implications for education? (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007). How are teacher expectations affected by their new migrant students? Does inclusion tend to be an "add-on" activity rather than a central facet of school life? Is the taught curriculum only minimally affected and does the hidden curriculum remain hidden with the dominant discourse being liberal multiculturalism with the neutral teacher leaving politics and social justice outside the classroom door? Are the peers of these migrant students who are lucky enough to get in to the prestige voluntary secondary schools in the town surging ahead academically and socially leaving their friends to fend for themselves in the blackboard jungle of the DEIS school? (Parazzoli, 2013). Are bullying and racism far more prevalent in their lives as they are attending a "tough" school in a "tough" neighbourhood? Are their parents likely to be "deskilled" having jobs that do not reflect their qualifications in their home country and are they unlikely to be involved in school life through the parents' association and other bridges between the home and the school? Is the intersection of race, class and gender likely to magnify the disadvantage that these students encounter? (Darmody, 2007, Bryan, 2010).

I will seek to explore these issues in interviews with students and teachers in order to contextualise and problematize the experiences of migrant students. Although our exploration is a case study of one school only, I hope to reveal the reality of everyday life for a migrant student in a DEIS school and understand better the complex intersections of all the issues identified in order to make better provision for such students in the future.

This literature review has demonstrated that intercultural education is a feature of the school systems of modern democracies and that it can be a powerful tool for the integration and empowerment of young people. An inclusive school that recognises individuals in a diverse setting, that gives scope for a public sphere of openness, debate and discussion and responds to the needs of the community it serves, can play an important role in preparing young people for citizenship. Migrants are more likely to attend DEIS schools and can bring significant cultural capital to these schools which may affect outcomes such as school culture and climate, curriculum and career aspirations. Racism can be a feature of schools where it is either ignored or misunderstood and needs to be addressed in a meaningful way that involves recognition and respect rather than pious platitudes. Teachers have a key role to play in delivering an intercultural curriculum and parents can also play an important part. This thesis seeks to explore these themes through the experiences of the people at the heart of the school- the students, to analyse and discuss their responses and to make recommendations based on the findings that follow.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As the aim of this research is to investigate and record the experiences of newcomer children to an Irish second level school, the researcher is faced with the dilemma of making the research practical and do-able during the timespan available, whether to use qualitative or quantitative methods, whether the research is rigorous enough to provide solid information and ideas, relevant enough to produce knowledge that is useful and is in keeping with my conceptual framework as outlined in chapter two.

In this chapter I will describe how I chose my research topic, what emerged as the research questions, why I chose a qualitative mixed-methods approach, whether the research area is suitable for good quality research, how I addressed the insider issue, the ethical implications of my methods, how I purposively sampled students and teachers, how I analysed the interviews and arrived at themes in this research and the scope and limitations of the methods used.

How I chose my research area

I selected the topic of intercultural education after deciding to carry out my research in my own school setting and after considering what the major issues were in the school. I selected my own school as I felt I had a suitable setting on my own doorstep that I had easy access to

and that would yield an "in-depth picture" (Ryan, 2006; Fink, 1999) giving "thick description" where the "researcher is part of the researched world" (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2011). The major issues in the school I identified as the integration of 40 per cent newcomer students who had transformed the school into a multi-cultural-crossroads and also the issue of Traveller education and retention.

I decided against a study of Traveller education because although they made up 10 per cent of the school population, only one student completed his Leaving Certificate or five years of second level education in 2012. This highlights an area which needs further research. Although issues such as diversity, interculturalism, parental involvement are present in traveller education, the paucity of specific literature, reluctance and shyness of parents and shortage of students (DES, 2002; Matras, 2014) lead me to conclude that a study of the multicultural phenomenon would yield more information and be more useful.

Research questions

Initially my research questions were around how did newcomer students settle in? How relevant was the curriculum for them? What did they bring to the school? What training did the school provide for integration and citizenship? What view of the school did their parents have and why did they choose this school for their children's education? How can I improve the experience of school for these students and how can I improve practice throughout the whole school? As I progressed through the literature, consulted with colleagues and observed "the school on my doorstep", I began to appreciate the journey these newcomer students had made, the contribution and transformation they made to the school and the possibilities that education had opened up for these students and for society generally. It was then I wished to

capture their story, valorise their experience, engage with them and learn from them about how to improve the experience of newcomer students in particular and how to improve intercultural education in general. Therefore the qualitative interview seemed most suitable as a means of answering these questions – what does a multi-cultural school look like? How difficult or easy was it for the students to fit in? What are the issues for newcomer students attending one? How can its programmes and procedures be improved?

Why I chose a qualitative approach

Considering my conceptual framework outlined in chapter two and bearing in mind the research questions outlined below, it is appropriate to discuss here why I chose a qualitative approach of mixed methods concentrating mainly on narrative analysis. I wish to study and give voice to newcomer students and explore their attitudes, concerns, fears and hopes by listening to them, their parents and their teachers so as to make useful proposals for improvements in school and society. "Our choice of methodology is based on the personal beliefs and philosophies that inform our worldview (ontology) and our ways of relating to, and understanding how knowledge is created (epistemology)" (Etherington, 2006, p. 83).

The qualitative approach best fits with my historical sensibility as it uses narrative to build a story of events that can be analysed to reveal a deeper picture of the issues for consideration in this research. I wished to learn from the everyday experiences of migrant students and understand what they had left behind as well as what they were bringing to their new environment. I wanted to communicate outside the atmosphere of formal schooling to gain this fuller understanding. The possibilities of the qualitative approach and the intersections of *habitus,* recognition and the lifeworld of others were brought home to me the summer before

I commenced interviewing when I met a Polish mother and son as they were enrolling for school the following September. After dealing with the formalities of recording age, address, subjects studied and so on, we had a general conversation about current affairs and Polish history. As she was leaving my office, the woman said "Oh, by the way, your Monet in the reception area is hanging upside down". I was unaware of this as I passed the painting every day and gave an enquiring glance. "I know", she said, "I saw the original in New York last week". The cultural capital on display here, as well as the confidence and cosmopolitanism, would best be captured through a general, semi-structured interview approach. Whereas this encounter was by no means typical of my meetings with parents, it alerted me to the nuances and diverse shades of experience best captured by a narrative approach.

I have chosen narrative analysis as I consider it best suits my epistemological and historical approach and is most likely to yield broad, deep and meaningful data that address the research questions. I have taken a broad approach to narrative analysis, acknowledging the specific schools and approaches within the narrative discipline. My own approach is one of using a broad narrative approach and analysis technique within a qualitative interview context. It is framed and inspired by what Clandinin and Connelly speak of narrative inquiry as '*personal* and *social* (interaction); *past, present* and *future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical *three dimensional narrative inquiry space*, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third'. These researchers also identify four directions – inward and outward, backward and forward (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 50). By inward is meant feelings, hopes, and moral dispositions. Outward refers to the environment or existential conditions. Backward and forward refer to time – past, present and future.

The objective of the research is to understand the intercultural experience and to make this understanding useful for application to future classrooms and students. 'Narrative researchers do their work by (politely) intruding on people in the course of living real lives and asking them to help us learn something. We do this in hope that what we learn will be of some benefit to others or will contribute to basic knowledge about aspects of human experience' (Josselson, 2007, p. 538).

'My candidate for the most distinctive and praiseworthy human capacity is our ability to trust and to co-operate with other people, and in particular to work together so as to improve the future' (Rorty, 1999, xiii) – this is the framework for my research and my hope is to record the experiences of the newcomer student and learn from that experience in order to improve intercultural education in one school and to share these improvements with other schools and practitioners.

It is indeed difficult to let go of 'the positivistic dream of control, prediction, objectivity and generalizability ' (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p. 15) but narrative approaches do not lead towards these lofty heights but rather to more particular, located, specific outcomes that can benefit educational discourse. In some ways I am coming full circle to my discipline of history whose knowledge 'progresses not by totalization but ….. zooming and refocusing' (Revel and Hunt, 1995, p. 588 as quoted in Morgan-Fleming, Riegle and Fryer, 2007, p. 83) .Of the social sciences, only sociology was born as a positivist discipline. The others especially history but also anthropology and psychology had their birth in narrative (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p. 26). However my objective is to record the voices, trials, tribulations, fears and hopes of our newcomer students and to contribute useful suggestions for education and society in the future.

Is the research area suitable for good quality qualitative research?

To yield to good quality qualitative research Tracy (2010) proposed eight "Big Tent" criteria. I intend to analyse the research area using these criteria to ensure its validity and suitability. Is the topic worthy? The topic is relevant as we become an intercultural society and seek ways to help schools reflect this society and experience. It is timely in that this is a relatively recent phenomenon in Irish history although it has been a feature of Western society since the 1950s. It is significant and interesting in that the results of the study can point in future directions for school and society.

Has it rich rigour? 'A head full of theories and a case full of data does not automatically result in high quality work' (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). However the researcher will need to spend a lot of time with the participants collecting, narrating and re-forming the data. Seven young people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds were selected by the researcher to ensure depth, breath and variation in the data. The data collection process was continuous throughout the school year. In addition, I re-interviewed three of the young people the following year as well as an additional young man who was not available first time round. I also interviewed teachers as discussed later.

Is it sincere? I am self-reflexive about my values, biases and inclinations. The methods were transparent and the participants were invited to respond to and re-construct the findings with me through the second interview process.

Is it a credible topic? 'Credible reports are those that readers feel trustworthy enough to act on and make decisions in line with' (*ibid*, p. 843). This can be achieved through 'thick

description' – showing rather than telling, awareness of complexity and cultural differences. It is also achieved through triangulation, multivocality and member reflections. Narrative approaches attach importance to going back to the narrator for clarification, elucidation and further meaning.

Is it resonant? The text needs to be vivid, engaging and well-put together displaying clarity in Orwell's sense (see chapter 2). Resonance can also be achieved through transferability meaning that the reader can see applications for the research in his or her own practice even though this may be in a very different setting and context. The desired outcome is that the research will achieve 'resonance across various populations and contexts, even if it is based on data from a unique population during a specified moment in time' (*ibid*, p. 845). The researcher well remembers seeking lodgings in Reading, Berkshire going down the Oxford Road in 1971 and seeing signs in windows that said 'No Dogs, No Wogs, No Irish'. Migration and displacement resonate across time and societies.

Will the research topic make a significant contribution? Will it extend knowledge or improve practice? Because the field for the research is one school, it is to be hoped that the findings will have application across the school system. This is especially so as the school has a high proportion of international/newcomer students. We are an intercultural society and the tensions, misunderstandings and opportunities for learning and mutual respect will be with us for a long time to come. Heuristic significance moves people to further research and to act on the research in the future. Again, due to the specificity of the research in one school, it is likely to spur similar or related research and practice in other schools as the research will illustrate the wealth of data that can be gleaned from one school setting.

Is it ethical? The research is mindful of procedural, situational, relational and exiting ethics. It follows the Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011) of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). The research is built around respect for the participants and their life-stories and recognises 'the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time' (BERA, 2011). At the end of the research field work period, I meet with participants individually to feedback, reflect and discuss the findings. I will address the ethical dimensions in greater detail below.

Does it have meaningful coherence? The study should achieve what it set out to do and the literature, research questions, findings and analysis should all fit together having used appropriate methods to reach its goals.

I believe that the experiences of newcomer students and their families, the ways the school has tried to respond to their needs (or otherwise) and the stories these young people have to tell will enrich, enlighten and empower me as a reflective practitioner in my role as principal of the school in this study. I also believe that the findings will help re-orient organisational, procedural and curricular provision in the school and this may assist other schools in the task of meeting the needs of all our children by cherishing all of our children equally (Democratic Programme of the 1st Dáil, 1919) and empowering teachers, principals, parents and students to access second-level education to the best possible advantage for their futures.

How this research was influenced by narrative analysis

Narrative analysis is a legitimate way of knowing and an act of sense making that shapes our conceptions and understandings about the world about us (Bruner, 1990), with reflexivity at

the heart of narrative inquiry (Macintyre, Latta and Kim, 2010; Phillion and Wang, 2011; Andrews, Squire and Tambouku, 2011). It is important also to consider the advantages and disadvantages of this methodology as used in my research (after Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk, 2007). The advantages can be seen as how relatively easy it is to get people to tell stories as most people are pleased to tell a story about themselves. This can be especially so when they sense the researcher is eager to 'capture' and understand their stories. Gaining in-depth data (thick description) is possible because this often occurs with ease in narrated events. Participants will have a rich variety of events to reflect on from starting school to the rituals of schooling to the 'rites of passage' from 1st year to 6th year. It is possible to gain in-depth meaning and reflection because participants reveal themselves in stories and are willing to reflect on their accounts at a later stage as well. This is where feedback and discussion between researcher and participants is important in the interpretation and re-constructing of the narrative. Being an insider researcher was helpful as I was familiar with the traits, personalities and dispositions of the participants.

The young people have just finished secondary school so that their experiences are fresh in their memories. Rites of passage such as Graduations, the Leaving Certificate, Debutant Balls encourage reflection at this time in a young person's life and this will feed into the narrative of the interview.

The disadvantages of narrative analysis can be summarised as follows: stories can be difficult to interpret in terms of the relationship between the story telling in the interview and the story-making in the presentation of data. This is where the reflexivity and understanding of the insider researcher can help build a nuanced picture of the data. Decisions need to be made about whose story it is and how it is interpreted and re-interpreted. This can be

problematic if the participant disagrees with the presentation of the researcher or if the researcher feels the need to protect the participant. It is often difficult to decide the relationship between the narrative account, the interpretation and the retold story. This is where trust, empathy and solidarity are important for the researcher. The negotiation of data interpretation and presentation of data can be continuously troublesome. The researcher's norms and values as well as those of the participants will be evident in the way the data are presented. "To dismiss the criticism that narrative enquiry is overly personal and interpersonal is to risk the danger of narcissism and solipsism" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 181). These researchers also warn of what they term the "Hollywood plot" whereby everything works out well in the end and either interviewer or interviewee or both dismiss uncomfortable truths or gloss over difficulties. This calls for honesty and clarity on behalf of researcher and interviewees as there may be a tendency "not to let the side down" and to paint a rosier picture than the data might suggest.

Nevertheless, considering the objectives of the research to narrate the experiences of newcomer students and to make useful proposals for improvement, the narrative analysis method is the one favoured by myself to glean the most useful, relevant and interesting data. "Narratives allow researchers to present experiences holistically in all its complexity and richness [and] quantitative methods tend not to have the scope to deal with complex human-centred issues" (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 3).

The richness and limitations of the narrative approach

The richness and appropriateness of the narrative approach can be seen in the stories told to me by the students I interviewed. The stories that they told me initially confirmed certain

assumptions I had regarding integration and curriculum and questioned other assumptions regarding academic emphasis and racism but, at a deeper level, they "should be seen as productive: narratives do things, they constitute realities, shaping the social rather than being determined by it" (Tamboukou et al, 2013 p15). I gradually came to realise that we were co-constructing knowledge about many aspects of school life – not just the curriculum and teaching (Richardson, 1990, 1991) .

I found myself in a position where "great caution and self-awareness must be exercised by the researcher in conducting qualitative data analysis, for the analysis and the findings may say more about the researcher than about the data" (Cohen et al, 2011, p554). In their storied lives, the students were telling me things I liked hearing as well as things I might be reluctant to hear. For this reason, I returned to as many students as possible (three) and located another to further explore the emergent themes.

Further richness and depth emerged when I realised what the "whole package" (Livholts and Tamboukou, 2015, p4) entailed. This was

- a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge

- historical and cultural specificity

- knowledge as sustained by social processes

- knowledge and social action going together

The methodology described above complemented my conceptual framework of historical context, social setting, reflexivity, praxis and critical thinking. This approach helps to overcome "Sociology's Faustian bargain" (Richardson, 1991, p.173) whereby the humanities

were granted the domain of beauty and morality and science granted the domain of "truth".
As Squire (2015, p91) put it

> "the narrative turn can be associated with many other social – scientific moves in the
> late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: turns to qualitative methods, to
> language, to the biographical, to the unconscious, to participant – centred research …
> to power, to culture, to reflexivity".

The complexity and ambiguity sometimes revealed in the interviews demand reflexivity
(Barr, 2010, p105) and the interpretation and analysis of these interviews demand a "longer
arc of conceptual, aesthetic, and political history" (Rodrigues, 2015, p57) in order to be fully
appreciated. This is both a strength and a weakness of the narrative approach relying as it
does on hope rather than on certainty (Josselson, 2007), diagnosis rather than prescription
(Eisner, 1985).

Ultimately, the stories told and the findings and recommendations reached will have to be
viewed in the context of a changing society with challenges greater than those encountered in
the school or local community and as we enter a period of uncertainty

> "the enemy within is neither cultural diversity nor critical literacy but a politics of
> greed and exploitation that is willing to jeopardise not only the lives of individual
> children but also the coherence of entire societies for its own coercive ends …. The
> scapegoating of immigrants and cultural diversity since the late 1980's have reignited
> *Us versus Them* divisions and fears in order to obscure and distract attention from the

increasingly obvious redistribution of wealth in North American societies. Indoctrination and disinformation are the tools whereby consent is manufactured for this process" (Cummins,2001, p297).

Methods

I sought volunteers from the Leaving Certificate from the class of 2012 who completed five years in the school by visiting each class and explaining the nature of my research project. Based on the response I selected seven to represent the main places of origin in the school i.e. 2 Poles, 1 Latvian/Russian, 2 Romanians and 2 Africans.

I carried out a pilot interview in June 2012 with one student inviting them to tell their story with reference to arrival, first impressions, academic performance, friendships, curriculum, relationships with teachers, bullying and racism, identity, levels of satisfaction with five years of schooling, hopes for the future, and memories they will take away from the school. This pilot interview influenced the format and themes of future interviews and issues.

The reasons for selecting seven past-pupils who completed their Leaving Certificate in June 2012 are the following

(1) They were mature young adults and had a wealth of experience to reflect on after 5 years schooling.
(2) In the year after leaving school they were in a position to have a broad and deep view of their experience.

(3) They were no longer 'students' under 'surveillance' by the principal/researcher and could feel freer to express their views.

(4) Making the transition from school to adult life of 3rd level, further education, work or unemployment would enable them to judge how successful or otherwise their secondary education was in preparing them for this transition.

(5) As adults with voting rights they have decisions to make regarding their involvement in local democracy and their future lives.

Interviewing teachers and presenting them with the issues raised by the young people and their families provided an opportunity for reflection on practice, assessment of curriculum and programmes, evaluation of outcomes and planning for changes in all these areas to make for a better school experience for the future. I also interviewed the chief executive of the local education authority, at a later date, to gain a managerial perspective and to probe the teacher and student views from a person who knew the local scene intimately, but who also had a regional and indeed national perspective because of his wide experience.

I sought to return to my interviewees, nearly a year later to probe further and to see if the passage of time had altered any of their views. I wanted to know if their experience of third-level and socialisation away from Blackthorn College combined with more time for reflection had altered their views. I managed to locate three of them and another one that had eluded me the first time round due to changes of address and his family's migration to London.

The overall impact of these interviews and re-interviews provided me with a privileged and unique vantage point to review my theory and practice, to communicate the findings with my Board of Management, staff and wider school community and to build an improve my school

and its programmes into the future. 'We are complicit in the world we study. Being in this world, we need to remake ourselves as well as offer up research understandings that could lead to a better world' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 61)

The contextual lenses I used

In approaching the multi-dimensionality of narrative research Fox (2006, p. 52) has developed a typology of contextual lenses to assist the researcher go beyond the text to the context of the narratives in question.

Diagram 2 (adapted from Fox, 2006)

Semiotic
Lens

Cognitive
Lens

Narrative
Contextual
Lenses

Experiential
Lens

Ethical
Lens

Hermeneutic
Lens
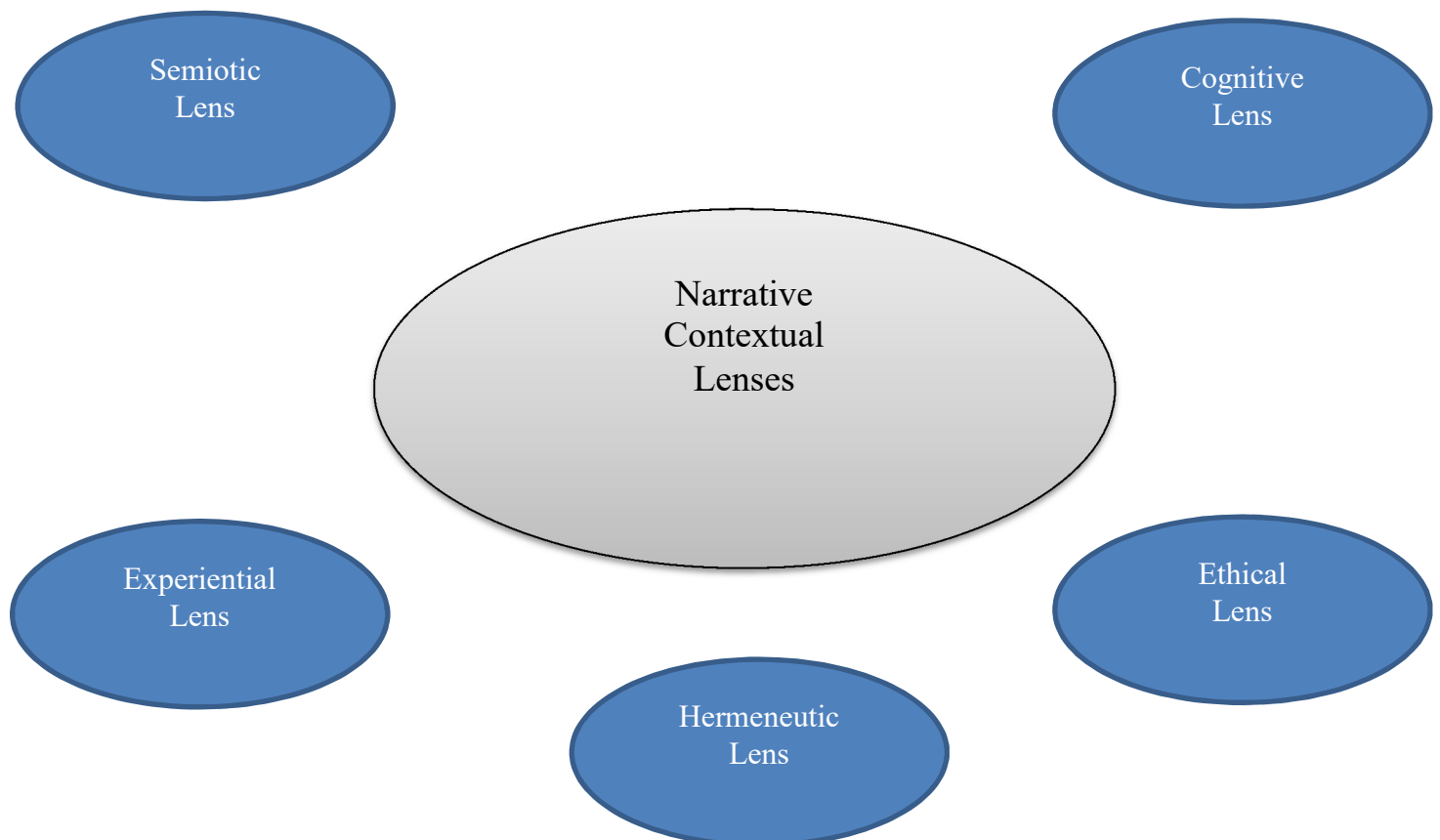
The cognitive lens refers to the construction of meaning through language and our awareness of what the speaker is saying and our awareness of how we are receiving this information. This required concentration on the content of what was being said and an alertness on my part to the speaker. The semiotic lens refers to the use of symbols and metaphors in helping us gain insight into meaning. This seems to be missing from my interviews as they are very direct and literal. The experiential lens refers to the context in which the narrative occurs. The researcher is coming from a very clearly defined role as principal and the young people may be "in" or "out" of role as "subjects", "pupils", "past pupils", "migrants" and so on. I have had dealings with these young people for five years so that I have a general idea of their backgrounds, friendships, goals in life. This can help me empathise with the interviewee. The ethical lens refers to a persons' sense of morality and justice and self-worth and can be quite complex as "it is within this category that questions of power and authority lie" (Fox, 2006, p. 55). This can come to the fore when discussing issues such as bullying, racism, fairness. The hermeneutic lens refers to interpretation and the ability to reflect critically in the context of history and culture. I need to be able to interpret and give meaning to what is being said. This is informed by all the other lenses and by my position as teacher/principal and researcher.

This type of reflexivity makes us aware of our own stand points, values, culture and ideology. It helps us understand and empathise with our research participants and brings great depth and rigour to our findings. My role as insider/researcher ought to bring an alternative perspective from that of outsider/academic and thus compliment and enrich existing knowledge.

Being an insider

Working as principal in my own school and researching how it operates and the impact it is having on students, teachers and parents all at the same time means "inhabiting the hyphens" of insider-outsider, practitioner-researcher at the same time (Drake and Heath, 2011, p. 25). This calls for reflexivity – being reflective about what is happening, where people are coming from, where I am coming from, and trying to disentangle and (re)construct incidents, events, utterances. Examples would include – is this bullying or is it racism and how should it be approached? Is this event (intercultural week) window dressing or is it meeting real needs in the school? Is this an issue (lack of discipline) in a certain teacher's class or are they generating the response that they get (by being unprepared for class or having a poor relationship with students)? These are everyday examples but the research project meant I had to stand back and ask myself searching questions such as – to what extent are my race, class and gender influencing the way I see things? Do I just consult with people who share my outlook and opinions? Do I have a general destination in mind for my research that will reflect well on me and my colleagues? "Wait and see" and "think twice" became my watchwords.

In interviewing the students, I tried as far as possible to create a relaxed, informal atmosphere. I did this by holding the interviews either in the school Parents' Room- which has sofas, soft chairs and a homely feel with sink, kettle, coffee table and family photographs on the wall- or in the local Education Centre which also has an informal room for relaxation. I invited the young people to call me by my first name, with limited success as old habits die hard. I also made tea and provided biscuits to break down barriers. I emphasised that I was now a student and hoped to enter their world as much as possible. Although all the students

entered into the spirit of informality and equality, it was sometimes difficult to draw out responses to what they may have seen as controversial topics such as academic standards, bullying, racism and discipline. Overall, the insider approach yielded much useful information and many insights that will be revealed in the next chapter (Coughlan, 2007, Brannick and Coughlan, 2007).

With regard to my colleagues – teachers that I surveyed by questionnaire and three of whom I interviewed in depth, I tried to be emphatic that we did not have all the answers, that the school was on a journey, that I hoped to discover things from them and from the students, that I had an open mind and that I trusted and valued their opinions and suggestions. With regard to the students – inhabiting this hyphenated world I was both principal and researcher, it was important for me to be open, trusting, interested and respectful to them. One way I did this in my practice was that I greeted all students at the school gate each morning with a "Good Morning" or a *Dzien Dobry.* (Greeting students at the school gates each morning is common practice in many DEIS schools). Asking students opinions was a good ice-breaker on the corridors or at break time and an insistence on respect for all was a shibboleth uttered at the start of every assembly and intercom announcement.

During the student interviews I avoided intrusiveness (asking personal questions about family or self) or questions that might require telling tales about friends, teachers or family. Before the formal recording of the interview, I would say how much I valued the students' presence, how I hoped to learn from them and that the interview was anonymous and confidential and would only be used in the context of my research.

I often discussed my changing opinions, stances and practice with my colleagues especially my deputy principal and home school community liaison teacher. Both became critical friends in the course of this research. These interactions and discussions with colleagues and course participants were important to me in affirming my work, in considering the evidence and in formulating ideas and approaches to my work and research. "Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports" (Patton, 2002, p. 65).

Ethical implications

"Interviews are interventions. They affect people" (Patton, 2002, p. 405). It is therefore necessary to have an ethical framework for dealing with the people who were involved in this research study. This framework consists of explaining purpose, minimizing risk, ensuring informed consent and agreeing anonymity and confidentiality, using the social science ethical review process of Maynooth University guiding this research.

At the start of each interview I explained the purpose of the interview. It was to gain an insight into their experiences in school during the past five years. I carried out a risk assessment assuring the interviewee that they need not mention names or answer questions if they felt uncomfortable or in any way doubtful. I asked if they were fully aware of what was involved and assured them that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. I explained that their comments would only be used in connection with my research and that their names would be changed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

I have abided by the British Educational Research Association Revised Ethical Guidelines (BERA, 2011) and my guiding principles have been the rights and dignity of the participants, respect and confidentiality. I have sought to be friendly and courteous, grateful and affirming in my dealings with all those I interviewed.

Purposive sampling and interviews

In order to hear the student voice, I needed to hear from as many students as possible within a given timeframe. The individuals I spoke to needed to be representative of the newcomer student body. There are many types of sampling. Thirteen are identified by Patton (2002, pp. 318-321) and I chose homogenous samples i.e. a group of individuals who had similar histories – five years in the school from a variety of countries.

The open-ended interviews were conducted between June 2012 and July 2013. They were informal conversational interviews carried out in a relaxed armchair fashion in the setting of the parents' room in the school. I had a very brief interview guide to ensure the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued with each person. The notes for the interview guide were as follows – starting secondary school, school programme, relations with teachers, your parents, bullying and racism, images of Ireland and the future. These signposts were selected by me after a reading of the literature and discussion with colleagues to give an opportunity to the young people to reflect over their five years in the school. I re-interviewed three of the young people in the autumn of 2014 and an additional student in February 2015 (as he had been unavailable during the first round of interviews).

I also interviewed three teachers whom I considered most involved with newcomer students and who had an empathy for and interest in the research I was carrying out. They were the religious education teacher and co-ordinator of SPHE in the school, the EAL teacher who worked almost exclusively with newcomer students and had an opportunity to get to know them well and the HSCL teacher who had a post of responsibility for integrating newcomer students and who visited all parents where possible on the entry of their children to the school. Reflecting on these teacher-interviews led me to a later interview with the Chief Executive Officer of the local education authority in order to gain an alternative managerial perspective on the issues arising from the teacher and student interviews.

In addition I used a questionnaire with the teaching staff asking about their experiences with newcomer students, the adequacy or otherwise of their training in diversity, strategies they may have used in the intercultural classroom, resources that might be helpful, the relevance and suitability of the curriculum in their subject area(s) and an open space for further comment.

These three sources of data resulted in the findings as presented in chapter five. The core of the findings is from the voices of the students, considered in the light of the comments of the teachers and interpreted and presented by me.

How I analysed the interviews to identify research themes

While I carried out the interviews between June 2012 and July 2013, I transcribed the contents and printed them off. I waited until I had six interviews completed and then I used a process of intensive open coding and colour codes to identify the themes that were emerging.

I considered the similarities and differences between responses. I read and re-read the scripts and compared the emerging themes with those on the teachers' questionnaires. I then interviewed three teachers in depth about all of the issues and later interviewed the CEO of the local education authority to further investigate these themes.

Scope and limitations of these methods

These mixed methods – interviews and questionnaires – reveal data for one particular secondary school (DEIS status) in an Irish market town at the start of the 21st century. There were 61 students in the Leaving Cert year group of whom 23 were newcomer students so that seven respondents gave a self-selected representative sample from this group.

Nineteen out of 44 teacher questionnaires were returned giving a 43 per cent return. The three teachers interviewed were very committed and in tune with the school. All of this leads me to conclude that what emerges is a fairly accurate picture of a school at a specific time. The narrative analysis gives a flavour and a "thick description" of life in a second level school for migrant students.

Limitations of these methods include the absence of voice for the early school leaver, specific groups such as Travellers and black African females. The complexity of ethnicity, let alone its intersection with other factors means that the scope of such qualitative interviews is inevitably limited. I wondered after interviewing one of the more articulate students whether an ethnographic study of his experiences would yield deeper and more meaningful data.

Summary

I have collected the thoughts and feelings of eight young people who migrated to Ireland in the first decade of the 21st century. I have interviewed three teachers and one education leader to give breadth and depth to their experience of schooling and I have surveyed the school teaching staff of the school in this study. Insights from the data collected will be revealed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD

Introduction

The methods used to collect the data for this research were seven student interviews between 2012 and July 2013, teacher questionnaires which were distributed and returned during April and May 2013 and three teacher interviews in August 2013. I also re-interviewed three of the students in December 2014 and one student in February 2015. The reason for the February interview was that I had great difficulty contacting my two African students as both had emigrated and left no forwarding addresses or emails. When I finally made contact with one of them through friends, he proved unwilling to participate further as he had "moved on". As the black African voice is so essential to this study, I contacted by social media one of the original African volunteers whose family had also emigrated and he agreed to meet with me. The number of African students whose families migrated and who were left in the care of uncles, aunts, cousins and extended family surprised me but I discovered that this practice is quite common.

In order to validate, contextualise and examine further the findings from these interviews and questionnaires, I also interviewed a leading figure in the regions education sector who has an unrivalled knowledge of the issues involved in their social, political, economic and educational contexts. This additional vantage point broadened the scope and depth of the findings. As the main voices heard in this chapter are those of the students, I will give a brief description of them hereunder.

The Students

The student breakdown was six male and two female. The two females were Polish, there were two Romanians, two Nigerians, one from the Ivory Coast via Nigeria and one Latvian/Russian.

Maria

Maria is a bright, energetic young Polish woman who wants to pursue a career in languages, tourism and possibly politics back in Poland. She is at present studying languages at university. She feels a very strong pull back to Poland as she put it "it kind of feels wrong for me to be here, I feel guilty to be here". She felt that Blackthorn College was not sufficiently academic, she was aware of the disadvantage around her although her views on this had modified after three semesters in university and at one stage she had tried to change school. A detailed analysis of the text of her interview reveals feelings of regret or deficit in her education as she was critical of her education on 37 occasions, using the comparative word "more" on 12 occasions (there should be "more discipline", teachers should be "more organised", the physical education programme should be "more diverse", students should have "more say" in what they are studying). Her second interview, in December 2014, showed she had mellowed somewhat but she again referred to the situation where she had tried to enrol in a more academic school and had been rebuffed "they just saw us and said 'no, sorry', they were full" adding the fact that "we came to the school in Blackthorn uniform, maybe that pushed them away as well". In this second interview Maria also showed a good understanding of disadvantage and referred to the need for "egalitarian schools" for a just society. Her patriotism revealed itself on several occasions especially in her

"unconscious" reflection of President Kennedy when she said "people think the country should be there for them, but I think people should be there for their country", and her comment "I'm looking at my feelings really, I love the entire country, the fields and the mountains and the sea and all of the towns and the people and I would love to speak Polish every day and watch Polish news and Polish events, concerts, cinema and all that".

Magda

Magda is also Polish, a very determined person who wants to pursue a career in graphic design or art. She went to Art College in Australia after her Leaving Certificate but returned to Europe in 2014 to Britain. Her sojourns in America, Poland and Ireland may have given her a practical and unsentimental outlook on life (she upbraids her teachers for "treating me as if I came straight from Poland" as she had very good English from living in America, "I didn't really care what other people thought" she said when referring to asking teachers questions in class, "I think that if you're mixing with the wrong crowd, whether it's Polish or Irish or Lithuanian, Ugandan. I think you're going to go down" referring to academic progress). There are 17 examples of this practicality in her transcript, what one might call "this is the way it is, so let's just get one with it". Unlike the previous Polish girl, Maria, she never "ever" sees herself returning to Poland because of its "bureaucracy and corruption". Interestingly, she also had the experience of being refused a place in a Loreto school "in Kilkenny" before she came to Blackthorn College but is quite sanguine and humorous about it "my mom went to Loreto and the woman behind the desk, the secretary, wasn't very pleasant to my mother because I think, she, you know, she heard her accent, I think maybe that was it. I don't know why she wasn't nice, but my mom just got this very unpleasant vibe

about Loreto that they just weren't very accepting of her. Ehm, I think the joke's on them because I was a very good student"; and so she was.

Nikolas

Nikolas is Romanian and has been in Ireland since 2002 and has a very strong sense of family. In his first interview he mentioned his family/parents 13 times and in his second interview 11 times and he put his feelings succinctly when he said "it's instinct, a child's instinct to copy what your parents do". He has a very strong work ethic which he got from his parents, especially his mother, who moved from "washing dishes" to "home ownership and a senior management position in a European Multinational". At one stage Nikolas saw himself moving to the US or Canada but, on reflection, he decided to stay in Europe and has recently become an Irish citizen.

Marius

Marius is also Romanian and is a quiet, introspective young man who is going to college in Dublin. He was reluctant to engage with me as is evidenced by 42 monosyllabic answers usually "yeah" or "no". Nevertheless, he confirmed much of what Nikolas had said and astonished me by remarking out of the blue about his experience in Blackthorn College "I would describe it as the best five years of my life, it was a very good experience, if I could start it all over again I would come back here". Having checked this with his year head and tutor, I believe him to be genuine.

Abi

Abi is an athletic, extroverted young man from Nigeria. He started off doing information technology at a regional institute of technology but is thinking of changing to go to college in England. Abi and his family came to Ireland from Nigeria in 2001 as asylum seekers and were at first in direct provision. After this process "we moved around a lot" before settling in the town where the school is situated. Perhaps because of his family's experiences Abi is reticent and measured in his responses. He became very animated and emotional when discussing his experiences of racism but then sought to minimize them by saying "it would probably happen, maybe sometimes once or twice a year". His reticence can be seen in his use of the negative at the start of a sentence – "I wouldn't really be so sure", "I don't like to say, but", "I wouldn't say they're the fondest people of Ireland itself" (referring to his parents) and his comment on the school's bullying policy "it worked for me" (implying it did not work for others). He does not see himself returning to Nigeria as "I just don't see my future lies there … I don't know, the country is just so corrupt". I spent over six weeks trying to re-interview Abi at the end of 2014 but although I had tracked down his mother and she said he would be willing to speak to me again, I came up against the reticence mentioned above and he had moved to England and did not answer emails and the telephone number given to me was not operational. Nevertheless, his reluctant comments offer important insights into the African experience in the school.

Chinua

Chinua is also Nigerian and he is very confident and assertive and is studying marketing and languages at college. He came to Ireland in 2006 and is very expressive and reflective. I

have counted 20 occasions where he makes a comment and then reflects and expands on it: "I think my experience at Blackthorn College was brilliant overall/I think it's the imperfections that made my time at Blackthorn perfect", "there was definitely bullying/usually it would be the guys wanting to test your strength", diversity was "definitely covered" on the curriculum "but the question is, how deeply?", "I don't think where you go [to school] determines who you are going to be in life/I think it does play a major part, but it doesn't define who you are", "that the students [in traditional academic schools] only learn academics and perhaps sports/but they don't learn anything on a deeper level like life lessons". He was open, confident and optimistic in contrast with Abi. This reflects a more positive experience of migration and he sees himself as a citizen of the world. "I don't see myself being tied down to one place when I get older, it's not me, it's not really in my nature to be stuck in one place for too long". Sure enough when I tried to contact him for re-interview, his family had disappeared without trace and several enquiries on social media were unfruitful.

Petr

Petr is a very tall, two metre, Russian/Latvian who came to Ireland in 2010 with his mother and step-father.   His parents are Russian speakers and he is studying mechatronics at college. He has a very practical, pragmatic approach to life and planned for his migration by taking private English lessons for three years in Latvia before leaving. Although very friendly, he thinks before he speaks and uttered 56 monosyllables (usually "yes" or "no") in his first interview, improving to 27 on re-interview. His main concerns about school time were that it should have been more "academic", the class should have done "more exam papers" and looking back on his time in Blackthorn College, the highpoint "was my results" (in the Leaving Certificate which enabled him to go to university). When asked if he had

been involved in the prefect system of the school, he gave a curt reply "No, I wasn't". When probed on this aspect of school life he said "I wasn't interested. I was lazy" meaning he was more interested in the academic side of school life. Similarly he did not have much regard for physical education as it was not graded. He is currently a very successful engineering student at Dublin City University and sees his future "I think in Ireland, because the climate is alright for me" and because "there is no future now in Latvia". He would also consider working in Russia or Britain, but not in the United States.

Michael

Michael was one of the original volunteers for this study, but when I tried to contact him, I discovered his family had moved to London. After visiting his former house, talking to his neighbours and making several attempts through social media I gave up hope of ever meeting him for re-interview. Then, out of the blue, I met him in a Dublin shopping centre and established what had become of him. His family had emigrated to Britain and he was staying with extended family in south Dublin. His parents came from the Ivory Coast via Nigeria and Michael lived in Ireland from the age of three and went to Primary School in Dublin 15. He is a big advocate of multiculturalism which I think is related to his school experiences and the fact that his girlfriend is white (he revealed this to me off-tape). He saw himself as very much a mediator, an "inbetweener" at school between urban and rural, black and white, Irish and non-Irish. He identified himself strongly as Irish and referring to the Irish language he said "it's part of me, it's of my upbringing, it's part of who I am. It's my identity. It's me". He thought his success as a mediator was due to "the way I carry myself" meaning accent, sense of humour, gait, understanding society in Bourdieu's sense of social capital which he can use to effect in defusing confrontations, interpreting situations and even ingratiating

himself with the police. His was the most free-flowing interview and it brought new and unexpected insights to the research.

Themes

The main themes to emerge from the interviews and questionnaires were the curriculum (content, cooperative learning and a more academic approach), bullying and racism (stages in school life, gender), role of parents, experiences of socialisation and schooling, positive climate (teacher thoughts), challenges to be met by the school, pedagogical responses and resources and other voices (three key teachers reflecting on the above). These themes are further explored and analysed in an interview with the CEO of the regional ETB for the area in which the school is situated.

The curriculum

The curriculum is the official programme of study in the school and is given life by the subjects on the school timetable. The Irish curriculum consists of the core subjects of English, Irish, Mathematics, Physical Education and Religious Education which are compulsory (unless one gains an exemption from Irish or Religious Education) and a range of optional subjects. The content is centrally decided by the Department of Education and Science in consultation with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment but there is some flexibility in local delivery. It is intended that there will be more flexibility with reform of the Junior Certificate.

A good multi-cultural curriculum has been described as one that includes activities and teaching that help students navigate from the familiarity of their own culture to learning more about other cultures and promotes positive ethnic identity, positive relationships and can develop skills to better understand and resolve social problems (Howe and Lisi, 2014, p. 193). What I tried to do was to get the students to reflect on the curriculum they had studied for five years.

Subjects

Overall, the students were not over-critical of the subjects offered as one student put it:

so far you guys are really not doing a bad job, everything is a work in progress

(Chinua)

Although he went on to say:

I don't really recall anything on African history… I know we did black history, we did about Martin Luther King and so on… but I think there could be a lot more diversity, you know?

The same student agreed that tolerance, diversity and cooperation were covered in some programmes such as CSPE and RE but he said the question was how deeply [they were covered]?

Abi (Nigeria) said that for him:

My happiest times was doing sports

While he contemplated that:

Other students from Ireland and Eastern European countries, sometimes they're kind of ignorant about African beliefs and things.

He was concerned that the image his classmates have of Africa is usually negative – war and violence and wanted to see students in class learn about the cultures and backgrounds of other students and not have their ideas driven by pictures of war, violence and poverty on television.

He saw the value of peer learning and social education in SPHE class:

Sometimes we talked about suicide and all that… gay rights, all that stuff… things I would never talk about with my friends [outside classroom setting].

He discerned a message of tolerance and interculturalism in Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* on the Leaving Certificate English programme:

Because in a way the sisters did not like the father, Jack, because he was bringing back beliefs from other countries… you always have to try and respect their beliefs and everything, even though you might believe something different, it's good to hear about other peoples' beliefs and respect them.

He has developed a liking and respect for the Irish language and commented on the way some Irish students do not have much regard for Irish

Thus;

I think if they really knew how people in their history, like Michael Collins, Eamon De Valera and all of them, fought for Irish independence they would respect the language more.

He speaks Yoruba in the family home although his parents encourage the use of English for practical purposes. He lamented he did not get the opportunity to study science as the school had a streamed entry to science when he was in first year. This has been discontinued.

Michael was also positive about the Irish language saying

> *I really take pride in knowing Irish … it's part of who I am*

And he had an amusing anecdote to illustrate this

> *I got stopped by the Gardaí a month ago in my car because I took the wrong way or something. I don't know what it was, I said something to them [in Irish] and they kind of let me off*

Nikolas (in his second interview) also spoke about the Irish language saying he liked studying Irish in school and lamenting the fact that

> *I haven't used it since my Leaving Cert*

He went on to say that the study of the Irish language and Irish history is useful as

> *It's good to have a bit of background on people*

Echoing this, Maria remarked in her direct way

> *Everybody says they're proud to be Irish, then on the other hand not many people know the Irish history, never mind the Irish language*

Maria considered that even though she thought education in Poland was of a higher standard, she felt that

> *In Ireland, it's more practical more useful*

And she gave examples of Home Economics and Business. She felt that Polish secondary education was too theoretical. This student would also like to see the students being consulted about what aspects of the curriculum they are going to study

I think we should have had more of a say in what we were doing

However on the subject of adapting the curriculum to bring in aspects of other countries and cultures she feels

No I don't think we should be bringing other countries into it because we're in Ireland… Irish students should study Irish literature as they're in Ireland so, for example, if I were Irish I would be angry if I had to study someone from Poland but I didn't study a very important writer from Ireland

She was very dissatisfied with CSPE as she felt

The CSPE was really interesting and we should have sat and covered every topic in there

Interestingly this student was the only one of the seven who intended to return to her country (Poland) and pursue a career in business and/or politics. This perhaps explains her interest in CSPE and its importance in teaching "responsibility as well and most importantly the responsibilities of the citizen". She also felt that the Physical Education programme could be more diverse as

We mostly played soccer or badminton and things like that and I think we could introduce volleyball and also handball, well we did play a little bit of basketball

This student also felt that by incorporating more international literature into the curriculum it could

Be interesting in making people think more globally

Another student Marius (Romanian) felt that CSPE and SPHE were worthwhile but he felt that SPHE

>*Was taken too slowly… we could have learned a bit more*

Another student Magda (Polish) had spent only two years in school in Poland and regretted that she did not

>*Know any Polish history*

And she

>*Would like to know* [Polish history] *because it is my country, it is my culture*

She also felt Poland could be covered in the Geography curriculum. This student was probably the least "rooted" of the seven students as she spent most of her life outside Poland and her next migration was to Australia immediately after the interview. Perhaps this explains her antipathy to Irish history and politics in general

>*Maybe it's the way the teachers taught us but I could not associate myself with Irish history, I didn't really like it, I don't know if it was just the way it was taught or… it's very political. And that's not what I like.*

This was a very studious and pragmatic student who found Irish history difficult but interesting and she felt that if she didn't have to study it for an examination

>*I would enjoy it much more*

Regarding adapting the curriculum, Chinua sees scope for development but cautions about going overboard with curriculum change

>*You can't be in Ireland and not know about Irish history. It's essential, you know*

The students saw the curriculum very much as a non-negotiable given but did make some valuable suggestions. African history could be incorporated into general history with an

emphasis on culture and society rather than war and violence. Polish history could be treated likewise. Physical Education can bring great joy and happiness to school but can be more diverse. This may reflect a gender imbalance in the school. Subjects such as English, CSPE, SPHE and RE can all provide opportunities to discuss tolerance and diversity in a secure setting. The Irish language and a subject Irish are seen in a positive light. It would be worthwhile for the class teacher to consult students on the content of their curriculum.

Cooperative learning

One of the unexpected outcomes of these interviews for me as researcher was the emphasis put by the students on cooperative learning. One student recalled that his best memories were of trips and times in class where you'd be discussing stuff and everyone would join in, you get everybody's opinion and nobody's fighting and everybody's just talking nicely to each other and there's no arguing, just everybody's getting along (Nikolas).

He identified Business, Accounting and Geography as the main subject areas for this type of discussion but said it kind of starts in every subject. He felt that peer learning was an important part of his experience as:

> *we'd be in the middle of a class doing some, eh, some topic and then our teacher would say something and a student would say 'well I think this' and then somebody else would come up with a better answer, or better opinion, or, I dunno, sort of start discussion and then we'd end it and continue with the subject.*

He continued that:

> *they all [international students] would like to do something of their own language… like in class we're discussing something about Geography or History and one guy*

says 'well in our history this is what happened' and someone else [will give their

account] and it's easier to learn from a student, in my point of view, it's easier to

learn from a friend, when he says something it goes in more.

The pedagogy of peer learning and group discussion ties in with the overall experience of

schooling and socialisation which will be discussed further on.

Maria also saw the value of group discussion, of tolerance and listening to others as was seen

in the Religion class

Yeah, I learned a lot… we talked a lot and we learned to express ourselves and we

learned that our opinions matter as well as to others

Petr emphasised the value of group learning/peer teaching when he reflected on his extra

English classes

I think I got it from extra English especially because I think it's like an extra time you

can improve your English… so for the foreign students it is more easy to understand

another foreign student… you know with the class, we talked about the ordinary

things in life, like you know, a kitchen, we learned other words for the life

This student had initially found it very difficult to communicate with Irish students because

They have a specific accent, an English accent [whereas] *with the foreign students*

[we] *don't have this accent, so for me it was easier to understand them and to learn*

how to speak English

Marius also saw the value of group discussion

We were all non-judgemental

And if someone said something inappropriate, the teacher would pick up on this and take it seriously. He felt that these group discussions gave a good preparation for life

> *Yes, especially in relationships, making new friends, having friends for life. Getting*
> *ready for the out world*

More academic

The experience of migrant students going to the least desirable schools in poorer neighbourhoods or DEIS schools in an Irish context and having to experience lower expectations, lesser academic standards and more racism and bullying has been mentioned frequently in the literature (Devine, 2010; Curry, Gilligan, Garratt, Scholtz, 2011; Darmody, Byrne, McGinnity, 2014; Parazzoli, 2013; Zinga and Gordon, 2014).

Maria is the most vocal on this, especially in the area of academic emphasis. In her first interview she recalled

> *I really wanted to go to another school* [because] *there was a lot of disruption in the*
> *classes*

but she was unable to enrol as related above. She was very critical of her CSPE class where

> *we often talked about nothing really,* [and says] *we didn't really have a very*
> *sophisticated SPHE class*

She felt that

> *education was not the most important thing here*

and yearned for more order and discipline saying that

> *there were many children who came to school without any manners, that they talked*
> *back especially, I was shocked by that*

In her second interview she returned to the theme of school choice musing

> *maybe should have gone to another school"* and explaining that *"when I'm in*
>
> *Maynooth and tell some people I went to Blackthorn College, they're just really*
>
> *surprised that I went there*

She is still disappointed that she did not get the points for Trinity College and says

> *I think I would be better prepared for the outside world after Trinity, not Maynooth*

When asked where she might send her own children to school, she said

Well, it depends on what they were like. So, if they wanted to learn I would probably send

them to the stricter school, I would probably also talk to them about their opinion and take

that into account. But, if I have somebody who doesn't want to learn and…then I would

probably send them to Blackthorn, yeah

Petr was reluctant to comment on these issues in his first interview saying that school could be

> *more efficient, like for your results*

but was more specific in his second interview saying that there should have been more focus

on theory (*in Leaving Cert Engineering),* on the use of past examination papers (twice

mentioned), on greater academic emphasis, better career guidance and grading and

assessment for physical education. It may be of relevance that neither Petr nor Maria got

involved in the school's prefect or mentoring programmes as Petr was "too busy studying"

and Maria "didn't have the time".

Abi also had strong opinions on these matters saying

> *But I think the relationship when it comes to academics could be better, sometimes I think teachers … they need to make students believe that they can set themselves a higher target in life.*

Sara felt that there were

> *"a lot of messers in the school"* and referring to a specific class remarked that *"every single time I got out of that class, I got a headache because I was trying to concentrate and I couldn't"*.

Bullying and Racism

"For every student to be able to learn and achieve at high levels, schools must first establish a safe climate. Students will not be able to learn in an environment in which they do not feel safe from other students and in which they feel the adults are not fully protecting them" (Howe and Lisi, 2014, p. 175). Individual and institutional racism and bullying were discussed in the literature review (chapter 4) and were identified as important issues in multi-cultural education. I therefore briefly asked each student about their experience (if any) of racism and bullying.

The distinction between racism and bullying or racially-motivated bullying is difficult to make. Rites of passage, initiation customs and the induction procedures all overlap with the general socialisation or the secondary school. This is evidenced by the experiences of a very tall, very young African boy (Chinua) who said

There was definitely bullying but usually it would be the guys wanting to test out your strength… I think the fights and bullying have definitely calmed down since the earlier years

He contends that incidents were often set up as in

"My big brother told me to do this"

And that in some cases they were

Very subtly racially motivated

Looking back Chinua thinks there is a

Lot of bigotry… but everybody is young, they only know what they hear

Realising that his height often brought him into conflict as teenage boys seek to determine pecking order, he nevertheless is quite frank

There's racism everywhere you go… I come across racism almost every single day

He added on recalling his early days of secondary school

It wasn't just my colour, at times it would be my colour because I stood out among the Nigerians. I was the tallest [and] *although the youngest, I was one of the biggest. I was quite loud you know. I was very outspoken so I drew a lot of attention to myself and I know that I still do, although because I am more mature, I kind of know when not to say things*

On the subject of what schools can do to combat racism, Chinua says

They can promote equality and set good examples. But there's only so much that they can do.

The experience of Eastern Europeans was somewhat different from black Africans. Nikolas (Romanian) reported

> *Mostly racism doesn't happen* [in school]

But he told of being racially harassed at work by a *"Polish guy"* who called him a *"gypsy"*. He found this experience very upsetting and unsettling. Attitudes of Irish people he found to be nuanced as

> *There were a few people who didn't like us for some reason maybe… they don't like*
> *other people coming into… their country and working and maybe they're not finding*
> *jobs anymore… because* [of] *the crisis and everything*

Referring to a fellow student from the Traveller community who commanded great respect in the school, Nikolas explained

> *The respect that comes out of him I never seen out of, sometimes not out of Irish*
> *people, he really doesn't care… he doesn't like the word "knacker", he hates it and…*
> *same with me, don't call me a gypsy, but call me a foreigner I don't mind*

Petr considered that a factor in his having no experience of bullying might be that he was 2 metres tall but he had experienced racism and bullying in Latvia as he put it

> *Really I would like to say, it's really good* [in Ireland] *because in Latvia I had it like.*
> *I had it maybe five fights in my life in Latvia but in* [this school] *it didn't have the*
> *thoughts of doing this because it's okay here*

The situation in Latvia was of more concern to this student as

> *There is a crisis and in Latvia we have a racism from the politics to the people…*
> *there is no racism from the Latvians to the Russians but it is from our parliament to*
> *the Russian people who are living there… because there is a system where you can be*

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alien, you know, so for example my grandmother, she lived maybe 50 years of her life in Latvia and she is an alien

Marius considered that it was

Quite a good experience [in school with people] *all from different countries getting together*

And while he thought himself lucky as he never got into trouble inside or outside school he felt there was

No racism [in school] *but there was a lot of messing definitely*

Outside of the school he felt

There is [racism] *everywhere*

But he had little direct experience of it and his school days were generally a positive experience.

Returning to the subject of bullying and racism in my second set of interviews, Nikolas felt that for Eastern Europeans like himself

as we're all white … you don't really notice.

He felt that the presence of black students like Michael and Kevin as prefects "

it kind of showed everybody that we're all the same and not only a white person can get in to the prefect, everybody's equal

He felt that racism "was a big thing in Blackthorn's system" (of discipline and behaviour management) and that "it was dealt with very severely". On being probed about his success at getting work he acknowledged that

I've never heard of a black person working there, no

Petr also felt, in his second interview, that "there was not such an awful bullying" in Blackthorn College, but he recalled

> *I remember the black people, they had a problem with the Polish people, it was mostly I think from 1st year to 3rd year*

This resonated with a comment by Abi who said

> *it was mostly the Eastern European students I found most racist, so I didn't really get on with them*

One of the more revealing interviews about this complex issue came with Michael who generalised that "it's a very touchy subject in general, racism" and agreed with those that said racism and bullying declined as you got older and went up through the school. He was somewhat hesitant in describing life outside school –

> *"it's just society is that way", "obviously with me being black, you'd get it from time to time", "you're always going to get [racism], in every country, you know, racist slurs or whatever, that's a very small minority, it's not something that would be in your face", "it would be a look or a comment, or muttering something underneath your breath".*

Using qualifying words like "just", "time to time", "whatever", "small", "underneath", Michael seeks to play racism down and yet he describes how he got "hopped" by "four lads or something" –

> *my nose, the doctor was like, it was so lucky that they didn't break my nose, my nose was gushing, a few wounds on my ribs, but it was grand. It wasn't great*

he continues to qualify with "something", "grand", "wasn't great". Agreeing that

> *there are certain areas of Dublin that have the reputation of being rough areas so obviously you'd be ten times more careful in the night time than during the day.*

Michael describes the shifting sands of racism for a young black man today thinking and hoping that society is "slowly but surely getting there" in terms of "racial integration and stuff like that".

Michael knows he is lucky to have a part-time job:

> *I'm the only black fella in the workplace, so I'd be seen as the token black fella in inverted commas, just to make it look like it's not a racist place*

while he reflects on his (black) friends' failure to get employment:

> *they'd feel, obviously, because I'm black they didn't offer me the job … but I don't know, maybe it's because I have a job, so I'm not seeing what they're seeing, I don't know*

but he is philosophical:

> *if nobody tries to make a change, a change won't be made, everybody will just stay the same.*

He saw himself as an "inbetweener" or mediator who was brought up in Dublin, moved to the countryside, had a Dublin accent, knew the score and expressed it as "the way I carry myself". He was therefore almost uniquely able to sort matters out as he was accepted by all sides as a bit different. He would be able to "twig" a social situation better than young people who were recent migrants as

> *the way I would have been brought up was 'the Irish way' and even my mom and dad, aunties and cousins, their like 'you guys are too Irish' … the humour, we understand the society, we understand, we know* [what] *it's like.*

With this cultural capital, Michael was able to act as peacemaker, interpreter and problem-solver between young people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Referring to bullying, Michael said

> *it's a serious issue, there's nothing comical about it at all. If a child is being bullied and not feeling too great about coming to school, it's going to hinder the child's learning and all that stuff as well … I definitely thought they enforced it [the school's anti-bullying policy] and they should keep enforcing it because it definitely paid off.*

Stages in school life

It is apparent from the interviews that students become more confident and feel safer and more valued as they progress from 1st year to 6th year. This may partly reflect growing maturity and also the way teachers and management increasingly trust the students by expecting more maturity, cooperation and by giving responsibilities to students as in the prefect of mentoring programmes in the school.

Nikolas saw bullying as more a feature of Junior Cycle (1st, 2nd, 3rd year) and contends that

> *It wasn't* [really] *bullying. I think it was people with better attitudes, who were confident in themselves, making jokes about the rest who weren't so confident*

But the kind of banter and badinage he is referring to tends to die out as he goes up through the school

> *I think when we got into 5th year people started to cop on*

The other African student in the group reported experiencing racism in the school

> *A few times… mostly I got racism from, surprisingly, the younger students*

He recalled his tutor telling the class that there is racism in all schools and that when it happens to you, you should report it to the teacher. The type of racism was

> *Hurtful… oh, it was the use of the N word. That stuff and sometimes there'd be remarks of a racist nature*

He recalled one teacher telling a student to

> *go back to your own country*

but he qualified this by telling the student that he may have made the teacher angry by his behaviour, nonetheless:

> *I would have seen it as racist but sometimes when people are angry, they say things they don't really mean*

Supporting the previous student Abi felt that although he had been bullied

> *The bullying really stopped as I entered 5th year*

He also felt that the schools bullying policy and procedures had helped him as

> *Teachers helped me… they really dealt with it well, you'd always get a letter if you're bullying, and then you'd get another letter and third time I think it was suspension or something so they made a strict rule on bullying… yeah, it [policy and procedures] worked for me.*

Again, reflecting what the previous student had reported, he said

> *It was mostly Eastern European students I found most racist, so I didn't really get on with them*

Gender

Girls seemed to get off more lightly perhaps because they are in a minority within a minority and the girls in this study were quite studious and focused on their work. Asked if she had observed racism, Maria replied

I think I did, but I'm not sure if I can recall anything right now. I'm sure we called each other names often, but other than that, no I don't think so

She felt that racism occurs everywhere but

[more] *probably in the other schools that aren't as multi-cultural*

She agreed that

There were cases but they didn't really concern me. So I didn't really mind them that much

Referring to her five years in secondary school and her overall experience of diversity, when asked for a word to describe it she said

It's normal to me. I don't see anything… I remember in 2nd year, we were talking about President Obama and I asked her what was so good that he was black. I didn't see anything abnormal. Yeah, normal is the word exactly that I would use.

Magda viewed bullying as a complex social phenomenon and subtle in its manifestation

I think that it wasn't like one particular person who was doing all the bullying or one particular person who was bullied. I think it's just subtle kind of, maybe not bullying, but kind of tension. There's always that between kids and I mean even some of the girls can be quite nasty and I've experienced that… talking behind your back, just not being very nice

Asked whether there could be a racial element to this behaviour Maria thought not

No, I think if a Polish person learns that another Polish person is Polish then they speak Polish, so it's only natural that Polish people stick together and Irish people stick together

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To complicate matters and highlight the issue of colour and gender in racism Maria related that

Last year we were sitting in the youth café [in the school] *and we were talking and I said something, I don't know. and she said "you're Polish?" and I said "Yeah, I'm Polish" and she said "I thought you were Irish". She didn't realise that I was Polish so that I don't know whether people know that I'm not Irish or people know that I'm Polish. I don't really know. I've never experienced racism*

And she sees a great advantage in the fact that the school is so multi-cultural – safety in numbers

I think there are so many nationalities and so many groups in this school that you can't single one out because we're all so mixed and there are many people here that can relate to one another, there are so many students here that are from Eastern Europe, there are Romanians, Lithuanians or Latvians or Russians or Polish people, you know there are so many of them… if there was a lot less Polish people here, then I think that would be a problem because then they would feel isolated

The overall impression from the seven interviewees is that racism and bullying are present but are manageable and also that it makes a big difference if you are black or white. Incidents decrease as you travel from 1st year to 6th year and the school is in many ways a safe haven. However outside school on the streets and at work, can be a very different matter.

Relationship with teachers

The relationship between teachers and students can have a major bearing on school culture, ethos and outcomes. Blackthorn College invested much time and resources in developing student-centred strategies such as the pastoral care system of tutors and Year Head, Breakfast and Homework Clubs (with the School Completion Programme), Care Committee for students in need and a Jigsaw Programme focusing on mental health. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities such as football, basketball, boxing, golf and an annual school musical. The students were asked about their teachers in general terms. Chinua recalled that

> *I wasn't exactly the nicest student or the most cooperative student. But I think a lot of the teachers did help you when you needed it. I remember Miss B* [his tutor] *for instance. I knew she was definitely there when I needed her*

Not all teachers fell into this category however and Chinua considered that

> *I'm not going to say they didn't love their job or whatnot, but I feel they… perhaps they felt they didn't need to go the extra mile. I think certain teachers use more initiative than others… you can't expect every teacher to teach the same way.*

Commenting on the curriculum and its relevance and potential for diversity, he brought up the subject of teacher background and ethnic origin

> *In relation to teachers, I think it would be nice to see different teachers from different places, from outside of the country. Different teachers that have different experiences*

When it was pointed out to him that the school had employed a P.E teacher from Malawi a few years previously who happened to be a strict disciplinarian with fixed ideas about his subject Chinua conceded

He was alright, he wasn't so bad… I think he was more based on athletics than other sports you know

And he elaborated on what was required

Provided they have the right mindset. It's not just about having a Polish or an African teacher for the sake of having that teacher

Towards the end of the interview Chinua returned to the theme of the role of the teacher

But from what I remember, I think some of the teachers need to be a lot more, I wouldn't just say it's just the teachers, but I think it would definitely help if the teachers were a lot more open with their students

The experience of Nikolas was also positive and he reported

They [the teachers] *kind of went out of their way to do everything for you*

He contrasted his teachers with teachers from the other schools in the town who go home (as he has heard from his peers) at the end of the school day and are not involved in extra-curricular activities or extra classes. His teachers

Actually kind of care what happens to you and how you go on and they provide extra classes just to be sure that we will get what we want in our Leaving Cert and even to the Junior Cert… teachers here really give a lot of extra classes… they care for you as a student, even if you mess up, they'll put in as much as they can and as much as you need, just to get through

Abi also recalled that his teachers were

Pretty nice… the teachers were welcoming… they made me feel welcome by telling me what we were gonna expect in secondary school… my teachers were always nice to me

He had special praise for his tutor Miss O' Leary as

She really pushed me to a level I never thought I could do

He felt that when it came to the academic curriculum, more could have been done

But I think the relationship when it comes to academics could be better, sometimes I think teachers, not that they're putting down the students, but they need to make the students believe they can set themselves a higher target in life… you can become more, you can do better

Having made his point that some teachers need to have higher expectations for their students in order to bring them on academically and help them realise their potential, he concludes that Blackthorn College has

Got a great set of teachers who really care about the students, who really want the students to succeed

Maria pointed to an important principle of teaching for second language students when she pointed out that

The teachers were nice and they always explained everything twice if I didn't understand anything and they weren't angry if I didn't understand something

However she felt that as she got older in the school, the teachers

Relaxed in 5th year

While conceding that this might be important for school retention rates as it

Also keeps the students in school because they don't hate their teachers but sometimes I think it was too much

She felt that the trade-off between a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere in Senior Cycle and thorough, concentrated teaching was biased in favour of the former at the expense of the latter as she said

I felt less and less authority as I grew up here [and] *… I prefer authority*

And her wish was for the teachers to be more organised and academically focused while at the same time being informal and relaxed

> *I think they should stay as friendly as they are right now and become more organised maybe*

Teacher expectation was also an issue for Petr as he put it

> *The teachers they expect from me and other students of course. It depends… for example, my Maths teaher, Mr. O' Neill, he expected from me to get a very good grade and I think I got it*

Marius also felt that the teachers were welcoming and that their expectations were high

> *The teachers always welcome me, always push me to my hardest. Yeah.*

Magda was struck by the positive relationships that developed over the five years between her tutor, Year Head and her classmates. Referring to her tutor, Ms. Mooney, she said

> *But I think we developed such a strong bond, we were like her kids, we were very close. Ms. Bird also* [her Year Head]

Again commenting on the changing relationship between students and teachers as they go from Junior to Senior cycle, she says

> *When we were in 5th and 6th year, the teachers took us a lot more seriously because they saw that we matured, you know, that we weren't the goofy kids that were in 1st year, but yeah, there was a very strong relationship between those teachers* [and students]

Role of parents

The role of parents is often seen as crucial to educational success and the role of immigrant parents generates additional difficulties. Blackthorn College has a Home School Community Liaison teacher as a DEIS school who also has an Assistant Principal post of responsibility to look after and coordinate the education of migrant students and their families. She meets almost all of the parents of migrant families before they start secondary school and she had two translators at her disposal (one Polish and one Lithuanian and Russian) in recent years.

Chinua thinks

> *It would be good for parents to know exactly what their children are getting up to in school*

But he observes

> *A lot of them* [parents] *don't have good English* [so] *I think a lot of them avoid them* [teachers] *altogether*

He recalled that his friend Chris had parents who

> *Didn't have great English, so they would always avoid parent-teacher meetings, you know*

Abi had parents who were eager for him to succeed and put a high value on his education

> *It always has to do with the parents, because the parents, they work so hard and struggle to get you to this country so they don't want us to waste our education or anything... it's really important for us and for them that we get a good education*

His parents took an active interest in the school but were not involved in the Parents Association. Nevertheless his parents had a keen interest in school life

> *My mum and dad were always the ones who always wanted to know what was going*
>
> *on in our school all the time and if anything had happened in school they'd always be*
>
> *the first to talk to us… my mum and dad always wanted to tell me "it might not be*
>
> *your fault but you're there to learn, so you have to listen to whatever your teachers*
>
> *tell you"*

He suggested that an African Parents Society might be one way of getting parents involved in the life of the school.

Maria felt that parental involvement was adequate but that there should be more than one parent-teacher meeting per year as things change over the course of the school year. She also felt that there were some

> *Students whose parents should talk with teachers all the time*

Magda also felt that some parents needed to get more involved with their childrens' progress as in

> *Parents teaching their children discipline but sometimes the parents don't know what*
>
> *to do as well*

Overall the students interviewed came across as quite independent of their parents and quite mature in their reflections on the role of parents in the school which they saw as quite limited. Perhaps this reflects an Eastern European and African (Nigerian) practice of leaving education to the schools and teachers and having a professional space between the two. It might also reflect greater motivation of young people who move from one culture to another and need to be independent, quick-witted and resourceful in navigating their new environment.

Experience of socialisation and schooling

All of the students commented on their experience of going through their five years of secondary school and how this impacted on their lives. It was this aspect that appeared to animate the young people most. Chinua confided

> *I think my experience in Blackthorn* [College] *was brilliant overall. I think it's the imperfections that made my time in Blackthorn perfect… so every day was different*

He went on to compare Blackthorn College with St. Jude's College, the only alternative school for boys in the town. St. Jude's has a high reputation for sporting success and academic achievement. Chinua remarks

> *That's the reason I really adore Blackthorn* [College] *because if you look at secondary schools like St. Jude's for instance, I don't think there's that much diversification… the Irish students as well, I think they become so used to international students as well. Racism wasn't the biggest issue, you know. I think that was overcome and it can be overcome. I think everybody in the long run was happy together, you know*

In contemplating the experience of schooling, the ups and downs, the clashes and difficulties Chinua says

> *I wouldn't have changed anything. Simply because I know that everything that has happened has taught me a lesson… because I found myself in awkward situations, you know. And if not for actually getting out of those situations or dealing with those situations* [in the school setting] *I really wouldn't know what I know now.*

The things he really enjoyed in school were the sports days, the Reading Challenge (a project of the JCSP in 1st and 2nd year to encourage literacy and reading) and the various extra-curricular activities such as golf and swimming which were part of the School Completion

Programme (a project to increase school retention rates through various strategies linking school and past-times). He went on to compare the progress made by students from 1st to 6th year with those from the other school in the town and said

> *Yeah and each student graduates at 6th year and if you're to compare when the people from St. Jude's graduate and compare the people from Blackthorn who graduate, I think definitely that the people from Blackthorn would have definitely progressed a lot more… in terms of character*

Nikolas echoed these sentiments by saying

> *Being together, in a mixed school, seeing all different cultures in a class and having to put up with them for 5 or 6 years, I think you kind of learn to cop on to yourself… so I think being together and kind of just makes you cop on*

He considered the prefect/mentoring system to be quite effecting in socialising junior students and in the socialisation of the prefects/mentors themselves

> *We stopped about two fights this year being prefects… so I think having a mentor or a prefect is good to look up to… it's a good thing and it helps the teacher, gives them kind of a break*

Overall he thought it was a very good experience being a prefect/mentor as

> *I think it was very good because you learn how to get to interact with different people in difficult situations*

This was also echoed by Michael who said

> *It was good, it was really good. Even now it's really helped me, even getting my job, I feel like it's part of me, it's a leadership role … I have it on my c.v … they see I'm*

able to think on my feet, that I'm a leader, that I've worked with people and during

my interview [for his job] I'd say I've worked with people from different backgrounds

Abi pointed to the advantage of security in numbers when he arrived at Blackthorn College

I noticed straight away that there was a lot of multi-cultural students. I always

assumed it would be a lot of Irish mainly but when I came I was surprised because I

saw a lot of international students… I met a lot of Africans who were like me, who

just came to Ireland so it was easy to get to know and talk to them

He also made comparisons with the local voluntary secondary school St. Jude's which he considered less tolerant and more draconian in its ethos

[Blackthorn College] *lets students be free* [whereas the other school] *would have rules*

like your hair and all this stuff and I was like "nah, a student can have his hair how

long, it's not about how your hair looks, it's about how you're going to succeed in

life… no [St. Jude's] *is like a prison, you can't do anything you want, you can't even*

play, you can't even do multi-sports, it's just all about Gaelic football

All in all taking into account the other school in the town and his own experiences in Blackthorn College, Abi summarises thus

It's a good place [for] *your children to interact with other people from other countries*

Positive Climate (teacher thoughts)

The aim of the teacher questionnaire was "to help understand the intercultural experience of our school so that we can plan ahead to improve matters if necessary and assist the Principal with his research". A total of 44 questionnaires were distributed on the 24th of April 2013 and 19 returned by the 3rd of May. Nine questionnaires were returned by teachers who had

more than ten years' experience, five by teachers who had 5-10 years' experience and four by teachers who had 5 years or less experience.

The impact of the international students on the life of the school was almost universally described in positive terms. They

> *"enhanced the school environment", "add a new dimension and make our school a brilliantly diverse environment for them to grow up in"*, they are *"ambitious and driven",* they bring *"multi-cultural opinions and experiences, challenging teachers to review teaching methods and materials", "their diverse backgrounds and tradition are an excellent contribution to the classroom", "diversity and enrichment", "once the language barrier has been crossed, they provide alternative perspectives on life experiences … we (the teachers) are required to re-evaluate our teaching strategies"*, they *"open up possibilities for Irish students – introducing them to different nationalities and cultures and makes them more accepting of others",* they have *"created a different dynamic in school and broadened perspectives of students and staff",* they are *"positive and challenging"*.

There were only two negative impacts reported "racism" and hanging around in groups!

Asked what specific positive things that international students brought to the school:

> *"they just help create an overall multi-cultural environment. I love them celebrating their own cultures"*, they make for *"a more inclusive community"*, they bring a *"variety of languages/ideas/experiences/ambitions and hopes … and different ways for students to integrate with each other and teachers e.g. handshaking and flowers on International Women's Day", "their willingness to get involved in extra-curricular*

activities … (and) raising of standards in relation to exam attainment and student retention".

Other positive contributions from international students include "music, religion, culture, food, dance etc." and "an awareness of the value of education". They also increased "the overall level of fitness" in the school as the "majority of international students are athletic and have a keen interest in sport". They were also "more positive about maths" and "can bring an international perspective to (classroom) discussions". One teacher reported that international students give "an opportunity to reflect on and appreciate (our) own culture". Twelve teachers mentioned the positive impact of diversity either directly or indirectly on the life of the school.

Challenges to be met

The challenges for the school in having so many international students included "ghettoization – the coloured kids hanging around together, the Polish, the Latvians" and the way gangs can be formed. Linguistic misunderstandings were also mentioned as well as an inability by some students "to engage fully with subjects". The presence of international students was also seen as a challenge for the school to "prevent racist faction fights … to rethink our teaching strategies (and) to make our school inclusive and respectful of all nationalities (and) cultures". Fourteen teachers singled out language difficulties or barriers as being a significant challenge to the school. Differing attitudes towards the issue of sexual orientation were mentioned by two teachers as constituting a challenge for the school.

Regarding adequate training and preparation for dealing with such a diverse social group, fifteen of the nineteen replied negatively.

> *"The HDip does not address this issue", "HDip does not prepare teachers, not enough emphasis on classroom methodologies or literacy development/language barriers".*

Most mentioned the need for training in English language acquisition and to a lesser extent the social and cultural aspects of teaching in a diverse school. Of the four who thought they were adequately trained and prepared, one had training in second language acquisition and specific EAL training. One thought they were well trained but were "always learning new ways". The other two gave minimal replies.

The kind of training and preparation recommended by the teachers included cultural studies (6), useful strategies and plans (5), TEFL training (3), identifying useful resources, solution focused training and using sport as a method of integration.

Pedagogical responses and resources

The strategies in use by the teachers at the time of the questionnaire included differentiation (4), using key words (3), peer learning (2), project work (2), using dictionaries (2), pre-teaching, modelling writing styles, learning the same song in different languages, scanning lessons/textbooks to identify and remove cultural bias, using posters, speaking slowly, cooking international dishes, exploring a festival from differing religious and cultural perspectives, sports from around the world, dances from around the world.

Asked to identify resources which could help international students, teachers recommended the following – a study of Irish culture, a buddy system for newcomers, various websites, using posters and notices in a variety of languages, teaching and ancillary staff from

culturally diverse backgrounds, using a translator with parents and additional help and resources for learning English.

Teacher views on the curriculum

On the suitability of their subjects for international students, the teachers responded as follows – "they contribute greatly in PE", "EAL is essential as English poetry and literature provide many challenges for international students who have neither sufficient English language nor cultural experience to understand/interpret … well". Geography is "very suitable (as) students aware of the geography of their native country allows for discussion and exploration of student experience", for Irish "in general they have an aptitude for the language … there is less resistance … they are more willing to attend Gaeltacht courses than some of our Irish students … they encourage/challenge Irish students to work harder to improve", Project Maths is "more challenging than traditional mathematics because it is text dense", Music is "very suitable … (it) is a language between all nations so performance and composition can be done without a common speaking language (although) theory can cause difficulties", the Materials Technology Wood teacher was anxious about classroom safety due to poor English but conceded its benefits because of project work, Irish history can be difficult to understand, Home Economics is "perfectly suitable".

Finally teachers were given an open space to comment on any issues that they encountered and considered important. Comments covered parental involvement with Polish and African parents being "very supportive" whereas other Eastern Europeans were not seen as supportive or involved.

"Younger international students hold on to the belief that most things at 'home' are better than in Ireland whereas senior students (those longer in Ireland) say that life in Ireland has made them into nicer people". "International students are amazed/curious about the relationship between Irish teachers (in this school) and students compared to at home". "It is important to build international student confidence in their first years in school (and) to acknowledge and recognise how tiring and difficult the transition to Irish school life is for most of these young people". "Internationals can excel at Irish due to their highly developed language skills at a young age". "I believe sport to be a very neglected form or mingling the different cultures". "Communication with parents is a challenge".

Teachers expressed a clear understanding of intercultural schooling, with one teacher describing how

our future leaders and global citizens will require direct encounters with strong and positive role models (i.e. us) to have formulated clear identities and have a greater understanding of the necessity for embracing diverse cultures to be well rounded individuals and perform duties life requires of them. Having attended a multi-cultural school, students will have gleaned much information about what it is to be Irish as well as forging a strong sense of self. Life experience is broad and travelling and awareness of and ultimately acceptance of others is more accessible and less intimidating since experience brings plurality and a firm concept of a pluralist society in which opportunity is provided for all to grow and succeed.

The direct encounters with strong and positive role models mentioned above puts an onus on teachers to embrace a model and vision of multi-cultural education that can inspire and teach young people. Such teachers "have high expectations for all students, use their knowledge of

students to design appropriate and relevant learning experiences, and make strong connections between the classroom and community" (Howe and Lisi, 2014, P. 149). This teacher challenges us to show what it means to be Irish and to respect the culture of the migrant student. She also suggests that the best way to develop tolerance and a sense of pluralism is to experience it in a multi-cultural school.

Other Voices

The aim of the teacher interviews was to probe the findings of the student interviews and teacher questionnaires at a deeper level with three very experienced teachers. The teachers selected were MD, teacher of Religion, co-ordinator of S.P.H.E and a person with long pastoral experience; NC, teacher of EAL who has been teaching English in special classes for students with little or basic English in need of improvement and MF, who as HSCL teacher interviewed all parents before their children started in the school, who worked closely with parents during the school year and who has an assistant principal post of responsibility for the integration of international students. These three key teachers were interviewed in August 2013 as they had a deep knowledge and experience of the issues involved. The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured focusing on the themes that arose from the student interviews and the teacher questionnaires. I have grouped their responses under the same headings as I used when reporting the findings of the student interviews – the curriculum, bullying and racism, relationship with teachers, the role of parents and the experience of socialisation and schooling.

MD was very emphatic that a multi-cultural class can yield great benefits for learners (herself included) as she said

> *It was very real and very practical and when you have different people in the classroom, different backgrounds, chatting, talking, working things out*

She gave an example of this cross-fertilization in the classroom when she recalled a class visit to the mosque

> *"Miss, you know Jawad at the back of the class? He's a Muslim, isn't he?" so I said "yeah, he's Muslim did you notice?" and she said "no, I just thought he was … different. But that's like his whole religion" and I said "yeah". And then I said (to myself) "(1) isn't that magic because the penny dropped and (2) I've been doing this (topic) for ages with my charts and my books and my whole nine years thinking I was great. And she, that girl, wasn't truly going to get it, truly, until it was someone in her class"*

NC, the English and EAL teacher, focused more on teaching methodology and learning styles as she put it

> *Some students learn visually, others learn through repetition, whatever. So we have to cater for all those different types of learners*

She was very practical and specific as to how to enable students to access the curriculum across all subjects with the use of pre-teaching, visual aids, key-word lists, peer teaching and peer learning as

> *By getting them to teach each other and by drawing on their own experiences, it cut out a lot of the discipline issues, because they really felt I was in tune with them*

Her approach was to draw out the students verbally or visually or by getting them to report on their own experiences as in

> "*So we're going to talk about volcanoes today. Who has ever seen a volcano? Has anyone ever travelled?" put up a picture… if they're struggling*

She also cautioned against grouping or streaming children on the basis of linguistic ability as this often ignores their previous knowledge and learning and she gave the example of Mindaugas, a Lithuanian boy who had won competitions in maths in his own country but he came across as quite aggressive because as she reported him saying

> "*it was hilarious. I thought Maths here so simple but they put me in foundation Maths because I couldn't speak English*"

She felt that many international students found the subjects English, Religion and History quite difficult because of the essay style answers required for the Leaving Certificate whereas she felt Mathematics, Geography and Biology were more manageable as they were more skill and content based. She felt that group work and project work gave the students an opportunity to shine and to build from their prior knowledge. Practical ways to improve teaching she identified as

> *Larger handwriting on the board, or more visual elements, or speaking slower or explaining key words but some of them felt that the teachers were too anxious to cover the curriculum for the exam, to move on quickly*

This tension between covering the curriculum and ensuring that each student is learning is not of course confined to multi-cultural schooling although she noticed

> *Other teachers would tell students "no Russian in this class, we speak in English, this class is through English" whereas the EAL approach would be – if there are two students who speak Polish and one can understand better, let them explain to each other (in Polish). Of course it's classroom management to keep them on topic… and I*

think… they should all have their dictionaries, English-Polish, English-Lithuanian

and we should have class sets for Irish students to look up

MF, who also has a cross-curricular perspective as home school community liaison teacher and as a post-holder for integration, echoes NF's previous comments when she says

Peer teaching is very much a part of the school now… it evolved, yeah. The EAL

classroom fosters that because students that know more tend to help students who

don't understand and clearly it has benefitted (them)

She feels that differentiated learning is the key to effective teaching and learning

Whether it's to do with special needs or international students… the other thing I

would say is that we have to speak slowly… that's the one complaint I hear from

students – the teachers speak too fast

Finally she notes the situation regarding the Irish language and the competency achieved by international students

Yeah and that's amazing. They actually don't have any difficulty with Irish at all, in

comparison with Irish students, which I find amusing

Bullying and racism

Racism is seen as a very complex phenomenon by MD who has observed students in difficult situations

I sometimes think racism is bullying and racism is the specific form of bullying

Reflecting on the dynamics at work she elaborates

There's emotive buttons that they'll push and you'll wonder… sometimes I see two

students, two particular personalities, and I wonder if you change the colour of their

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skin, would they not have been fighting? No, they would have been fighting, just about

something else

The overlap between racism, bullying and horseplay was also commented on by NC as she
reported

Racism seemed to raise its head in P.E quite a bit because of the physical nature of

the subject and also the changing room areas (unsupervised) and competitive

However she recalled a strategy that was very useful in combatting racism. The school ran
an extra-curricular World Cup at lunch time with teams from the various countries vying for
glory. The teams were 5-a-side indoor soccer teams and tensions could be high. She
suggested that each team have a minimum of three nationalities on it and this rule greatly
reduced tension and encouraged integration. She also highlighted how racism can be non-
Irish as

Those students who had been three years (in the school) and had English language

support for three years, those can be very intolerant of new incoming students

Supporting the view expressed above by MD that bullying and racism are complex
behaviours where it is not always possible to disentangle one from the other, she says

A lot of it, I feel, is superficial. You know it's superficial if you sit the students down

and question them about it, they don't really believe what they're saying. That's my

feeling of it. And I feel that if there wasn't the race issue it would be because one was

taller, one was shorter, one was fatter, one was thinner, one was wearing glasses, you

know? I just feel that they'll find something to get at each other, those students who

are inclined to do that. And I don't feel that it comes from any deep-seated hatred of

another race… so I think this whole thing of racism, I'm not saying it's not there, it's

definitely there, but sometimes gestures or things can be interpreted as racist when in

actual fact they're just rude, ignorant behaviour

This teacher has considerable experience in dealing with international students and incidents of bullying, racism and other difficulties. She related how she resolved a conflict between an African boy and a Lithuanian that was on-going and nasty. The Lithuanian student had set up the African student in a classroom situation. The teacher had been accused by the Lithuanian of being biased. She rounded on the African student detailing how what he had said was unacceptable, disrespectful and racist. She asked the student did he accept what she said and he agreed. She asked him (Benjamin) was he willing to apologise and shake hands and he said he was. Then she spoke to the other boy

And I said "now Artur, are you going to shake hands with Benjamin?" and he folded

his arms and said "No" and I said "why not?" he said "I can't shake hands with him,

he's not my friend, he's not ever going to be my friend" and I said "no, shaking hands

here is not a sign of friendship, it's a sign that you agree with what's being said. That

racism is bad, that it shouldn't have a place in this school and that we should respect

each other. And Benjamin should respect you and you should respect him" so he

shook hands with Benjamin

With tactful classroom management and a revised seating arrangement the teacher was able to get a result. As she said of the students

They ended up sharing, they never became pals, but there was a growing tolerance

and recognition

Another group of students in the school that sometimes clashed with international students was travellers. Only one traveller completed his Leaving Certificate with this group although seven started out in first year. NC explained their interactions thus

In the pecking order of the school, before this large cohort of international students came in, the travellers were seen as the lowest in the pecking order. So, they were always fighting against the others who they felt looked down on them. So, now with the international students coming in over the years, they felt "oh great, we're no longer the last on the pecking order, we have somebody who's…" and that's how they felt and the international students, of course don't agree with that pecking order, so there has been a lot of conflict

She said that these issues would be mentioned in her class and that the students

Would pick up on derogatory terms and racist insults towards travellers, they all learned the "knacker" word very quickly, just the same as the "N-word" would be thrown over and back

Interestingly enough, given the deep-seated difficulties down the decades in Irish society, she observes that during multi-cultural week or even in routine classroom activities

The travellers, it was very difficult for them to showcase their culture

Due to these difficulties and the poor communication between these two groups – travellers and international students – many of the latter

Assume that all travellers are poor and dirty and… you know, the stereotypical traveller… they also associated travellers with Romani gypsy and whatever stereotypes and racist attitudes they had towards the Romani gypsies

The home-school-community-liaison teacher had a more nuanced view of racism and bullying thinking about incidents in the past

I'm not sure they were racially motivated. I think they were personality driven more than racially motivated

She did agree that black students were in a different situation to those from Eastern Europe

> *I get the sense alright that black students do feel as if they're being, at times,*
>
> *differentiated somehow because they're black*

Relationship with teachers

Positive relationships with teachers were a feature with the student interviews and this is evident from MD when she says of her students

> *For me they were a gift, they made the pages alive*

She was aware of the need to simplify words, ideas and concepts

> *Things you have to break down as well, in stories or narratives, colloquialisms, or*
>
> *saying or expressions*

She was aware that international students liked to be recognised in their own right. She gave the example of Polish students liking it when she would discuss morality in class and bring up the example of Father Maximillian Kolbe. They were also much taken by the death of Pope John Paul II and his importance in world affairs. Similarly

> *African students love to hear you talking about Africa, not like you were doing*
>
> *something charitable but just the food and the weather and normal stuff*

In terms of training teachers and preparing them for future classrooms she would

> *Get the word "interculture" and get rid of the word "multiculture"*

She feels the good teacher-student relationships are a mark of the school and recalls an incident when a student who had transferred from another school into 5th years reacted

> *I remember one day in the History class (a student came) bouncing in the door.*
>
> *"Miss, do you know what happened in such-a-place?" and it was around September*
>
> *and there was a student from another school and she kind of turned around to slag*

her off, like "surely who are you talking to?" and she goes "oh, we just go on like

that". It wasn't inappropriate or rude

She considered good, healthy, open relationships like this to be the result of the experience of coping with change and challenging situations

I think when there are challenges people can bring out the best in people and I also

think how are people going to thrive unless they're happy and secure?

As a female teacher dealing with students who may come from homes where this is a culture of male dominance, this could be difficult to manage in a classroom setting. Some teenage boys had unhelpful attitudes towards females in authority

I found that initially, I don't know if it's a temperament thing, but you can get insulted

and offended

She felt that it was important to understand where the student was coming from in terms of home background, culture and relationships but she stood her ground

My attitude is "well you're here now in my classroom and this is a place for respect

for everybody. So this is an opportunity for you to learn that that's not okay" and I

can see that's difficult for some students. I can even see now that some students live

in two worlds. Where they might go home and Dad is the figure of the house and the

mother, wife, girls have a particular role. That's their world, their reality, they have

to live with that

Finally she took a message of hope and success from the end of year graduation ceremony in the school. It is not a mass but a prayer service followed by prize giving and graduation. The saying of prayers of the faithful in the different languages in use in the school had a particular resonance. A young African said his prayer at the start in Igbo

There might have been 15 or 20 people in the audience who understood it but they all

answered it. And I just thought isn't that magic.

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It was a similar experience for the Polish, the Lithuanian, the Romanian prayer and so on. This normalising of shared values in differing languages would not have happened a few years ago, she thinks and

> *For the community that was created here, for a little while, I thought was "our" normal but not "their" normal but now I can see a lot more of it happening as time goes on. So, that's positive*

The difficulties faced by teachers and their lack of training and preparation was highlighted by NC, the EAL teacher

> *I think some of the teachers were brilliant, some were overwhelmed; the idea that you're a trained and qualified History teacher, Geography teacher or whatever… and now you have to teach it to a student who doesn't understand English. And there were, uncomfortably for me and for some of the students, a lot of comments "I'm a History teacher, I'm a Maths teacher, I'm a 'whatever' teacher. I'm not here to teach you English". And it was hard for teachers were no in-service*

She felt that a turning point was reached with the Whole School Evaluation (WSE)[14] in 2008 when

> *You know, it was really drilled home; you're here to teach the students that are in front of you, whatever that takes… I think the teachers in general have become more open-minded… or maybe, kind of like "well, this is the way it is", so your professional response to that has to change, you know?*

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[14] WSE is a Whole School Evaluation – an inspection of all aspects of the school from management to health and safety to teaching and learning conducted by inspectors from the Department of Education and Science over a two week period or longer. Inspection reports are available for all schools on www.education.ie/inspectionreports

This change has filtered through to the perception students have of the teachers but this took time. She would have heard international students over the years comparing and contrasting the Irish education system with their own. She felt that international students had difficulty adapting because

> *Whereas here in Blackthorn College teachers care. And I think at the beginning some of the students thought that was too intrusive. Sure what do you care if I wasn't in your class when I was supposed to be? Or where I was? Or if I have a problem at home? Why are you asking me how my mother is? You know but the longer they're here and they hear us talking like that to other students, they actually like it… and that relationship carries on outside the school and I think it's great*

Summarising her experience of teaching in the school for the past 6 years she says

> *It's a privilege to work with international students, definitely*

The home school community liaison teacher took a longer and a broader view. She has been teaching in the school for over 30 years! Looking back

> *I think initially it was a huge shock to teachers and teachers were resistant because it seemed like, it was, very difficult… and I think teachers may have had difficulty initially because they felt they weren't able to do justice to the students*

However times have changed, people have moved on and learned by experience and now

> *At a certain level cherishing different identities by staff is something that's happened and is important… well it's lovely to see it when it comes to awards at the end of the year how enthusiastic people are, teachers are, about different cultures*

She feels that the key to effective teaching and professionalism is

> *Differentiated learning whether it's got to do with language needs or whether it's got to do with intellectual ability*

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The low level of parental involvement in the school was well explained by MD

> *You can be really honest and then really realistic. Building relationships is always worth it, but that takes time and energy. There are so many pulls on education now, on time*

The main forum for parent-teacher interaction is the parent-teacher meeting which is usually held once or twice a year and as MD put it

> *You can't build a relationship in 15 minutes*

There is also the language difficulty with many students having better English than their parents and this also impacts on meetings between school and parents as

> *They lack confidence (due to poor English)*

The EAL teacher strikes a more strident tone as she feels that more parents should attend parent-teacher meetings

> *I have an issue, I think they abdicate too much responsibility to the school, I can't understand it personally, but we're all different you know*

She also feels there are economic constraints on parents and that parents views of the future may not coincide with their children's views and hopes for the future

> *I think a lot of parents, if they're working shift work, they're not available during the day or evening, they don't bother giving a translator contact to the school, I think it's a disgrace really… most (parents) are here for financial reasons, they work shifts, they're not available in school time, they're either working or sleeping. Evening activities are, again, outside what they have to do. The students see themselves long term in Ireland, I think a lot of parents don't, you know?*

The home-school-community-liaison teacher has a broader view as one might expect from a teacher who meets parents daily as the principal part of her work

> *From a parent's point of view, they're really not clued in to what the education system is in Ireland at all. They want their children to have an education, they want them to have a qualification and they want them to be happy… but they don't really have an understanding of the points system, they don't really have an understanding of the Junior Cert and Leaving Cert examinations*

The gulf in understanding between migrant parents and the school was illustrated for her by an incident

> *Somebody came in a few years ago looking for the doctor in the school*

There is also the issue of repeating a year in secondary school in order to improve one's English and to better comprehend the program of instruction. This often meets with resistance as

> *If a student is asked to repeat because of language problems, that's often perceived as somehow a slight or a disadvantage or "my child isn't performing well enough" rather than they'll benefit more if they stay longer*

On the practicality of using a translator MF uses two regularly but concedes

> *It's more difficult to form relationships when there's a translator involved because there's delay in communication*

As home-school-community-liaison teacher MF organised classes for parents on a variety of topics usually chosen by the parents themselves

> *They'll come for the initial meeting but otherwise they won't come unless they're called in and they expect it's a situation that's difficult, discipline or whatever*

There is also the problem of fluency in English which was mentioned by NC above

The other difficulty, I think, that's present is that the children speak English better than their parents… I think they're intimidated because there's only one or two (at a meeting) and the majority are Irish so they don't return

The combination of social, personal, economic, cultural and developmental issues that inhibit greater parental involvement is summarised thus by the teacher

It is just more difficult for parents to be involved in the school, they want to be, but I don't have a sense that they understand that they could be more involved with the school, actually. It's almost as if they send their children to school; the children are educated; and they'll pick them up the far side. If there's difficulty, they'll come in. but otherwise they don't really see that they have an input

Socialisation and schooling

The opportunity to spend 5 years together in a school setting for a diverse group of teenagers from all over Europe, Africa and further afield can make the school central to their growth and development and creates a challenge for the school

The school has to know, what is the school about. The school can be a culture in itself (MD, teacher of Religion and SPHE co-ordinator)

She further articulates

But I can't help think that there is something special about our school. There is so much difference, that difference is nearly normal

The fact that 40 per cent of the school is international means that nearly everyone is in a group of one kind or another and you don't stand out as being different in this regard whereas in other schools with small minorities you can stand out as somewhat different or exotic

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It's kind of making the minority a bit exotic which I don't think has happened here because there's such a blend

However groups of students do form often along ethnic lines within and without the school. She sees this as

It's about belonging, confidence and security comes in belonging to something, it's a natural human thing to create and form groups and I think that phenomenon is neither good nor bad, it just depends on how it can play out. It is what it is but I think it has to be managed

She displays empathy for such groupings as she relates it to her own experience as a child going to the Gaeltacht where she was expected to socialise and speak Irish all the time

The thing you do is sneak off (with) some of your friends and talk English, that's the truth of it, that's what I did, because it was lonely

She feels that the opportunity to grow, develop and relate in a secure school setting is very beneficial for the student's social and personal development and thinks adults could benefit from a similar environment

I think a lot of adults and professionals maybe don't have as much intercultural interaction with people as our students do. And I think that what they get from that is of enormous benefit to them

It is not all one-way traffic either as she sees the benefits for Irish students as well. She illustrates this with a small example of change in Irish social habits

Greetings, you see students in the corridor now shaking hands. You see Irish students shaking hands with other Irish students because they've seen it from Eastern European students

The EAL teacher agrees with the benefits of intercultural education and the impact the school has had on students' lives

> *Yeah, students I've met who've graduated from here and have more life experience, they would say it was invaluable. Whenever they come up against difficult situations or racism… and a few of them said that… the school here softened them, made them more accepting or tolerant of people who are not the same as them*

She felt that the school gave students the time and space to thrash out issues in preparation for adult life

> *I think subjects like Religion, SPHE or even tutor groups, there are great opportunities to discuss these issues with the students in mixed groupings in this school that you wouldn't get in other schools. And I think that's hugely positive… the idea of a rounded education, you know? It's alive and thriving in this school, that's what I think and it's great*

As well as the formal classroom setting, NC put great emphasis on informal or extra-curricular activities as a way of promoting tolerance, integration and mutual respect. She feels that it must develop naturally from the lives of students and teachers in the school community

> *You can't kind of create it artificially*

She mentioned the benefits of combining Seachtain na Gaeilge with Multi-Cultural Week and the work that went on in painting the mural which is in a prominent place in the school opposite the staffroom and beside the school canteen. The mural depicts a multi-cultural setting, is the backdrop to the schools website and was painted by students, teachers and parents as a collaborative art project funded by Creative Engagement

> *When the students were actually doing that there was great socialisation going on… you have to create genuine opportunities for the interaction. So in a way I think that*

when they're working on something together that that's where it happens more

effectively

She also mentioned the benefits of the school musical which was performed in the local

municipal Arts Centre

I mean there was something like 20-something nationalities on stage there, all

working together, all enjoying themselves, showcasing their talents

She further commented on the end of year graduation ceremonies noting how

It has evolved, hasn't it, from a very Irish, very Catholic now, to a multi-cultural kind

of prayer service for an ecumenical and different languages as well. But again that

came from the students, it wasn't imposed by teachers or… there was no instruction

given that this is how we have to do this… and it's evolving. School is a living,

breathing organic place with a developing community. I suppose it will change again

The home-school-community-liaison teacher concurred with the previous two teachers and

said

My overall experience is very positive in relation to the international students

She said that the newcomer students

Bring a whole new dimension of enthusiasm, willingness to study and it also benefits

the (Irish) students within the college because they've had to stretch themselves to

become more inclusive

She cites the example of a student in a Religion or History class being asked by the teacher

"what is a Muslim hij?" and the natural way the student would turn around and ask "Ali, what

is it?". On the other hand she says that we as teachers do not really appreciate the enormity

of the task facing newcomer students

I don't think we really appreciate how difficult it is for them… if they come in to secondary school straight off… I don't think we have any idea of just how difficult it is for students to integrate and negotiate all the unseen agendas and subtleties that we have in our culture… it really is amazing how some of them do as well as they do

She feels that there already is an existence in the school a culture or tradition of newcomers settling in and that this makes it easier in the present. The culture and tradition developed over the years out of necessity to integrate and educate newcomer students. She thinks that the original immigrants, from around 2005-06 depended more on the school than current ones do. Structures and programs that have developed since then such as the prefect system, Friends for Life and Big Brother/Big Sister have all contributed towards making the school a better and more welcoming place. One thing that is important to her is that

We need to pronounce their names clearly… we tend to pronounce it as we think it should be pronounced as opposed to their own experience of their own name

Another issue of concern to her is the patriarchal nature of some African societies as reflected by parents and children

I think the Africans in particular would have a sense that they listen more to the authority of a male voice than of a female voice… there seems to be a macho approach to things

And this leads to her concern for a minority within a minority – African girls

I'd like to understand more how African girls integrate

Unfortunately no African girls volunteered to be interviewed as part of this research. The teacher feels that this is an area that needs attention due to her considerable experience in the area and this concern would be shared by the researcher.

I also interviewed the Chief Executive of the education authority where Blackthorn College is situated to gain an over-all view and further tease out the findings. He saw his role as managing the growth in student numbers and staffing, developing leadership in the schools and responding to the *wave of immigrants* which he saw as bringing about *a sea change in the educational environment* and *bringing about an injection of energy and vitality into our schools.* He felt that stand-alone schools were in a better position to tackle inequality whereas Blackthorn College had to contend with social stratification typical of a traditional Irish market town and had to deal with a disproportionate number of migrant students relative to the other three schools in the town at the time. However, he felt that Blackthorn College had *bought into it* (interculturalism and civic responsibility) and had responded well to the new demands of these migrants. He posited that the school's history of dealing with marginalised students such as Travellers and students with special educational needs had helped its response as such a school population *forces you into a pastoral space whether you like it or not* and that this emphasis on the pastoral as opposed to the academic can pose difficulties but can be rectified over time. He proposed more emphasis on practical subjects for students with English as a second language and English language learners such as Woodwork, Metalwork and especially Art which he saw as *therapeutic and inclusive* and ought to be compulsory core curriculum. Regarding teacher training and professional development, he observed that most teachers come from a comfortable background and can find it a challenge to be confronted with students from diverse backgrounds and differing learning styles and this needs to be addressed in teacher training and CPD but underperforming teachers can *hide behind the wealth of kids* (in affluent schools) and *hide behind the poverty of kids* (in DEIS schools). Having worked in Africa, he sees *a deeply ingrained racism in Irish society* which he calls *Free Nelson Mandela but keep him over there.* On visiting the schools he thinks that it is the young people who teach the adults about integration and he finds the best expression

of this in the school musicals which are an annual event in many schools. *Newcomer students are entitled to the recognition and respect which is showcased in these musicals.* As he nears the end of his career he cautions against complacency and urges *school leaders to be reflective, dynamic and always ready to adapt to the changing needs of their students and to recognise the common humanity of mankind.*

Summary

The students, for the most part, enjoyed their time in secondary school but were not uncritical of its shortcomings – its curriculum could be adapted and made less Eurocentric, there could be greater academic emphasis in tandem with good pastoral care, teacher expectations could be higher to enable better teaching and learning and better academic outcomes, bullying in junior cycle is apparent and racism outside of school is unfortunately all too common especially if you are black. Teaching strategies such as cooperative learning and group discussion work very well, but not all teachers use them. Parents can find it difficult to visit schools for a variety of social, cultural, economic and linguistic reasons. The experience of school or what is sometimes called the informal or hidden curriculum has a huge effect on young people and has great potential for teaching and learning. Teachers generally have a good relationship with their students and perceive them in a very positive light. They need pre-service training and ongoing continuing professional development in methodologies, teaching English as a second language, cultural awareness and identifying and sharing useful resources in a context of recognition and respect and high expectations. Although the young people interviewed were somewhat insistent in pointing out the positive in their experience of secondary school, it is evident that not all had the same experiences and that they encountered

difficulties and frustrations along the way. These difficulties and frustrations will be

discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the broader implications and significance of the findings from the empirical data for our understanding of interculturalism in an Irish school setting from a student and teacher perspective. It will reflect on the complexity of interculturalism in education and the implications for school practices and life, pedagogy and curriculum as related to me in the stories of eight young people who lived and learned in a school in transition and have now progressed to third-level and working life.

The themes considered in this analysis and discussion chapter reflect the general picture that emerged from the empirical data about the following issues - the practice of inclusion, the relevance and adaptability of the formal and informal curriculum, the extent and response to issues of bullying and racism, the role of parents, the importance of relationships with teachers, socialisation and schooling, the variety of pedagogical responses and resources and my own reflections as former principal and researcher. These themes will be considered in the light of the literature pertaining to them and in the wider context of school and society. This analysis has to be placed within the broader methodological context of this research which is useful to recall at this point. Its scale and orientation means that it reveals a particular picture of interculturalism and migrant experience in Irish education at a specific time. It takes an in-depth focus on the experiences of a small group of students and teachers from one single school. The single case study enables a deep examination of the diverse

aspects of the migrant experience across all aspects of the formal and informal life of this school. This demonstrates the vital qualitative value of contextualising research within the local context and dynamics of school and community life. This does limit the sampling of this research to the particular insights of those students and teachers who volunteered to participate. As has been acknowledged throughout the findings, the counter-side of this is the depth enabled by the qualitative case study approach. However, it has highlighted specific issues and groups which warrant further investigation - such as the experiences of African girls and Traveller students in particular. The use of interviews and questionnaires as methods focused respondents' attention on retrospectively recalling school experiences, thereby raising the benefits and limitations of recall, memory and how we recount experiences from our past. In addition, as researcher I am deeply embedded in this context, able to draw on my depth of insight and existing relationships of trust in this context. However, this also presents challenges for me as a researcher in terms of balancing the demands of the multiple roles and perspectives of author, researcher and principal. Each of these roles holds significant power which must be acknowledged in terms defining the scope of the research, its analysis and writing, as well as the powerful role I occupied as principal of this school for these students and teachers. These issues were discussed in further detail in the methodology chapter.

A rich tapestry of new insights offered by this research

The stories of the young people as retold and reflected on in the course of this research have yielded a number of new insights for me as author/insider-researcher/school principal. The arrival of young migrants in Ireland at this time has led to many positive experiences for both students and teachers. It has broadened the world-view and mind-set of both and has been enriching for the school in bringing a wealth of cultural capital to it. The experience of a

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DEIS school in dealing with disadvantage and special needs created an openness and commitment to dealing with and responding to a new " need"-the sudden arrival of migrants needing to be catered for in the specific context of Irish society and secondary school education of this time through recognising and affirming their presence and potential. Important insights are offered by these students into the dynamics of the local contexts, cultures and structures in shaping their education experiences. Localising inclusion to the specific structures and cultures of educational systems and social contexts is vital in understanding how migrant students experience education.

This focus revealed how the inclusive vision of the school can give flexibility in meeting the needs of the newcomers. The curriculum can offer potential to be creatively adapted to reflect the lives of the students in front of the teachers. Despite the prevalence of the "banking approach" in the Irish second level system, there is scope in all subjects for fresh thinking especially in the "soft curriculum" or non-examination subjects of SPHE, CSPE, PE and Religious Education. Parental involvement remains a challenging issue with a more focused and prioritised approach to parental involvement required. What was particularly striking was the influence of the informal or social context, with a radical rethink of the role of the school as a place for communicative action, socialisation and learning urgently needed. The issue of racism needs to be explored more deeply, especially as it affects specific groups of students in very different ways in different locations and times and is such a deep barrier preventing members of society living good, productive lives (Zurn, 2015).

The general picture that emerges from this research is a rich tapestry depicting the everyday lives of the students involved. A wide variety of student experiences is recorded in this case study such as getting to know the school and its teachers, a sense of inclusion, routines of

school life, the formal and informal curriculum, relationship with teachers, involvement of parents, the extent of bullying and racism, and the general importance of socialisation and progression from 1st year to 6th year. This picture is a limited or partial one as discussed in Chapter 4.

Nevertheless, bearing these limitations in mind, what emerges is a rich and complex picture of student experiences of school life. It could be said that this complexity and intersectionality of the themes enhanced school life and brought a new and exciting professional challenge for teachers and school management.

Overall, what emerged from the interviews and questionnaires is a snapshot of a school in a specific time of transition and migration in Irish society, a school system that is rooted in liberal multiculturalism with the teacher as educator and the students eager to access the curriculum to achieve examination success and a path to adult life. There was evidence of aspects of pluralist multiculturalism among the black students especially, through their emphasis on difference rather than sameness (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997). Moreover, the school, its teachers and students conforms to Banks' notion of the multicultural school seeking to enable students to acquire the skills, knowledge and cultural capital to function effectively in society by providing relevant educational experiences promoting global citizens with cosmopolitan attitudes (Banks, 2009). The case study approach enabled the local context and uniqueness of this school during this era to be highlighted. What this reveals is a school context shaped by the fact that 40 per cent of the students in the school in this study were migrants at this time. This helped bring newcomer students to the centre of school life rather than being left at the periphery which is a feature of several schools in the Irish context in the past decade (Smyth *et al,* 2009). As global and national economic and social contexts will

continue to change, migration will undoubtedly continue to be a feature of our society and education systems; with qualitative studies such as this one capturing the lived experiences and contextualised insights from students during this wave of migration into Irish society. It is vital to continue to study the dynamics of migration. This case study reveals the importance of the local context, with this particular community playing a key role in facilitating settlement. Its history in integrating members of the Travelling community may have helped in this regard. There are presently close to 400 Traveller families living in the local authority area – most of them living in the county town where the school in this study is situated. The experience of the school in dealing with students with special educational needs and with Travellers helped to develop an inclusive ethos which facilitated the later inclusion of migrant students. These local, specific factors which illustrate the richness of a small scale study which would likely be lost in a larger, broader study of schools and students. This historic recognition of the needs of others points to an unintended outcome for a DEIS school which embarked on the path of inclusion before the arrival of migrant students at its door.

The other side of the inclusive coin may be reflected in lower teacher expectations and a greater emphasis on pastoral rather than academic matters which is explored later and is also evident in other studies of inclusion (Devine, 2010; Gilborn, 2010; Parazzoli, 2013).

Inclusion in the daily life and structures of the school

All schools can claim to be inclusive as they are recognised by Section 9 of the Education Act (1998). Mission statements and declarations of ethos indicate the aspirations and values of a school, but their realisation through practice on the ground is a more complex matter. The students in this study identified how important it was for them to feel valued, trusted,

welcomed into the daily life and structures of the school. Practice must go beyond "heroes and holidays" (Nieto, 2014; Smyth *et al*, 2009) to a deep sense of recognition that is apparent in classroom practice, student relationships, student-teacher relationships, school ethos and policies, involvement of parents and a culture of collaboration and cooperation (Smyth,1999, p. 221).

The inclusive school is not a static behemoth of rules and regulations but a constantly changing dynamic interplay of the people within it (Crandell, 2008; Cole, 2008; Murawski and Spencer, 2011). The students in this study highlighted the complexity of their experiences of interculturalism in education. This represents key learning for us as researchers and educators on several levels. Students detailed their own learning as they developed and grew from 1st to 6th year in formal and informal learning spaces across the school. They also acknowledged how life outside the school comes into and affects school experiences in areas such as peer group pressure, bullying, racism and parental expectation. They spoke of the interculturalism and inclusion in school in terms of engaging with the curriculum, classroom practice, discussion and debates, to working in partnership with teachers towards a common goal reflecting good practice internationally (Banks, 2010; Howe and Lissi, 2014).

Students reported the way in which an inclusive environment can facilitate intercultural learning and how it normalises and affirms an intercultural outlook. Students appreciated teacher practices such as having high expectations, "pushing them", being there when needed, being friendly and welcoming. Teachers saw the diversity among students as "positive and challenging" and adding new dimensions to school life. However, challenges for students were also evident such as the lack of academic emphasis with some teachers, the

rigidity of the curriculum in some subjects, bullying in the earlier years and racism especially in the out of school and out of earshot contexts. Findings indicated how school management and teachers need to be constantly evaluating and getting feedback on the school, its programmes, its teaching methods, its policies and procedures and especially the health and welfare of its students if they wish to create a truly inclusive school. This is also reflected in the literature on inclusion in schools (Murawski and Spencer, 2011; Byrne, McGinnity, Smyth, Darmody, 2010) and this is especially true for the formal school programme-its curriculum.

Curriculum and pedagogy

This research demonstrated how students respond favourably to an intercultural curriculum and especially to the methodologies recommended in the Intercultural Guidelines of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2006). All subjects across the curriculum have a role to play in creating an intercultural environment. Subjects mentioned by the students in this research included English, Business, Accounting, Geography, History, Home Economics, Physical Education, Religious Education, SPHE and CSPE.

There is clear scope for the integrating of aspects of other cultures and history in the existing Irish programmes. Discussion and study of African, East European and other cultures, history, literature and music could be given more attention and prominence in the Irish curriculum as a way of acknowledging the contribution of these countries and their peoples to Irish life. The short courses recommended for the new Junior Certificate programme have the potential to blend in and reinforce these approaches and pedagogies. Social studies subjects such as CSPE, Religion and SPHE offer many opportunities for discussion and reflection on

diversity, interculturalism and other areas of social life. However, SPHE can be underused and under-recognised as it is not an examination subject and/or does not earn credits in the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. CSPE suffers similarly as it is only available at Junior Certificate level, with only one period per week on the timetable.

There is a danger here of relegating intercultural matters to the "soft curriculum" of RE, SPHE and CSPE. This is also where teachers are more likely to practice more active learning methodologies such as group discussion and collaborative learning. This consigns the delegation of active, student-orientated pedagogies to a lower status than in the "hard" examination subjects (Jeffers, 2008).

The value of peer learning and teaching was stressed by both students and teachers as a means of personal, social and academic development. The approaches were also valued in the context of English Language Learning and they will be returned to later in this chapter. . Listening to and arguing with your peers from other cultures and backgrounds in a respectful school setting can be a good preparation for adult community living in an increasingly multi-cultural society (Banks, 2010; Howe and Lissi, 2014). The students were as concerned with pedagogy as with curricular content, pointing to the importance of the processes of education. Cooperative learning, "discussion", and peer learning-"it's easier to learn from a friend"-were emphasised by students. Students also valued pedagogical values of respect and consultation-"we should have more of a say in what we are doing". Student willingness to be involved in the school and the curriculum builds on Cole's model of an inclusive school climate-"working within social situations rather than alone" (Cole, 2008, p. 2) – and the validation and legitimisation of students emphasised by multiculturalist approaches (Banks, 2008, p. 29). Echoing this, the disposition of the teacher – "having the right mindset" – matters just as

much as the content of the curriculum in the eyes of the students, as this ensures good communication and good relationships.

The support expressed by the students in this study for the benefits of a more integrated curriculum and the value of more student centred learning and pedagogies is consistent with other large scale research on Irish post-primary students' attitudes towards ethnic minorities (Tormey and Gleeson, 2012, p. 165).

Physical Education is also a subject that suffers from lack of accreditation and has huge potential for personal and social development and teaching respect and tolerance for diversity. Its non-verbal and group learning components combine well with the more positive attitude towards health and physical wellbeing held in many immigrant communities. The potential of games as facilitating social interaction will be discussed under socialisation and schooling as well as other aspects of the hidden curriculum or extra-curricular activities.

In terms of language, the status of the Irish language is enhanced rather than endangered by the presence of newcomer students. There is no record of any negative comment or perception in this research save an aside by an African student to the effect that it's a pity that Irish students don't respect their own language more. Bilingualism and trilingualism are quite normal for many migrant students (Cummins, 1991, p. 70) and they welcomed the opportunity to learn Irish.

The positive impact of EAL – English as an additional language – or extra English as it is called in the school was remarked on. EAL gave extra space to students learning English outside the regular classroom to reflect and learn. This highlights the issues of time and

space in a non-formal context for discussion and active learning styles that students found very useful. Non- examination subjects and classes offered space for this in a way that the mainstream curriculum subjects did not. It also raises broader issues about how we teach our curriculum and why the subject areas suited to active learning methodologies are not given the same level of recognition in our school system. As the findings chapter illustrates, students spoke highly of the learning about the qualities of pluralism, interculturalism as well as language learning that these subjects facilitated. Teachers also adopt different pedagogical approaches and use more active learning including peer support in these areas, which are more beneficial for newcomer students, especially those learning English.

These pedagogic strategies occur in a school structure and system dominated by an ideology of liberal or pluralist multiculturalism which do not address issues such as class, race, gender or inequality in any depth. They not only avoid an analysis of these issues but also fail to acknowledge the deeply intersectional nature of these issues in terms of how they interweave in students' daily life and school experiences (Bryan, 2009; Kitching, 2010). The findings of this research reveal how ethnicity, economic and social capital and gender intersect in complex ways whereby these students and their families adapt to life in Irish schools and communities. While these findings are limited to the insights of eight students in one school, they highlight the embedded and complex nature of migrant experiences in Irish schooling. It also highlights the value of locating research in the specific context, with responses shaped by the community's experiences of in-migration, the school's DEIS background and previous experiences with Travellers all influencing the pedagogical, institutional and cultural responses of the school.

The broader significance of these findings on the curriculum and pedagogy indicate that they can be adapted in subject areas to make it more relevant in response to student diversities. These students respond very positively to classroom discussion and peer learning. This offers enormous potential for teachers to adjust the curriculum and pedagogical approaches to serve intercultural purposes. Non-examination subjects have an important role to play in this regard also as highlighted in the discussion above.

> Schools that succeed in bringing issues related to cultural and linguistic diversity from the periphery to the centre of their mission are much more likely to prepare pupils to thrive in the inter-dependent global society within which they will live. These schools will communicate to pupils and communities that their access to more than one culture and language is a resource that can enrich the entire school. This form of communication in itself challenges the racism and xenophobia that are all too common in societies around the world
>
> (Cummins, 2001, p. 324)

Bullying and racism

The belief that each race or ethnic group possesses specific characteristics, abilities or qualities that distinguish it as inferior or superior to another such group and discrimination or antagonism towards groups based on these beliefs are features of modern and pre-modern society (Giddens,2006, pp. 482-527). Attitudes and actions of a racist nature can be subtle or overt and it can be difficult at times to distinguish them from teenage horseplay, badinage or plain but very hurtful bullying. What is noteworthy about this research is that all students reported some aspects of racism, either physical (boys) or verbal (girls). It was much more pronounced for African students than for Eastern Europeans and was more pervasive outside of school than inside school and also in the younger year groups. These findings confirm Irish and Scottish research in this area (Bryan, 2010; Curry, Gilligan, Garratt, Scholtz, 2011; Byrne *et al*, 2010; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007; MEPESS, 2005; Smyth *et al,* 2009) and warn against complacency on this issue. These three aspects of bullying and racism-age,

outside of school and the experience of African students- will be discussed below in turn as each is significant. Bullying was also commented on as a feature of school life with school policies and procedures deemed to be largely adequate but very necessary for dealing with it.

There was general agreement that experiences of bullying and racism decreased as a student progressed from Junior cycle to Senior cycle. This may reflect growing maturity, sense of belonging and a greater sense of security as students go up the school ladder. The discussion and reflection on topics such as bullying and racism in subjects such as SPHE, CSPE and Religion may also play a factor. It must also be related in relation to school policies on bullying and racism and how teachers deal with everyday incidents in their classrooms as ongoing learning. For example one teacher recounted a good strategy of tactful negotiation between an Eastern European and an African boy which involved tactical diplomacy and a reframing of the problem (p. 167). This indicated the importance of such social interactions as pedagogical encounters in the life of the school.

Racism takes many forms in this study including descriptions of intercultural racism between different minority groups. Students described how bullying and racism manifested themselves across minority groups in the school with some Eastern Europeans looking down on Gypsies, Africans and Travellers. Some Travellers also can resent newcomers and see them, as one teacher remarked, as replacing them at the bottom of the school social "pecking order" in the hegemonic sense of "learning to love our servitude" (Brookfield, 2010, 94). This highlights the complexity of minority group experiences of bullying and racism and the need for ongoing research, education and policies in this area.

All students were aware of the issues to a greater or lesser extent (variations are discussed

below).Students described racism as pervasive outside of school, with the school serving as a

kind of oasis or refuge for many students. The role of the school as a "safe haven" and

promoter of an inclusive society through its ethos, culture and programmes is an important

one. The theory that if you grow up, learn and sit beside someone from a different race and

culture and if all races and cultures are valued in the school, it is less likely that young people

will have the prejudices and misconceptions of those who grow up and are educated

separately (Allport, 1979) needs to be tested in school settings.

> Educational institutions need to proactively promote equality and actively combat
> discrimination. Promoting anti-discrimination measures will boost inclusiveness,
> while action to promote inclusion will create an environment that is hostile to
> discrimination
>
> (Lodge and Lynch, 2004, p. 106).

Robust and effective policies and procedures are required to deal with the issues of bullying

and racism (O Moore, 2010). Everyday strategies are learned in the classroom, on the

corridors and on the way to and from school. Such strategies can be modelled in class by

teachers and practiced by students for the betterment of all. School can give a good

grounding in social skills and coping strategies to deal with what one student called the "out

world" meaning outside of school world (MEPESS, 2005).

As discussed in the literature review, incidences of racism and racist attacks impact far more

on black students than on other ethnic or racial minorities (Byrne *et al*,2010; MEPESS, 2005)

and is a continued cause for concern. Incidents outside of the school are also of concern and

they impact on school life, relationships and performance. The experiences of Michael as an

"inbetweener" and mediator offer a fascinating and instructive insight into the

intersectionality and complexity of racism. Because Michael had a Dublin accent, good

knowledge of slang and street culture and because of the way he "carried himself" (his embodied *habitus*) he was able to defuse situations through tactical intervention. This is a response which is reliant on individual capacity rather than tackling the underlying intercultural issues at a societal level. It should also be noted that both Michael and Chinua (another black student) reported being attacked outside of the school setting when they reached third level education, highlighting the continued nature of such attacks. On one hand, racism was reported as decreasing from 1st year to 6th year but on the other hand both young men were attacked on the street during first year at university. The gravity of the attacks reinforced the need for intercultural anti-racist education which are located as part of a deeper societal transformation.

The interviews also revealed Polish/Black as well Traveller/Black and Polish/Romanian tensions which show further complexity. Add in white privilege "as being an invisible package of unnamed assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious" (Zinga and Gordon, 2014) and the complexity of intersectionality multiplies. While this requires analysis and action on a structural and systemic societal level, the reality of racism recorded in this research – from the student interviews and reinforced by the literature – makes a clear case for the centrality of inclusive and anti-racist programmes in schools. School managers and teachers, all too often, do not experience racism and can therefore be complacent or blind to its reality.

Relationship with teachers

The relationship between teachers and students varied considerably in this study. Some teachers and students saw themselves as collaborators and such relationships were viewed as

healthy, open and progressive (p. 149). However a number of students indicated that certain teachers should have higher expectations and one cited his Maths teacher as encouraging and expecting a good grade which he subsequently achieved (p. 151). Another student reported that his teacher pushed him to a level he never thought he could achieve (p. 150).

The care the teachers took of their students was very much in evidence and this is often a feature of DEIS schools. Students described how the teacher-pupil relationships evolved over the five years from one of authority towards greater mutual respect and autonomy. The teachers' willingness to put on extra classes was a feature of this school and much appreciated (p. 149). Students and teachers noted that a healthy relationship between students and teachers was crucial to the running of a good, effective school. Students and teachers described the high priority on pastoral care in the school and its tutor system from first to sixth year. While students are very responsive to this caring ethos and practice, some students feel that higher academic expectations should feature more in school life. For example, one of the Polish students said she would prefer more "authority" especially in Senior cycle (p. 150) but others felt that teachers did encourage them academically (p. 151). A greater diversity in the ethnic background of teachers was noted as something currently lacking, which reflects limitations in the national profile of initial teacher education and the profession generally (Drudy, 1993).However, what was perceived as essential was the "mind-set" of teachers as professionals rather than their background (p. 149). Teacher attitudes towards students was key, with an interesting observation coming from a Nigerian student who was not over-impressed by a P.E teacher from Malawi who had a rather conservative "mind-set" i.e. was a traditional authoritarian teacher.

The issue of diverse perspectives about patriarchy within cultural groups was noted as problematic for some teachers. This ranged from patriarchal assumptions including a macho culture, dominant male roles to homophobia in some cultures. A way around this was suggested by one teacher whereby two different worldviews were acknowledged but school culture must prevail in school whereas another viewpoint may prevail at home. There was a general acceptance among teachers that they had come on a professional journey and were continuing to adapt and change in the light of the students' needs. Teachers generally accepted the need for professional development and could see its benefits. This is good news for schools as "wherever there are inventive schools, committed teachers and a robust pedagogy, learning is able to thrive" (Macbeath, 2014, p. 163).

Teachers sharing responsibility with students through the prefect or mentoring systems was supported by the findings. There is a sense of shared collective responsibility across the school. The positivity and inclusivity of the end of year celebrations brought home the success of pupil-teacher relationships in a very public, communal way and celebrates the inclusive nature of the school. Relationships between students were also noted as a key way of developing learning and responsibility. Students sometimes pay more attention to what an older student says than to what a teacher might say. There is a greater sense of community especially with the older students. This can also serve as training in citizenship and civic responsibility (Jeffers, 2008).

Whereas teachers' positive views and experiences of multiculturalism and their good relationships with students are very commendable, these must be seen in the context of a DEIS school. It is evident that migrant students brought a significant increase in cultural capital (embodied and objectified) to the school and this expressed itself in higher student

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expectations and motivation. Embodied cultural capital was noticeable in many migrant students' eagerness to go to the school library and get involved in extra-curricular activities such as projects in a variety of subjects such as history, science and art. Four of the original seven interviewees had been involved in these projects. The best example of objectified cultural capital was illustrated to me by a Polish mother. While enrolling her son in the school, she politely informed me that the school caretaker had hung our copy of a Monet painting at reception upside-down. She informed me she had a copy in a book at home and had seen the original in New York some months previously. This raises the broader issue of the growing complexity of intersectionality of ethnicity and class in this DEIS context.

Many of the teachers saw migrant students as having a "potentially positive impact on the more 'deficient' working class students" (Devine, 2005, p. 61) as the newcomer students often had higher expectations than the "natives" and were consequently more motivated than their Irish peers. This creates significant inter-sectoral dynamics of ethnicity and class which must be monitored on an ongoing basis by schools and educational systems, as well as research. Schools that build trust among students, create mutual respect, and share cultural power can foster both academic achievement and minimize racial and ethnic tension (Zubia and Doll, 2002). In the case of this particular school, this was done through the pastoral care system, the prefect and mentoring programmes but also through the daily interactions of students and teachers in the classrooms, on the corridors and in the school canteen and schoolyard.

Institutional and cultural aspects are equally important. The teachers saw the need for continuous professional development in inclusive teaching methods and for adaptation of the curriculum in their own subject areas, which ties in with what the students were saying.

Teacher identity and positioning emerged as important in this research, as teachers negotiated their sense of identity as a teacher of subjects versus teacher of students. This positioning of teacher of subject/teacher of student and curriculum/curriculum methodology is further complicated by the demand for a "more academic" approach by some students. This "more academic" approach could be seen as a reproach to some teachers "hiding behind the poverty of the kids" but it more likely signals a need for the school and students to critically explore the intersections between the pastoral/academic divide. What is evident from the voices of students is the central role the teacher plays in their lives in school. The extended teacher role needs to be grounded in the pastoral but dedicated to high expectations for high academic achievement. A DEIS school has to address issues of poverty and disadvantage but not to the exclusion of the bread and butter of schooling as performance-preparing young people to realize their potential through scoring well in the State Examinations.

Role of parents

The participation of parents has to be set within the general context of the limited engagement of parents in Irish second level schooling. At a school level the two main interactions between parents and the school are at once yearly parent-teacher meetings and all parents must visit the school prior to enrolment of their child or children. In the case of DEIS schools such as this one, all parents of first year students are visited at home by the HSCL teacher and parents can be invited into the school to meet with individual year heads, teachers or Principal/Deputy Principal (Flynn, 2007; Mulkerrins, 2007). Parents may also request such meetings in any school. If a student is suspended from school, s/he may not return until a parent has attended the school with their child to discuss the matter. The only other

avenues are participation on the Parents Council or election to the school Board of Management.

Attendance at parent-teacher meetings in the case study school tends to be 30-35 per cent and migrant parents' attendance is roughly in line with this. Three particular difficulties have been identified with regard parent-teacher meetings in this research – first, that one meeting per year is hardly adequate for a meaningful discussion of pupil progress, second, that many migrant parents are on shift work and find it difficult to get time off to attend and third, many parents have difficulty with spoken English and often their children have better English than they have which posed difficulties for communications.

Social and cultural factors are also significant with parental involvement as many migrant children tend to be more independent than their Irish counterparts as they learn the ropes of a new society with its traditions, customs and educational system. Some Eastern European and African parents see teachers as autonomous professionals who have a very specific task to perform- and consequently see no role for themselves working with the teachers. However, as former school principal, I must say that I have experienced a huge number of parents both at enrolment times and in day to day activities. I have always found parents eager to engage and interested in their children's progress. There have been very few exceptions to this, except where there are pressures of such severity that the parents cannot handle.

A specific concern to the HSCL teacher is the lack of understanding by migrant parents of the Irish education system. Such basic concepts as Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate, higher, ordinary and foundation levels, the CAO points system and school rules and regulations, and their longer-term implications for students can be poorly understood. A poor

understanding of these fundamentals makes for difficulties in the promotion of parental involvement in their children's education which is echoed in other research studies (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007, p. 153; Howe and Lisi, 2014, p. 50; Walters, 2012, p. 146).

As one teacher put it "you can't build a relationship in 15 minutes" so that the whole area of a more meaningful role for parents in the school requires much work to be done. Over the years many parents were invited by the principal to serve on the Parents Council. Very few stayed beyond the first meeting due to pressures of work, language difficulties and so on but I think the greatest difficulty was in not meeting like-minded parents and feeling uneasy or like "fish out of water" as described by Bourdieu in this context. There are many issues relating to parental involvement that continue to need addressing (Little and Lyons, 2007, p. 70).

The implications of the findings on parental involvement are that there is a paucity of opportunities for meaningful dialogue, that there are social, cultural and language difficulties which make collaboration difficult and that parents can have a poor understanding of the Irish education system. However it is the school that sets the parameters and culture for parental involvement (Devine, 2011, p. 109) and there is an onus on the educational system and school to develop new ways of involving parents in their children's education (Howe and Lissi, 2014, p. 50; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007, p. 153; OECD, 2009). When opportunities are provided, there is research evidence that parents can become very actively involved (Vincent, Rollock, Ball, Gilborn, 2012, p. 351).

Students and teachers in this research were aware of the importance of having a role for parents, but they were not exactly clear what that role should be. This can partly be explained by the increased independence and self-reliance of migrant students who know the school

system a lot better than their parents who went to schools in different systems and cultures. Many Parent Associations and Parent Councils can be perceived as cliques which are not welcoming to newcomers. This calls for cultures of greater inclusion to be developed by parents committees, schools and councils. The level of English language proficiency of many migrant parents can also make it difficult for them to confidently take part in public meetings. There is also the socio-economic aspect that many migrant parents work in occupations that have anti-social hours or precarious conditions that do not allow time-off for Parent Teacher meetings. Many migrants also come from societies where the role of the teacher is seen as akin to that of a civil servant or government official and an extended teaching role is not considered appropriate. On the other hand, while Irish education policy emphasises the role of the parent as primary educator both constitutionally (Bunreacht na h-Eireann, Article 42) and legislatively (Education Act, 1998, Section 26),the reality is that parental involvement tends to be confined to annual reviews at Parent Teacher Meetings, representation on Boards of Management, voluntary Parents Associations/Councils which are often fund-raising bodies and the Home School Community Liaison service which targets those most at risk of dropping out of school (Conaty, 2002; Flanagan, 2015). Nevertheless, parental involvement has complex dynamics and huge possibilities for migrant parents and their children which should be explored in future research. Two things that struck me when listening to the stories of the students were the harmony and warmth that seemed to exist between the young people and their parents-even in the case of Michael whose parents moved to London-and the energy, independence and self-reliance of the students. These dynamics need to be at the heart of future research, policy and practice about parental involvement in education.

Socialisation and schooling

This research highlights how the socialisation that goes on in school on the corridors, in the canteen, in the youth café, on trips and excursions and in all the other extra-curricular activities contribute greatly to the social inclusion of students, their mental well-being and their preparation for adult life. It was while discussing these aspects of school life that students became most animated and often reflective on their five year school experience. The sense of freedom of expression was well captured by one student when she remarked positively on the almost "bohemian" atmosphere in the school. Three students contrasted the schools ethos with that of other schools which they found wanting in terms of petty rules, personal freedoms and a sense of welcome (p.156). However, others wanted a "more academic" approach so there was diversity in student preferences.

The issue of co-education as a natural way of learning and as preparation for adult life was mentioned but it should be noted that all of the Eastern European students came from school systems where co-education is the norm (p155).

As noted earlier, classroom discussion and active learning were seen as helpful in preparation for life after school as well as for socialising and getting to know your classmates. Communication skills were honed through classroom discussion, especially in subjects such as CSPE, SPHE, RE as well as EAL supports. These communication and social skills are vital to complement and perfect English language acquisition.

The experience of participation in the schools prefect and mentoring programmes was also cited as very beneficial. Students, especially students from minority contexts, benefit from

the sense of responsibility, trust and authority that is given to them by these programmes. They are also a preparation for citizenship and civic responsibility with older students serving as role models for younger students attending the school. It is interesting to note that the students who felt that there needed to be greater academic emphasis in the school, did not participate in the school prefect or mentoring systems (two were emphatic that they did not have the time or see the importance of such participation as they wished to concentrate on their studies for their examinations). Two others, who were involved in these programmes, felt that they gave them benefits in terms of personal development, leadership skills, self-confidence and in the longer term gave one of them an edge in gaining employment. Sport and games were also cited as presenting important opportunities for integration, socialisation and developing mutual respect. Many opportunities exist with the school such as chess, basketball, games in the PE curriculum as well as opportunities provided through the School Completion Programme such as boxing, cycling, golf and swimming. These provisions did need to consider the intercultural dynamics in their structures as illustrated by the example of the lunchtime 5-a-side soccer league whereby each team had to consist of at least three different nationalities (p.166). This innovation simultaneously diffused racism and promoted tolerance and diversity in the school.

In a school where diversity is lived as part of everyday life, where it is valued and promoted by management and teachers and where students feel safe, secure and valued, the development of tolerance, respect and responsibility is made easier as these attributes are lived out daily and not taught as discrete units of instruction (Lynch and Lodge, 2002).

A school culture that promotes social events, that provides opportunities for free expression of youth culture, that gives students a sense of responsibility and creates spaces and events

for communication and socialisation and also celebrates diversity – all this can contribute towards school inclusion and student development as literature reiterates (Cole, 2008; Murawski and Spencer, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, 2009).

Pedagogical responses and resources

This research has to be viewed within the context of its setting and timing. It reflects Irish society and education at a time of key transition as levels of immigration increased rapidly during the 1990s relative to previous low levels of immigration (CSO, 2012).The readiness of teachers, schools or the Department of Education and Science for the influx of migrant students was not much in evidence at the time of their arrival at the end of the 1990's. It was a case of "make up and catch up" for the Irish educational system which was reflected in practice at the individual school and teacher level. This is not to take away from the importance of the development of the Intercultural Guidelines (NCCA, 2006) or the Intercultural Education Strategy (DES, 2010). Resources were granted on a national level in terms of teaching hours for EAL, but individual schools and teachers were left to work things out for themselves in terms of inclusive education more widely. This research study points to some of the areas where teachers require assistance with pre-service education and continuing professional development in particular.

Given the emphasis placed by students and teachers throughout this study on active learning, there is a need for additional training in cooperative teaching methodologies, and project work and peer learning. There are great cognitive and social benefits to be derived from these methods and they contribute to a sense of inclusion and mutual respect. There is a need for sharing strategies and examples of best practice in CPD at school level and more widely.

Cultural studies exploring cultural norms and attitudes would be a useful addition to the multi-cultural educator's toolkit (Lyons and Little, 2009, pp. 64-71). Teaching and learning resources need to be made widely available but the greatest resource the teacher has are the individual students sitting at their desks in front of her/him.

Initial teacher education and continuing professional development programmes that address the issues of multicultural education are often stand-alone, discreet or optional courses and "in many teacher training programmes, multicultural education is a special course and the issues of cultural diversity are not integrated into other courses on pedagogy" (Gonsolaslves, 2008, p. 24). There needs to be a greater emphasis on multicultural education at teacher training and in-service training if teachers are to realise their potential in this area (Conaty, 2002; MEPESS, 2005; McGorman and Sugrue, 2007) and the role of the school leader/principal is crucial (Devine, 2011, p. 58).The culture and ethos of the school need to be welcoming and inclusive respecting the culture of the newcomer and having high expectations for personal, social and academic progress.

The findings from this study have shown the complex nature of inclusion and interculturalism in education. The curriculum is divided into subjects, is delivered using different methods and its content is adapted to meet the needs of the students being taught. Bullying and racism can take many forms depending on race, gender, age and *habitus*. Racism can take on Irish/non-Irish, Traveller/Settled, Polish/Romanian and many other inter-connected forms. Parental involvement varies depending on social expectations, cultural norms and language proficiency. Teachers can be a friend and guide or a formal instructor or a pastoral care tutor often inhabiting the boundaries between teacher of subject and teacher of student. For

students socialisation can take place formally in the classroom, informally on the corridors and in the canteen and accidentally in various social situations.

Integration of ideas in this research

This research has explored the daily lives of young migrants as they recalled and reflected on their experiences in a particular school at a specific point in time. They were in transition from childhood to adulthood and the school was in transition from a school dealing with students on the margins of society to one dealing with more mainstream education albeit with a rapidly changing student cohort. The young people had to deal with the normal developmental milestones of adolescence as well as settling in to a new school with a formal structure of year groups, class groups, curriculum, discipline procedures and an informal structure of friendships, extra-curricular activities, behaviour norms and varying student and teacher expectations. The study of the local dynamics at work enrich our knowledge of the experiences of young migrants and point to ways of improving their experiences of schooling. To understand these dynamics, I was greatly assisted in my reflections on practice by an eclectic mix of literature and theory. The literature helped me to compare and contrast my school both in Irish and international contexts. Conceptual frameworks such as the reflexive sociology of Bourdieu which contextualise the students and their families in the field of social relationships showing the importance of social and cultural capital or Honneth's theory of recognition which explains and reinforces practices of affirmation and esteem offer a theoretical framework which would be useful for future research in this area. From the initial exploration of this qualitative case study, such frameworks seem to offer potential to understand the complexity, intersectionality and specificity of ethnicity in the Irish educational system, culture and society of this time. Such theoretical frames also enable

analysis on the individual student or teacher level, as well as the group and systems level which acknowledges the complex interplay of these levels on each other. The qualitative nature of this case study highlights the value of locating analysis in the local context to reveal the influence of the specific logic and dynamics of each context.

More broadly, the qualitative nature of this analysis enabled me to critically examine my own assumptions and those of society and to see more clearly the processes at work in my school and community. An examination of the complexity and intersectionality of forces that affect the everyday life of the school in this study-its formal and informal programmes, its teachers and students, its structure and culture and all the relationships that interact on a daily basis-reveals a world of young people, their parents and teachers, preparing for adult life and progressing in a changing world that we, as educators, can influence and improve if we are mindful of all the forces at work in this process. This is the value of a practitioner-orientated small scale study in that it enables us to build from the bottom up taking into account our positionality, observations and critical reflections on the world as we see it. The findings and recommendations are based on empirical study which can serve to enrich, enhance and inform policy and practice at local and national level.

Summary

The focus of this thesis was on the experiences of newcomer students in an Irish second level school and their teachers' responses. The experiences captured in this research reveal the complexity of interculturalism in education and point towards ways in which intercultural education can be a worthwhile and meaningful experience for the students and their teachers. This thesis has shown that a school can change and adapt in response to population shifts but

"policy change is only as 'good' as its adaptations and interruptions in everyday schooling and society" (Kitching and Curtin, 2012, p. 30). Migrant families can bring their expectations and *habitus* to apparently hostile fields and they can enrich and transform these fields if they are met with recognition and respect and given the opportunity to engage in the social spaces available to them.

Given the context of rapid migration shifts, there were some difficulties evident, specifically with regard to the institutional level of curriculum and pedagogy, and at the inter-social level of bullying and racism and student- teacher relationships. Parental involvement was patchy but the overall assessment of their school experience by the students was good and worthwhile, especially in the area of socialisation and growing up in a multi-cultural school preparing for life in a multi-cultural society (Suarez-Orozco, 2009, p. 71).

There is scope for broadening and adapting the curriculum for interculturalism and including areas that are not currently covered. The proposed reform of the Junior Certificate gives ample scope for such adaptations. Students highlighted how it was the method of pedagogy rather than the content of the curriculum that generated deep teaching and learning for them. Active and collaborative pedagogical methods such as peer teaching, peer learning, classroom discussion, and school visitors all have a role to play in this regard and they can contribute towards a good classroom atmosphere as well as fostering social education and English language learning (Cummins, 1998).

Students and teachers alike testified to how extra-curricular activities such as sport, games, trips, clubs and the daily interaction of a diverse student population in a safe, secure, inclusive school setting play a major role in social and academic progression. Most teachers

will say that when you go on an in-service course you learn most from your peers at coffee and lunch break. It is also thus with students that they are constantly learning from each other.

Teachers benefit greatly by having open, receptive communication with their students and students benefit likewise (Lynch, 2010, p. 93). Teachers need to reflect on this relational aspect of their work as much as on the content of their programmes. CPD should focus on creating an ethos and atmosphere of tolerance, diversity and inclusion. Teacher training education should also focus on recognition, diversity and interculturalism in their own right as well as in the context of differentiation to meet the needs of all students (Nieto, 2009, p. 89).

Parental involvement is a difficult area given the social, economic, cultural and linguistic diversity involved and the forces of social reproduction. There is also the natural teenage developmental task of growing independence and teenagers in a foreign society develop coping skills and strategies that can make them quite independent of their parents. Nevertheless the importance of the home in realising educational potential must not be overlooked and new strategies need to be devised to include migrant parents more in the secondary education system (Engen, 2009, p. 253; Devine, 2011, pp. 119-129).

It would be a mistake to be overly sanguine about the experiences of migrant children in secondary school but it is important to acknowledge the active responsibility and independence of students and adaptiveness of the students and teachers in the school at the centre of this study. Adaptations can be made to curriculum, policies, procedures, teaching methods and all the extra-curricular programmes in the school context. CPD can be

developed in the light of teacher and student needs. Parents can be better provided for but the real heroes of this study are the students themselves who have shown a remarkable degree of resilience, tolerance, bravery, understanding and commitment through their five years at secondary school when we consider the road they have travelled. Using the insights from the discussion and analysis of this chapter, I draw conclusions and make recommendations in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

I set out to investigate and record the experiences of newcomer children to an Irish second level school during a time of rapid demographic, social and economic change in Irish society. The focus was on eight young people, as well as their teachers' perceptions and experiences of interculturalism during that time. Their journey almost coincided with my last five years as principal of the school in question from 2008-2013 and their journey has encouraged me to reflect on my own journey during roughly the same period. I will weave together here the main conclusions of the research and then make recommendations based on these conclusions for the improvement of intercultural education in the school which, hopefully, will have implications and applicability for other second level schools in Ireland.

As I set out on this journey a few years ago, I had little idea of the shape the research would take, the evolution of my ideas, the interesting people I would meet and the value for me both personally and professionally of the work involved. It has been both been a humbling and an affirming experience. It has been humbling to review the vast literature on the subject of intercultural education and reflect on the massive work that has been done worldwide. It has been humbling to listen to the voices of students who know their school so well and also the voices of teachers who are the practitioners on the ground. The experience has been affirming in that I feel that the school rose to the occasion and dealt with the complex challenges and ongoing change in an honest, professional and compassionate way and I was

fortunate to be the school leader during this time. The research has given me the opportunity to deeply engage and critically reflect on interculturalism during this critical time.

Scope and limitations of this study

The scope and limitations of this study must be acknowledged, as the research was carried out with the cooperation of eight students who volunteered to be interviewed by me on completion of their Leaving Certificate, as well as insights from the teachers in the school. Their experience was of one second level school with DEIS status in a rural market town. The students came from a variety of cultural backgrounds – Eastern European and African. They were speaking with their former principal. The teachers interviewed and surveyed were all from the same school and it has a 40 per cent international student population. This is a one-school insider study using narrative analysis to build a picture of intercultural education with its strengths, weaknesses and remedies for improvement.

The schools socio-economic profile is a combination of mainly traditional working class Irish students joined by a large cohort of newcomer students. Many of the newcomer students' parents had professional occupations or had trained or worked in such roles prior to migration that are not typical of Irish nationals in the school. Ten per cent of the student population is Irish traveller and about 20 per cent of the students have special educational needs. Eighty per cent of the student body qualified for Medical Cards compared with a national eligibility of 37 per cent. The school is part of the DEIS programme which is an action plan focusing on "addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities" (DES, 2005, p. 7).

This study focuses on the experiences of this single school in a rural market town in the Leinster region of Ireland which had rapid population growth as a commuter belt during this time. Newcomer families comprised a large proportion of this population influx. The children of these families needed school places and the school in this study had vacant places and a welcoming atmosphere. The school grew in numbers and became the school of choice for many (but not all) newcomer students because of its welcoming ethos and an attitude by many newcomers of safety in numbers as well as the lack of space in the other schools in the town. The school had to adapt to the changes particularly in the ELL area in the early stages. The school's experience of dealing with a previous influx of SEN students and Traveller students enabled it to be flexible and creative in dealing with the new situation.

Within the scope of the research methodology, the use of a single case study enabled an in-depth exploratory focus that raises important questions for further research. This research is conducted from an insider participant perspective which means the researcher brings a depth of knowledge and insight about the research site. However, the capacity for self-reflection about the impact of the dual positioning as researcher and participant did require considerable work, especially the impact of power dynamics of research being conducted by the former principal (Drake and Heath, 2011). This required much reflection and sensitivity on the part of the researcher and necessitated a highly nuanced approach to interviewing and analysis. The interview and narrative methods enabled a focus on stories of self-selected students to capture their recollection of schooling which is shaped by the students choosing to participate in the research. This choice of interview method depends on recall and what students decide to talk about (Reisman, 1993; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, 2010).

Narrative analysis is also shaped by its focus on story structure and this connects with the researcher's study of history and literature (with its own set of strengths and limitations) which was discussed earlier.

Formed within these limitations, I believe this study achieves what it set out to do in investigating and recording the experiences of a particular group of newcomer students from one school context. I feel that it captures the experience of change and adaptation in a school challenged by many disadvantages. I see this as a strength of this research in that it shows what can be achieved against the odds in a highly complex setting.

Practitioner knowledge, as in knowledge generated from the workplace (in this place the local specifics of one particular workplace) has a key contribution to make to educational studies. A researcher could go into any school in the country that has migrant students and s/he would meet students like Chinua, Nikolas, Magda and Maria. "The universal is the local, but with the walls taken away. Out of the particular we come on what is general" (McGahern, 2009, p. 11).

Personal reflection

As I write this I feel as if I am on a boat leaving the harbour. The buildings on shore may be getting a little indistinct but my thoughts, I hope, are getting clearer and more comprehending of the time I spent on shore and the friends I made as the sun begins to rise and illuminate the whole scene. I am putting out to sea in the sense that Louis Mac Neice wrote about. There is much work to be done, there are many challenges to be met, there are hills to climb but education provides a road map with so many energetic reflective teachers and honest and

open young people willing to take up the challenges and work towards better schools and a better society. Back to Freire and his insistence that there can be no teaching without learning and learning without teaching, I now more fully comprehend what it is to be a lifelong learner.

New learning for me involved the realization of the complexity of interculturalism. Initially when enrolling new newcomer students, I saw them as just new students to add to the school register and get on with the business of teaching and learning. I have come to understand the complex dynamics that they have brought to the school. They have changed the way I look at school by opening up endless avenues for curriculum development, school policies and lived practices. This research has enabled me to think globally while acting locally. It has enabled me to empathise with the everyday life of the student and seek to make it a better one. It has enabled me to reflect critically on the role of the principal and the power dynamics that go with the role. It has helped me think more critically about the inequalities in Irish society and especially our education system. I have a better understanding of the routes that migrant families take to find a school for their children and the underlying forces at work in signposting these routes. I comprehend the importance of respect and recognition to enable these students to realise their potential.

I am currently working part-time as a placement tutor with trainee teachers and as an educational advisor. The insights from this research will enhance my approach to teaching. I will be mindful of the complexity of schooling and the opportunities education offers to both learners and teachers. I hope to be a better listener and to have greater empathy for the students and teachers that I encounter.

I hope to return to the school at the centre of this study and conduct a workshop with the staff where I will give an account of the research, affirming the good practices where observed, alerting staff to shortcomings that I have identified and exploring the enormous potential that newcomer students bring to the classroom and school. I hope to invite the student group to an informal meeting to thank them for their contributions and to report back the research findings and have a general discussion on where they are now and in what direction they are going.

Conclusions

The following are the main conclusions reached by reflection and analysis of the personal journey I have made and the journeys of the eight young people interviewed. These have been researched by means of personal interviews with the young people, teacher questionnaires and select teacher and management interviews and in light of the literature around intercultural education and inclusive schools throughout this thesis.

The earlier chapters of this thesis have mapped how this school has grown from a relatively mono-cultural institution to a multicultural Tower of Babel in a relatively short period of time. Its experience needs to be shared with others in education for learning, especially in terms of what it reveals about the complexity, local logics and intersectionality of interculturalism. This experience includes reception of newcomer students, their induction into the school, how it deals with resources and timetabling, relationships, pedagogical and curriculum issues, and the school's overall inclusive ethos.

The school has grown, developed and adapted to the influx of migrant children and its practices need to be shared as well as its shortcomings. These include institutional practices such as managing the range of languages, cultures and religions that are in the school, recognising and celebrating diversity in everyday life, representing diversity through art works on public display throughout the school building, promoting responsibility and inclusion through the prefect and mentoring systems and above all treating all with dignity and respect, as well as a host of very influential social and cultural informal practices expressed through the very mature and thoughtful reflections of students. When these practices are recognised and promoted at every level of school life, interculturalism can thrive.

Shortcomings highlighted by this research include different perceptions of the emphasis on inclusion sometimes at the expense of academic excellence (in some students' eyes), differing subject and pedagogical experiences (especially in terms of subject status), a Eurocentric curriculum and sometimes a "heroes and holidays" approach to celebrating diversity. Relationships issues were also of central importance, with experiences of bullying and racism cited by many students. This varied depending on factors such as age and gender marking key shifts in students' experience, with hegemonic masculinity and physical manifestations more evident in the younger age groups and males, while verbal bullying was mentioned more by females.

DEIS status has been maintained by the school which continues to have a disproportionate number of disadvantaged students. The presence of migrant students in this student population has enhanced the school and encouraged diversity offering opportunities for developing mutual respect and understanding. Their presence has also raised academic

standards and career expectations. There are openings for research by students and teachers on all aspects of intercultural experiences in education and social life. This is very fertile ground for action research, participative teaching and learning by researchers, teachers and students.

The formal curriculum has been implemented in the school with varying degrees of adaptation. As the findings demonstrated, the differences in perceived status and recognition of various subjects (especially examination and non-examination subjects) has a key impact in how students and teachers approached different subjects. Some subjects such as CSPE, Religious Education, SPHE and Physical Education were perceived as more open to intercultural learning, discussion and methodologies and, where they were non-examination subjects, they were often perceived as having a lower status and recognition (Jeffers, 2008). There is much scope for further adaptation and the provision of short courses in line with proposed Junior Certificate reforms offering particular scope for development. These could be in social studies on a range of themes such as migration, Ireland's diaspora, social justice, globalisation and also the study of different languages and cultures.

Students also acknowledged the possibilities of including intercultural learning in other examination subjects (such as geography, history, English, science) if more active pedagogies are used. There was a significant range of responses from students with different preferences for various learning styles and teaching methods, from more academic orientation to preferences for group, active, peer and discussion based approaches. This diversity of preferences from students and teachers needs to be considered in developing appropriate diverse curriculum and pedagogies (Gleeson, 2010)

Students described their preference for varied teaching methodologies including group work approaches such as peer teaching, peer learning, classroom discussion and project work. Such methodologies require in-service training for many teachers and bring opportunities for professional development and make for more interesting classrooms. They also afford opportunities for students' personal and social development as the students' narratives in the findings chapter expresses very powerfully. The school can act as a social model of good practice although the outside world may not replicate such practice.

One of the key issues that emerged from students' narratives in terms of relationships was the issue of bullying and racism. These were prevalent in Irish society especially towards groups who were perceived as more visible such as black Africans. Students spoke about the formal and informal aspects of bullying and racism. Formal aspects can and are addressed by the school in its practices and policies at an institutional and cultural level. However, this study also reveals a complex picture of students' experiences of bullying and racism which varied depending on age (more prevalent prior to junior certificate level and lessening throughout the school cycle as students got older and more mature) and gender (experienced more by male students as an aspect of hegemonic masculinity in its physical form and less so by female students and only through verbal forms of bullying). These findings reflect the general picture emerging from literature on bullying and racism, but with the added complexity of the intersectionality of ethnicity, age and gender. This is an important finding for schools to consider in their work with young people and will be reflected in the recommendations from this study.

The school can be a haven of tolerance, diversity, recognition and mutual respect and can model good practice on an institutional level. This requires school management and teachers

to model good practice and to bring racism and bullying to the centre of school life rather than be at the periphery. This means that racism and bullying feature as topics in the English and Mathematics class as much as in SPHE and Religious Education, and the informal or social life of the school.

Teachers are adaptable and eager to be involved in building good relationships and being critically reflective practitioners. However, they need space and time to discuss, compare, contrast and reflect on their experiences. The school leader has a role in facilitating and leading this process which is building a collaborative, cooperative, professional learning organisation.

The involvement of parents has been limited due to social, economic, cultural and linguistic factors. New ways need to be found to include parents of migrant children in the education system. Greater involvement of local ethnic organisations and religious groups can be helpful in this regard. Mc Gorman and Sugrue (2007, p. 151) recommended a Cultural Liaison Officer where there is no Home School Community Liaison teacher. This proposal is worth examining in its own right as I feel that the Home School Community Liaison teacher has more than enough responsibility in dealing with marginalised children and their families.

There are great civic, social and educational benefits to be derived from a well run, inclusive, multicultural school. Migrant children can connect with their community and society, they become aware of the culture and *mores* of the host society and through educational achievement can play a significant part in the future development of this society. Irish children in turn can grow in understanding, empathy and cooperation with newcomer children. As we commemorate the centenary of 1916 there has been much talk of nation

building and what it means to be Irish. "The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities … cherishing all the children of the nation equally" (Proclamation of the Republic of Ireland, 1916). It is my contention that a commitment to intercultural education can focus attention on the ideals of 1916 and contribute towards building a more inclusive, progressive, civil society enriched by the presence of newcomer students and enhanced by intercultural school practice.

The civic, social and educational benefits referred to above accrue during attendance at lessons, study of the curriculum but especially during a vast array of extra-curricular activities both formal and informal. The formal include activities such as games, public speaking, prefect and mentoring systems and programmes run by the School Completion Programme. The informal include day to day interaction on the corridors, in the canteen and library and group discussions in, before or after class. In many ways the school is a microcosm of society and can work as an incubator of tolerance, respect and understanding for tomorrow's citizens. The shadow of Dewey's education not as preparation for life but as life itself rings true.

As young people progress through school, the school needs to be aware of their differing needs at differing ages. The journey from 1st year to 6th year is one of relative dependence towards independence and the school needs to reflect this in its curriculum, its programmes and its ethos. The intersection of gender, ethnicity and age necessitates an awareness by school management and teachers as they deliver the school programmes over the five years of second level school.

All of the foregoing need to be led and coordinated by a senior management team that has the vision and commitment to ensure the delivery of an inclusive, respectful, responsive,

dynamic, happy school. Ideas into action, theory into practice are essential if intercultural education is to work well. We need principals and teachers who are reflective practitioners willing for the "long haul" of school improvement and social progress, as well as a student population and wider community open to learning and respectful of diversity.

Recommendations

In the light of the above conclusions, I now make the following recommendations for improvement in the school which may also be of use to other schools wishing to engage with interculturalism and improve the quality of their educational provision.

The school should celebrate its success, naming and making visible the diversity of its intercultural profile and achievements. Recognition of diversity is core to the experiences and values of the school. This can be done on the school website, through local and national media and the school might consider rebranding itself as an intercultural/inclusive school. This can be reflected by amending the school mission statement to include the international dimension and on school stationery and logos. The school might also consider exchange programmes or more formal linkages or 'twinnings' with schools and communities in Eastern Europe and Africa. Reflecting student family backgrounds, Poland, Lithuania and Nigeria would be obvious places to start.

A small international intercultural study centre should be established within the school under a steering group comprised of the principal/deputy principal, the EAL teacher, the HSCL teacher, the school librarian and other teachers committed to intercultural education and inclusive schooling. The study centre should be in a prominent location emphasising its

centrality to school ethos and mission. Parental and community involvement in this initiative

would also be very fruitful as also would the contributions of students and former students.

This study centre could serve as a resource centre for good practice, a catalyst for innovative

programmes and should hold regular meetings to formulate policy and practice in the school.

Working with the DES PDST team, the study centre could disseminate information and good

practice through CPD via the education centre network[15] and through professional subject

associations and other professional groups. This study centre could also provide a

translation, learning and support service for the school and wider community.

The targets set for the school under DEIS planning regarding attendance, retention,

examination attainment, progression to third level, involvement of parents and the

community should be revisited and updated annually and presented to the Board of

Management as part of the School Plan. These targets should also be evaluated using the

school self-evaluation process. Parallel to this could be the School Intercultural Education

Plan with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed objectives that are regularly

evaluated and feed back into the School Plan. These objectives can be agreed through

consultation with the Student Council, Parents' Council, teaching and other staff and

formulated by the study centre mentioned above

All subject departments should appraise their programmes and seek to include an intercultural

dimension. Each department plan should have a section on intercultural education detailing

content and teaching methodology for each year group that acknowledges the different needs

of students of various ages and maturity. The status and recognition of subjects by students,

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[15] Education Centres are defined as "a place in which services are provided for schools, teachers, parents, boards and other relevant persons which support them in carrying out their functions in respect of the provision of education which is recognised for that purpose by the Minister" – Education Act, 1998. There are 21 full-time centres located strategically around Ireland and their umbrella body is ATECI – www.ateci.ie

teachers and general public also needs to be acknowledged in these programme appraisals, as certain subjects were perceived as more or less open to intercultural education.

Short courses can be introduced in junior cycle on aspects of migration, the story of Irish emigration, the American civil rights movement, Nelson Mandela, the Cold War, Polish films, African customs and so on. The list is endless and will be determined by student interests, teacher knowledge and commitment, local resources and CPD courses.

CPD needs to be provided in the areas of cultural studies, teaching methods and strategies (peer teaching, peer learning, group discussion, differentiation), ELL and using resources in the intercultural classroom. Peer teaching occurs when the student takes the lead role in instruction on a topic or subject area. Peer learning occurs where students working in groups explain to each other what is being taught. Group discussion is an exchange of views by students on a given topic usually controlled by the teacher. Differentiation means adapting the subject being taught to meet the needs of each individual in the class and can involve a range of teaching resources such as work sheets, tasks, projects tailored to meet the need of each student rather than teaching collectively. Pre-service teacher training should include modules on the above topics as well as a general understanding of interculturalism and the inclusive school. The best providers of these short CPD courses would be practicing teachers in the field. Teacher training providers need to include intercultural education as part of the recruitment and training for future teachers.

Teachers should be encouraged to be critically reflective practitioners by partaking in study groups, joining subject associations, pursuing post-graduate diplomas and degrees and bringing the fruits of their research back to the classroom and their school colleagues.

Teachers should be encouraged to carry out this research collectively – with other researchers, with school colleagues and students as practitioners rather than individually as it then stands a better chance of implementation. Individual research studies are very worthwhile in themselves but tend to stay on the shelf after completion whereas collective, collaborative studies are more likely to enter into school practice.

Racism is best addressed through providing a healthy, inclusive school environment through a well-planned formal and informal curriculum and a clear focus on appropriate relationships. Teachers are role models for their students and older students are role models for younger ones. Inclusive activities and games should be a feature of school life and the prefect, mentoring and buddy programmes all help to foster an inclusive environment. Existing artwork on display in the school could be expanded and developed involving students, teachers and parents in producing reflective pieces in prominent positions around the school. Teachers need to be aware of the complexities and intersectionality of age, ethnicity and gender and also be aware of white privilege. A robust and well understood bullying and racism policy should complement this on an institutional level. Greater understanding and attention to the informal and social aspects of relationships need to be encouraged amongst all in the school community to ensure that respect and recognition of all ethnicities is appreciated (as is discussed below).

Parents need to be encouraged to get more involved in their children's education. A leaflet outlining the Irish education system and emphasising the role and rights of parents should be part of every child's induction package in the various languages in use in the school. Parent-teacher meetings could be made less formal by having parent and child attend them together and they should be held a number of times during the school year instead of just once.

Parents clubs, activity groups and the study centre could be set up as part of a community education programme. School news should be included in local newsletters, leaflets, pamphlets distributed among migrant families at ethnic shops, clubs and religious meetings. Cultural liaison should be part of the duties of post of responsibility holders as such posts are reviewed and restructured in the light of school needs.

There is a role for public representatives to play through the formal curriculum spaces such as the CSPE programme and through involvement in various celebrations such as multicultural week, end of year graduation ceremonies, prize-givings and other school related events such as the proposed study centre. Migrant students need to connect not just with their peers and teachers but with the wider society where they may become engaged, active citizens. The role of the student council needs to be examined as it has great potential for representing student views and training the student body in active citizenship, as well as greater involvement of students and former students in decision-making bodies and other activities regarding the school.

As much attention needs to be paid to the informal curriculum or extra-curricular activities. More resources and energy go into planning the timetable than in planning for extra-curricular activities which tend to occur in an *ad hoc* fashion. Plans should be made at the start of the school year for school trips, tours, guest speakers, sports, games, clubs and other activities. Places should be made available for meetings, study groups, social groups, and clubs to ensure that the activities occur. The School Completion Programme has the flexibility and inter-agency contacts to assist in this regard and its involvement supports the whole-school inclusion aspect of its work.

The Board of Management and the trustees of the school have a role to play in formulating policies and procedures to ensure equity, transparency and accountability in an inclusive, intercultural school setting. Senior management needs to take ownership of and lead the implementation of the intercultural inclusivity plan to ensure its implementation, evaluation and practice as part of school life. The principal should meet with the Leaving Certificate class individually at the end of each school year and discuss with the students their experiences in the school. Before or after the June examinations would seem to be the best time to do this. The feedback from these meetings would greatly enhance School Development Planning and influence future directions for the school. I regret that I did not do this formally in the past as this exercise through this research study has enthralled and energised me and made me realise "what's worth fighting for in education".

This study has shown how one school managed the influx of migrant students over a five year period of intense population shifts and what some of these students and teachers thought of their experience. It challenges both society and individual schools to rethink their policies and practice in dealing with an intercultural school population.

Broader questions about population density and diversity are raised by this study which are pertinent for future research and policy attention. Even if the outcomes are generally positive, is it appropriate for the majority of migrant students in a town to attend a DEIS school? Should these schools have such high concentrations of students with special educational needs and students from the travelling community? What awareness is there in Irish society that such stratification is occurring? Is this another case of the blind eye being turned on uncomfortable truths? What is the appropriate response for the Department of Education and Skills and for the politicians to whom the department is accountable? There

needs to be a national conversation that goes beyond the current preoccupation with school patronage and ownership (necessary though this subject is) towards a debate or roundtable discussion on diversity, interculturalism, recognition, curriculum and pedagogical relevance and the role of the school in society. Otherwise this report will just gather dust on a library shelf like so many other reports.

At the school level there is a need for teachers and managers to critically reflect on the challenges posed by an intercultural society. There is a need to evaluate and plan the formal and informal curriculum of the school, to build policies and procedures related to bullying and racism, to create a better space for parental involvement, to provide for the professional development of teachers and to develop policies and practice that meet student needs and address societal issues.

Further research

These conclusions and recommendations resulted from an insider study of one school as it rose to the challenge of integrating a diverse 40 per cent migrant population into its school culture and environment. The students who were interviewed self-selected by volunteering to be interviewed. It would enhance the research further if the voices of other student groups could be heard, such as Irish national students, disaffected students and also the voices of black African females and Traveller students. During the course of this research I refrained from probing the issue of social class, parental occupation and education levels in order not to appear intrusive which could have affected the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. However, these aspects of migration are worthy of studies in their own right. Likewise research on the experiences of other student and staff groups in the school and their

reflections about their own school experiences and their perceptions of interculturalism in the school would also be insightful. Teachers in the school are in a very strategic position to carry out this and other research. A combination of insider/outsider research would broaden and deepen our understandings of the many issues raised by this research (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 223).This research would benefit from an intersectional methodology (Hancock, 2007, p. 74).

It would also be worthwhile to revisit as many of the eight students as possible in five to seven years time. They would then be a greater distance from school, would have experience of third level and the world of work.   It would be interesting to see if their views had altered over the years and to see how well they had settled in to Irish society.

As Irish society and education continue to evolve and adapt to the needs of its changing population, broader studies of the implications for the education system and culture, for educational policy and for Irish society and communities more widely needs to be conducted.

A final thought

Globalisation, schooling and racism are not going to go away anytime soon. In fact the challenges of a multicultural society are likely to continue and the role of the school in socialising, integrating, educating young people will remain a very important task. The more we can learn from our young people and teachers, the better we can apply that knowledge for improving school and society. One astute commentator has said that "the most powerful lessons we learn at school are not through what is taught but through the 'hidden' curriculum – the lessons we learn about conformity, the nature of authority – of knowledge and human relationships . . . good teaching not only models relationships and honours the authority of children but also makes connections with, and builds on, prior experience" (Macbeath, 2014, p. 190). I hope that this study has honoured the young people involved and that the experiences of the students, teachers and researcher will help build better schools and a better society.

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