

CRITICAL RESEARCHERS 'OF AND FOR OUR TIMES': EXPLORING STUDENT TEACHERS' USE OF CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION FRAMEWORKS IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH PAPERS (PRPs)

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Abstract: This article examines some of the complex, transformative features of student teachers' learning as they grapple with key critical multicultural and Development Education (DE) concepts. Through a series of scaffolded workshops - designed to support research with a strong social and cultural inclusion purpose - the article investigates how six post-primary student teachers initially experience new critical research practices and identities. The article begins with a brief description of Ireland's 'new' multicultural context and details the overarching theoretical perspective of this study. It outlines some key insights and challenges from extant research studies in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland and briefly details the research methodology employed in this small-scale research project. Drawing on student teachers' workshop debates, informal and focus group conversations, Professional Research Papers (PRPs) and later online survey comments, we analyse key moments in their 'becoming' critical researchers *of and for our times*. We conclude that this journey significantly matters for both the student teacher and her/his young learners; but that it remains a journey - one still in the making and far from certain. The foundational work of 'overcoming' challenges for critical research in ITE is likewise shown to be far from certain. Yet we hope to demonstrate how critical research conducted on the critical work of student teachers can cultivate more understanding of, and improvements in, the nature of teacher education provision.

Key Words: Critical Multicultural Education (CME); Development Education (DE); Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland; Student

teachers' Professional Research Papers (PRPs); Critical research 'of and for our times'.

Introduction

This article is based on a small-scale student teacher-focused research project which was carried out during the 2016-17 academic year at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland. The students were in the second and final year of their Professional Master of Education (PME) programme; a university postgraduate course which eventually leads to a post-primary teaching qualification. As part of their study and towards the latter end of their second year, PME students must undertake school-based research and write up a Professional Research Paper (PRP). This article focuses on such small research projects/interventions which they carry out in their school-placement classrooms. Along with other teacher education institutions across Ireland, the School of Education in UCC successfully applied for and received funding from the Ubuntu Network to undertake a range of projects that would support student teachers' commitment to education for social justice, equality and sustainability. Funded by Irish Aid, the primary purpose of the Ubuntu Network is to actively support the integration of Development Education (DE) into post-primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland. Specifically, and in close collaboration with the network, we in UCC have been able to advance the focus on Development Education and Critical Multicultural Education (CME) within core student-teacher modules, as well as offer more in-depth specialised support to smaller numbers of students who wish to avail of it for their research and teaching practices.

The research project outlined here highlights some complex, transformative features of student teachers' learning as they seek - through their own research work - to self-develop as more caring, conscientious and critical practitioners. We hope to show that critical research 'of and for our times' significantly matters for both the student teacher and her/his young learners. And we hope to demonstrate how research conducted on the critical (Development Education) work of

student teachers can cultivate more understanding of, and improvements in, the nature of teacher education provision.

This article is centred on year three of our 'Id Est' project (Integrating Development Education into Student Teacher Practice). During this third phase, we wanted to support students who wished to integrate DE and CME frameworks into their final research papers and, at the same time, carry out meaningful research on their experiences of this kind of work. We invited all 120 PME (year two) students to participate in five workshops 'outside' of their normal scheduled programme. Seven students attended the first session and six fully engaged thereafter. This article traces these six students' qualitative learning journeys in constructing their PRPs. The workshops - designed to support research with a strong social and cultural inclusion purpose - were audio recorded and our numerous conversations with student teachers then and throughout the research process form the primary data set within this article. The empirical findings presented, alongside related conceptual insights, highlight how central the nurturing of critical researchers ('of and for our times') is to both Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and wider society.

The 'new' multicultural context in Ireland

Many studies and scholarly articles about multicultural education in Ireland begin with the customary explanation of the country's most recent transformation from a traditional homogenous society or a country of emigrants, to a country of immigrants (Devine, 2005; Parker-Jenkins and Masterson, 2013). From the mid-1990s there was a dramatic increase in asylum-seeker numbers in Ireland and non-European Union (EU) migrant worker flows reached record heights in 2002-2004. EU enlargement brought significant immigration from Eastern and Central Europe from 2004 to 2007 (Migration Policy Institute, 2009). Presently, net immigration is less but still significant. According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO, 2016), 'the number of immigrants to Ireland in the year to April 2016 is estimated to have increased by almost 15 per cent - from

69,300 to 79,300 persons'. One in 12 people in Ireland was born outside of the country (CSO, 2016). The highest numbers of non-Irish nationalities in Ireland include Polish, British, Lithuanian, Latvian and Nigerian citizens. And while the largest ethnic or cultural background group in 2016 was 'White Irish' (making up 82.2% of usual residents), this was followed by 'Any other White background' (9.5%), non-Chinese Asian (1.7%) and 'Other including mixed background' (1.5% of usual residents). 'Irish Travellers' made up 0.7% of the population, while 'Chinese' made up 0.4% of usual residents in 2016 (ibid.).

The increase in migrant numbers is of course significant and it is important that initial teacher education should reflect and respond to these demographic changes. However, we must be careful not to frame multicultural education only in terms of the needs of a 'new' demographic reality. Indeed, many schools in Ireland, particularly those outside of large urban areas, are still, largely, ethnically homogenous. CME is equally, if not more, important for those 'mainstream' school populations. Also, as McQuaid (2009: 70) has noted, discourse such as 'rapidly changing' and 'newcomers to our shores' can accentuate the notion of the 'other', the 'foreign' and these discursive 'links with power relations' strongly imply that 'they' are coming 'to us' - as 'the other'. Those who aspire to become critical educators, we argue here, need to be supported in cultivating their critical/cultural literacy around such multicultural issues. Student teachers also have a responsibility to cultivate their own critical/cultural literacy and support those in their charge to directly challenge populist sentiment, including 'us and them' polarities. This is particularly important in the context of overt (e.g. an increase in support for far-right movements and the US presidential campaign of populist nationalist Donald Trump in 2016) and more 'veiled' (e.g. the political campaigns behind 'Brexit' and the French presidential candidacy of Front National's Marine Le Pen) attacks on migrant populations. Finally, we argue that student teachers and their pupils have the right to be exposed to an education that provides them with the sensibilities, skills, values and

knowledge that they need to help co-create a more humane, inclusive and rights-driven society – both at local *and* global levels. Such exposure to Development Education at the initial teacher-training stage can facilitate more effective, theory-practice and research-based learning about the ‘new’ realities of a multicultural society. This modest research study hopes to show how such understandings can result in enhanced learning processes and outcomes for both student teachers and their pupils. While this plays out more often in the *small spaces of education* (most directly in the classroom and with student teachers in university tutorials/workshops), such Development Education work crucially helps to sustain the well-being of our wider schooling system and society.

Overarching Theoretical Framework: Critical Multicultural Education meets Development Education

The overarching theoretical framework for this research study forms from the meeting place(s) of Critical Multicultural Education (CME) and Development Education (DE). Interwoven with critical pedagogy (e.g. Freire, 1996) and global education (e.g. Andreotti, 2011), both fields offer us the personal/professional stimulus for, and commitment to, this kind of work. Within the specific context of teacher education, we draw on the broader critical traditions of education (e.g. McLaren and Kincheloe, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2009; bell hooks, 2014). This reminds and guides us to teach *with* all students; to become critical thinkers and social reformers who are committed to the redistribution of power and other resources amongst diverse groups in society (Grant and Sleeter, 2007).

Critical Multicultural Education

The term ‘intercultural education’ is favoured in Irish policy discourse, appearing significantly both in the NCCA’s (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment’s) guidelines on *Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School* (2006) and the Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Integration’s *Intercultural Education Strategy* (2010). There are welcome references here to the need to value

diversity and develop equality policies, anti-racism and human rights education; especially the need to respect and accommodate cultural differences whilst seeking greater levels of social inclusion and integration. But a more 'critical multicultural education' reading raises some important, and unresolved, points of analysis. Lentin and McVeigh (2002) (quoted in Ging and Malcolm, 2004: 126) for example, contend that both 'intercultural' and/or 'multicultural' approaches in Ireland (the terms appear to be used interchangeably) can best be understood as a set of political policy responses to cultural or ethnic diversity that are primarily seen as 'problems'/'challenges'. Policy-makers tend, they add, to substantially ignore the question of power relations. Thus, policies stem from a 'politics of recognition' of cultural difference, rather than a 'politics of interrogation' (ibid) or significantly, we would add, a 'politics of redistribution'. Dymrna Devine (2005) raises key critical points for the schooling system and teachers in particular. She argues that the Irish state plays a key role, through its immigration and educational policies, in 'framing teacher perception of and practice with migrant children in schools' (Devine, 2005: 56). These policies can reinforce stereotypes which in turn tend to reduce and simplify the 'other' and obviate against interrogating schools as complex and dynamic arenas where relationships and identities are continually formed (ibid: 52).

In essence, a *critical multicultural approach to education* values education as a human right; it tasks us with knowing ourselves and others (Kitching et al., 2015) in order to nurture our co-relations as global citizens (Bennett, 1990; Gay, 1994). Thus, Rios and Markus (2011: 1) describe 'human rights' as 'the right to learn about oneself, to learn about others, and to learn citizenship skills associated with a deep democracy in a global age'. There is no common definition that can be applied to the term CME and, as Brandt and McBrien (1997: 13) point out, seminal writers who have influenced this field include: Paulo Freire (1996) who refers to 'critical pedagogy'; Henry Giroux (1994) who discusses 'insurgent multiculturalism'; Peter McLaren (1994) who talks about

‘critical and resistance multiculturalism’ or ‘revolutionary multiculturalism’; Donalddo Macedo (1994) who speaks of ‘liberatory pedagogy’; and bell hooks (1994) who discusses the idea of ‘engaged’ or ‘transgressive pedagogy’. They all, however, stem from and represent a common set of issues and conditions and *together* they provide a body of knowledge that characterises critical education (Brandt and McBrien, 1997: 14). These approaches have much in common with Development Education.

Development Education

Like CME, DE acknowledges problems such as social injustice, racism, power imbalances and exclusionary structural and ideological patterns within society. It situates the deeply embedded roots of racism, discrimination, violence and disempowerment within historical, politico-economy and social constructs, thus challenging - as Marx had fore fronted - the assumption that such realities are inevitable, avoidable or easily dissolvable (Arendt, 1963/2006).

Like CME, DE adopts a critical pedagogical approach that seeks to empower learners to challenge their own assumptions and come to understand ‘glocal’ issues from diverse perspectives. Kathryn Sorrells’ (2012) work, for example, echoes Paulo Freire’s emphasis on the learners’ capacity to think critically about their personal lives and circumstances. This enables them to make connections between issues which affect their own lives and the wider social context in which they live. This DE approach is focused on learning that is open and participatory, but it is also deeply political as it incorporates a strong recognition of power inequities and engages with ‘live’ civic concerns. It also requires learners and teachers to actively collaborate in the learning process; to engage in learning ‘of and for our times’. Ajay Kumar (2008), Associate Professor of Development Education at Jawaharlal Nehru University in India, asserts that such approaches to DE must be concerned with:

“...how learning, knowledge and education can be used to assist individuals and groups to overcome educational disadvantage, combat social exclusion and discrimination, and challenge economic and political inequalities – with a view to securing their own emancipation and promoting progressive social change” (Kumar, 2008: 41).

Kumar (2008) advocates DE as a form of emancipatory and dialogical learning based on ‘critical humanist pedagogy’. Again building on Freire, learners collaboratively pose problems, enquire and seek solutions that matter to them now and into the future. And allied to this critical pedagogy are deeply rooted (‘past’) cultural traditions, specifically Gandhian educational ideals that aim to liberate us from servitude and instil mutual respect and trust (ibid).

DE practices have consistently emphasised the importance of promoting the voices of the oppressed and enabling those most directly affected by international development policies to be heard and understood (Andreotti, 2006). Central to this post-colonial approach is a recognition of the role that power and ideology plays in determining what and how education is delivered; how knowledge is constructed and interpreted; the importance of understanding dominant and subordinate cultures and of critically examining the root causes of global social issues (Giroux, 1994; McLaren, 1994; Andreotti, 2006). Post-colonial theory, in particular, questions Euro-centrism, ‘charity’ and ‘benevolence’ and it questions group identity, representation and belonging (for example, the recent march of ‘nationalism’). It searches for ‘a new globalism’ that has an ethical relationship to ‘difference’, and that does not reproduce the universalistic and oppressive claims of cultural superiority (Andreotti, 2006). Skinner et al. encapsulate DE as follows:

“Development Education can be considered a ‘pedagogy of global justice’, as its questioning and critically reflective nature inevitably raises a desire amongst learners to bring about

positive social change. Development Education's critical pedagogical perspective empowers learners to further economic, political and social change, and therefore could make a valuable contribution to the global drive to secure quality education for all" (2013: 17).

CME and DE in Initial Teacher Education: Some insights and challenges

The overarching theoretical framework for this research study is therefore formed from the meeting place(s) of both Critical Multicultural Education (CME) and Development Education (DE). Both theoretical perspectives can inform new schooling practices and provide teachers and students with the necessary cultural skills, knowledge and attitudes to co-develop as caring, conscientious and critical learners in society. While *all* teachers need support in engaging with a diverse pupil cohort, it is particularly important to nurture such cultural skills, knowledge and attitudes in ITE.

Aisling Leavy's (2005) research with student-teachers - 286 primary school teachers' experiences of working with people from diverse backgrounds - is a serious case in point. Leavy (2005: 172) found that there is a 'concerning lack of familiarity with other cultures' and that this poses 'a significant challenge to educators whose task is the preparation of teachers to teach a diverse student population'. She calls for the creation of new pathways into the teaching profession for people from diverse backgrounds. Indeed, in April 2017, the DES did initiate a plan for widening access to teacher education centring its focus on groups from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students with a disability, and members of the Traveller community. Crucially, the plan does not specifically mention the inclusion of non-Irish national student teacher populations. Leavy (2005) also called for increased opportunities for trainee teachers to learn more about and practise multicultural forms of education. While all ITE programmes include a multicultural modular

element to the curriculum, CME/DE has yet to be fully integrated into the mission and cultural practices of various Schools of Education (Ubuntu's work seeks to redress this situation). Leavy (2005: 174) concludes by advocating a real commitment to diversity; one that permeates the entire education system. Thus, those in ITE (teachers and students) are exhorted to engage with their own attitudes to diversity and come up with innovative ways to overcome the under-representation of diversity at both faculty and school levels.

There are similar findings in Hagan and McGlynn's (2004) examination of the effectiveness of ITE (in one university in Northern Ireland) in preparing students for teaching in an increasingly diverse society. Again it was shown that student teachers come from similar sociocultural and class backgrounds; that they have few prior experiences of diverse cultural and social contexts. Although student teachers viewed the accommodation of diversity as an important pedagogical issue, only a limited number felt comfortable with (and prepared for) dealing with diversity in the classroom (Hagan and McGlynn, 2004: 243). This finding chimes with the LETS (Learning to Teach in Secondary School) Study in University College Cork (Conway et al, 2011). Inclusion – be it cultural and/or social – was often seen by beginning teachers as separate from the immediate priorities and exigencies of the job. Student teachers expressed a genuine care ethic for 'others', but their inclusive practices were often framed in terms of 'managing' diversity and 'coping' with its challenges. Generally, inclusive practices were 'methodologically weak' and most student teachers appeared to hold the view that such work was best met by more advanced/experienced teachers. A number of student teachers indicated that they did *hope* to become 'that' advanced/experienced practitioner, thus highlighting the importance in ITE of fostering evolving notions of teacher identity. LETS (2011) clearly demonstrates that 'cultural literacy' is a key area of personal/professional competence, but that specific skills/knowledge/attitudes need to be constantly nurtured in pursuit of this proficiency.

Hagan and McGlynn's (2004: 249) study concludes that there is an onus upon ITE to promote 'a greater understanding of the interconnectedness between the personal and professional role of the teacher, educational policy and societal transformation'. Schools, Dympna Devine adds, are

"embedded in this social context and are often positioned at the coalface of dealing with the shifting realities of life. Teachers as a group are not immune to this social change, and bring to their work a series of discourses on ethnicity, immigration and identity that both reflect and are influenced by the norms and values prevalent in society at large" (Devine, 2005: 52).

The educational contexts, both local and national, within which these teachers work, are, Devine claims, 'also important as they marry national policy with local logics in the implementation of the curriculum in school' (ibid). However, policy implementation ultimately depends on teachers having the necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills to do justice to the policies, and to children's diverse potential and needs. This requires an approach to professional development that promotes awareness of equality of opportunity *and* conditions and an awareness of the latest policy developments and legal obligations (Lynch and Lodge, 2002; 2004).

Finally, we wish to highlight a recent study conducted by Fiona Baily, Joanne O'Flaherty and Deirdre Hogan (2017) into student teacher engagement with DE interventions across PME programmes in eight different Irish Higher Education Institutions. From questionnaire surveys administered to 536 student teachers pre- and post-DE interventions, and from six focus group discussions with 26 student teacher representatives, the following research findings (inter alia) emerge. Firstly, DE is a relatively new concept for student teachers and motivation and interest on the part of students is limited by virtue of the (perceived) higher value given to 'results' and a restrictive 'curriculum'. Given this context, student teachers grapple with how they can provide adequate depth when

engaging a development topic; they are also divided when it comes to imagining DE as either part of a subject (an integrated DE curriculum?) or as a subject discipline in its own right (a separate DE curriculum?). This study also shows that student teachers felt there was a need for more permanent DE internal support staff; that personnel committed to DE work could enhance collaborative teaching and research projects and help sustain DE integration. Finally, student teachers are uncertain about DE methodologies; they are uncertain too with engaging with complex and sensitive development issues in the classroom and need *school practice*, as well as academic, supports.

These studies demonstrate some of the salient challenges facing educators in their attempts to integrate CME/DE in ITE. There is much to learn from student teachers' lived experiences of doing such cultural work with their (school) students. And for those in ITE – most importantly teacher-researchers but also programme and module coordinators (who are perhaps more distant from DE enquiry) - there is a responsibility to bring this knowledge to bear on *their* cultural work with *their* (university) students.

Methodology

This small-scale but deeply qualitative research project was carried out in the second semester - January to April 2017 - of the second and final year of the Professional Master of Education (PME) programme at the School of Education, UCC. Our primary aim was to support critical research and explore ways in which this matters for both the student teacher and her/his second-level pupils. We also set out to explore how research conducted on the critical (Development Education) work of student teachers can cultivate more understanding of, and improvements in, the nature of teacher education provision, particularly from DE and CME perspectives. All 120 second year PME students were invited to attend a series of six workshops on a voluntary basis. The workshops offered additional support to students wishing to bring CME and DE frameworks to bear on their final year Professional Research Papers (PRPs). Here

students were required to carry out a small scale independent piece of research at their school placement site and report upon this in a 6,000-word paper.

All students had already attended eight hours of Critical Pedagogy and Critical Multicultural Education support in two of their core modules. They also attended a full module which was dedicated (via lectures and tutorials) to support them in carrying out their PRP assignment. Six students volunteered to participate in our action research study. The supplementary workshops were facilitated by the authors of this paper; a full-time lecturer who has taught, researched and written extensively on Critical Pedagogy and CME and a third year PhD student with significant experience in and knowledge of the fields of Development Education and Multicultural Education. The aim of our research intervention was to support and understand PME students' experiences of integrating these frameworks into their research and classroom practices. The students were fully informed of the details of the research focus and signed consent forms agreeing to their full participation were secured. We specifically agreed to meet regularly throughout the academic year, share resources, critical research methods and findings, as well as personal/professional reflections and writing. We were keen at all times to abide by and integrate strong ethical principles throughout the research study and we incorporated a range of guidelines from a number of respected sources, notably from established educational research associations such as SERA (2005), BERA (2011) and AERA (2011). We also followed important institutional ethical guidelines (UCC, 2016). We were most cognisant of our own, as well as the student teachers' role as 'inside researchers' and the particular ethical challenges that this presented (see Malone, 2003; Mercer, 2007).

The workshop sessions were 'organic' in nature and followed student-led interests, questions and challenges rather than any set of prescribed enquiry. Personalised readings in advance of our meetings were provided to the student teachers. This added focus to our

conversations and enabled us to 'tease out' CME and DE challenges – particularly in relation to how conceptual frameworks could be further understood and put into action in the classroom. Every workshop set out to identify each individual's research interests and questions and relate these to the challenges that they were encountering in their 'reading' of new concepts and experiences in classroom practice. We also mediated – not least to support the students' desire to be 'assessment ready' - the structure of the PRP paper as prescribed by the School of Education, which included the following sections: Introduction and Context; Literature Review; Research Methodology; Findings and Analysis; and Conclusion. Each workshop session was recorded; we noted too our ongoing informal conversations (as agreed with the participants); the students contributed to an additional focus group (post initial data analysis); and they filled out an online survey at the end of the research process. Data was constantly engaged and we employed a hermeneutic, rather than a rigid thematic, approach to analysis (Habermas, 1990). This reflexive, interpretive position is never straightforward (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) and it demanded many conversations and debates with one another and by our 'selves'. As a further check on our own research 'reading' we co-engaged in analysing students' multiple drafts and final papers. Finally, two of the students took up the invitation from the PRP module coordinator to publicly present their work as part of a School of Education event. Feedback on their contributions – from some colleagues and other student teachers – was extremely positive and helped us with our analysis.

Of the six students who attended the workshops, five were female. The group's primary teaching subjects included English, German, Religion and Geography - it was noticeable that no business or STEM subjects were represented. All except the male participant taught in single-sex (girls') schools – he taught in a mixed gender setting. All were interested, despite the intense pressures of the PME programme, to participate in our voluntary research project pointing to the fact, as one

put it, that ‘we are now teaching in multicultural classrooms in Ireland’. Indeed, two of the participants (both Irish citizens) were born and raised outside of Ireland and they expressed a strong commitment to investigate how ‘other migrant children’ were experiencing Irish schooling.

Findings and Analysis – on ‘becoming’ critical researchers of and for our times

At the earliest workshop sessions, participants generally emphasised the notion of inclusion of the ‘minority student’ ‘into’ the majority classroom, reflecting McQuaid’s (2009: 70) view that discourse such as ‘newcomers to our shores’ can be often (unwittingly) used to accentuate the notion of the ‘other’ and lobby for her/his ‘assimilation’. One student spoke at the outset of wanting to encourage five of her class of 22 students, who were born and educated outside of Ireland, ‘to celebrate their identity and to incorporate skills acquired from their previous education outside of Ireland’. While it is most important to familiarise oneself with and celebrate ‘other’ identities, the group (at least initially) did not adequately consider celebrating the identity of *all* the students in the class. Multiculturalism, as they would later acknowledge, is not just about ‘minority’ cultures but about ‘mainstream’/‘dominant’ ones also. Certainly, as they would say in later focus group discussions, the group might have initially seen multiculturalism as a ‘problem’ to overcome (as the aforementioned LETS study indicates). Students would constantly refer to having to find ‘solutions’ to, as one put it, ‘deal with this challenge’.

A number of student teachers later acknowledged that they might also have at times ‘exoticised’ others; wanting to ‘make the strange familiar in a strange way’, as one insightfully commented. It would take time too to understand that the kinds of inclusive cultural work they intended to put into practice was not that ‘special’; rather, as Gloria Ladson-Billings’ (1995) paper really illuminated for them, culturally inclusive practice is ‘just good teaching’. Still, they felt that in order to do ‘that’ kind of good teaching, they would need to develop confidence in

'handling' the big CME and DE concepts; they would need to become more comfortable and competent in their own 'cultural literacy'. In their final PRP papers, most students referred to Larson and Marsh's (2005) work which argues that cultural literacy is a tool for 'interpreting what people from different communities do, not simply what they do not do when compared to a dominant group' (Larson and Marsh, 2005: 12).

The importance of teachers' affective work, of 'knowing how to feel about the other' (Kitching et al., 2015), was also highlighted. Finally, student teachers noted in their PRPs the skill of facilitating democratic dialogue with and between students (Apple and Beane, 2007); though sometimes, as one put it, dialogue can be 'difficult, even confrontational'. To illustrate this latter point, another student had discussed during one workshop how work on 'migrant populations' in her classroom led to some 'unsavoury comments and phrases' being used by the pupils. The rest of the group supported this student by affirming the good work she had done in her classroom ('it's important to discuss these real issues') and they later offered each other guidelines on how to create open, honest and respectful dialogue. Over the course of the study, students learned from each other's experiences and co-generated a more critical reflexive position in relation to 'live' multicultural issues. Indeed, everyone's original research focus changed in conjunction with such joint 'problem-posing' moments.

Several students said they were motivated to join the workshop series in order to, as one student put it, 'meet, exchange ideas and collaborate with like-minded peers'. Student teachers certainly feel the intensity of time and workload pressures on the PME programme and can become isolated from one another as they juggle myriad responsibilities between school and university. A core methodological approach within CME and DE is to collaborate with others and share interests, concerns and ideas. The workshops themselves 'felt different' to the student teachers, with one even describing them as 'support group sessions'; another elaborated later in the focus group discussions that they offered

an opportunity for ‘similar worldviews to come together’. As researchers, we were keen to *practise* CME/DE in a manner befitting its theoretical and methodological foundations. We hoped that student teachers might even mirror some of the dialogical methods used in the workshops (albeit they would have to engage a much bigger student cohort than ours). It was clear from the outset that we would have to focus conversations on each individual’s research interests and questions and relate these to the challenges that they were encountering in their ‘reading’ of new concepts and experiences in classroom practice. The recommended (personalised) CME and DE readings helped focus our conversations – though, perhaps again due to the intensity of the PME course, these were not always fully engaged by the students. Frequently – and students called for this – we were asked to clarify key CME/DE concepts before dialogue could ‘take off’ again. This revealed to us, as Baily, O’Flaherty and Hogan (2017) had found, that students were constantly grappling with key ideas and that they struggled with how they could *deeply* implement these in a classroom context.

We were always mindful of the context within which this research study was set. There are many ‘professional’ demands on student teachers - having to meet statutory/regulatory codes of conduct, be conversant with new curricular and assessment developments, develop whole-school policy perspectives, engage with prescribed assignments and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses, etc. – and as important as CME/DE work is (and student teachers did recognise its significance), it can be somewhat overshadowed by these tasks. One student teacher, for example, acknowledged that her professional identity was ‘being pulled in all directions’; that she understood ‘the priorities of a system, the importance of exams, for example’ but that she also saw the need to ‘value the person, particularly the person on the margins’. She informed us that DE/CME was ‘of particular importance’ to her and that she was ‘committed to seeing teaching in another way’. This demonstrates that some student teachers

are thinking deeply about the priorities and moral responsibilities of teaching and critiquing restrictive notions of ‘professionalism’. Certainly, ‘finding one’s place’ in the profession is never smooth as uncertainties, anxieties, dilemmas and frustrations are frequently met along the way.

The exigencies of the PME course too strongly dictate ‘thinking and feeling’ and the group would sometimes drift into focusing on the (formal) assignment to hand. Many pointed to the fact that they would have wished, as one put it, ‘to do more justice to the research outside of the assignment and deadlines’. Certainly, inclusive work takes time and effort: it requires, on the part of teachers and students, an honest appraisal of evolving dispositions and values; through new methodologies, it encourages the sharing of ideas, creativity and inquiry; and it has the power to develop new critical analytical and practice-based skills. CME/DE work encourages teachers to get to know their students, value their experiences and engage with their broader socio-economic and cultural lives. And ultimately CME/DE encourages taking action for change. In this regard, we noted that there were some conceptual and practical changes that were more difficult to implement than others. It was particularly challenging, for example, to move from a position of ‘empathy for others’ to a more elaborate structural explanation for inclusion/exclusion.

There was some analysis of the education system, teacher bias, socio-economic, cultural and political contexts, but analysis of wider social justice action was not as strongly evident in some final papers. Thus, whilst students came to appreciate the nuances of an individual’s culture and the positive or negative influences that schooling can bring to bear, they found it challenging to imagine how social justice and equality measures could be *effected* in the system. As system workers, they likewise struggled with their own change roles. It was particularly challenging for them to move away from seeking out and employing a certain set of methods/strategies, as though they existed in a pre-packed pedagogical ‘toolbox’. While practical exemplars on cultural inclusion

were provided – we agree with Baily, O’Flaherty and Hogan (2017) that there is need for more *school practice* supports – the student teachers were somewhat anxious and uncertain in designing their own inclusive lesson plans. Crucially, they were creatively challenged - how could *they* possibly imagine themselves as ‘promoting progressive social change’ (Kumar, 2008: 41)?; how could *they* possibly see themselves as enacting ‘a pedagogy of global justice’ (Skinner et al., 2013: 17)?

Consequently, we sought to encourage the student teachers to nurture their own ‘sense and sensibility’ (O’Brien, 2016) around multicultural and development issues – to think through their research plans with one another; to help effect small changes (in how they and their pupils might think, feel and act differently). There was evidence in later workshops, focus group discussions and in the final papers that these supportive seeds had been sown and were bearing some fruit. In the PRPs, for example, there was evidence of students encouraging their pupils to talk about their lives (through storytelling, painting or photography). Efforts were made to understand pupils’ social and cultural worlds and write about their perceptions, feelings, creative ideas and classroom relations. One student, in particular, moved from a very strong focus on curricular competencies (what minority pupils have to tell us in relation to ‘their’ culture) to ‘combining each other’s knowledge within newly formed social practices’. Another wrote too about ‘democratising the learning space’, giving more time for ‘peer learning’, ‘getting to know each other and each other’s ideas’. Attempts to develop a more collaborative learning space helped with the ‘anxiety’ that student teachers genuinely felt about discussing some of the more ‘contentious issues’, ‘like racism’ in the classroom.

The final online survey and papers indicate that student teachers had become more confident in facilitating dialogue which they would have previously perceived as ‘contentious’. Specifically, they pointed to their ‘relief’ (as one put it) that they had discussed ‘live’ multicultural topics, such as ‘migration’, ‘racism’, ‘nationalism’ and ‘Islamophobia’. None of

these topics were incompatible with curricular competencies - indeed one student specifically identified 'big improvements in critical and cultural literacy' in his classroom. Moreover, the students identified enhanced social relations in the classroom. One student teacher mentioned that she 'enjoyed classes more', intimating a renewed sense of (social) purpose to her work. All could see the learning benefits for *both* minority and majority culture pupils – one specifically mentioned 'the importance of critique' and 'questioning common-sense', whilst all recognised the importance of 'finding common ground with others'. Without exception, they found their pupils prepared and happy to discuss multicultural/development issues, with one student teacher poignantly noting 'isn't this the kind of communication that's needed in today's global world [sic.]?' Another participant came to realise that communication channels go further than language:

"It is important to break down the communicative barriers which are actually 'beyond' English proficiency [...] In order for all students to feel included within the classroom they must be able to relate to each other".

Participants clearly indicated that they were happy they had attended the workshops. They certainly saw this impacting their teaching. As one participant put it in the online survey:

"My teaching has benefitted significantly as I have been able to select more suitable teaching approaches that accommodate all my students more effectively. I have developed an enhanced rapport with my students who along with enjoying the research have also positively responded to being given the chance to air their individual opinions. The fact that they feel their own interests and preferences in relation to their learning is being considered has led to a deep mutual respect being developed".

Despite their busy schedules and despite the pressures of the assignment, they had chosen to conduct research into an area of 'live'

interest and concern to them and their pupils. Thus, the group members produced work that personally/professionally meant something and that, consequently, had a better chance of being sustained in practice. Their work included projects that focused on: pupils' co-creation of 'culturally empathetic learning experiences' for all in the classroom; teachers' development of pedagogical approaches for cultural and social inclusion; improving pupils' oral literacy skills (a new Junior Cycle requirement) by enabling them to present their own cultural values and traditions; fostering a multi-lingual approach to English instruction; and drawing out children's diverse learning practices and their views on a fairer, more child-centred, curriculum. Echoing Baily, O'Flaherty and Hogan's (2017) study, some expressed the view that the School of Education needed more internal CME/DE supports, highlighting that someone/persons could help model teaching methodologies and sustain this kind of work. In terms of their own modelling practices, they indicated that inclusive education will be a priority for them in their future lives but that, as one participant put it, they 'will have to work more on cultural integration and Development Education'. It is clear that, in order to 'become' critical researchers *of and for our time*, student teachers will need more (formative) learning time and space.

Conclusion: On 'overcoming' challenges for critical research

As this issue of *Policy & Practice* attests, we are currently experiencing a most volatile and politically unstable climate. To re-illustrate, the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Change Accord; its plans to raise barriers and 'crack down' on migrant and 'undocumented' populations; its open attack on Muslim populations; its stoking of popular nationalist sentiment; and its reticence to promptly and unreservedly condemn racist violence is of serious concern to all of us who care about global citizenship. Of course those most impacted by a globally unstable climate are the poor and dispossessed – those without a sheltered home, those fleeing from famine, war, religious and ethnic persecution. According to Save the Children, at least 600 children died in 2016

attempting to cross the Mediterranean in search of a safer and better life. Migration is not a choice for a lot of people who continue in large numbers to suffer real-life hardships. The majority of refugees who manage to enter European space reside in unsanitary and unsafe 'settlement' camps, the bulk of which are on the frontiers of Greece and Italy. 'Others' suffer human rights violations as they pass from region to region and country to country, awaiting further their fate (Davidson and Doherty, 2016).

The refugee crisis, it seems, is a crisis not just of political manipulation, but of political will. And while this situation persists, there is real evidence of mounting acts of intolerance towards migrants and 'others'. We in society have the capacity to ignore/co-generate such a climate of hate, mistrust and fear. But equally we can help create a society that tolerates, accepts and embraces 'others'. Where can we look to for inspiration? Literature and art can help us to understand, critique and cope with the change forces that bear down upon us. Literature and art can help us break with – if not always materially, then symbolically – the neoliberal consensus that binds our personal narratives to notions of individual/national 'success' and 'self-interest'. And literature and art, as Ivor Goodson (2005) reminds, often carry more cultural weight than other ideological messages in renewing personal narratives and in re-defining one's 'life politics'. In an age of mounting intolerance, we need critical literature and art – fictional and non-fictional accounts of 'other' people's lives; others' poetry, painting, music and literature; and photographic and cinematic representations of others' life journeys and experiences of social injustice.

Closer links – what Joe Kincheloe (2008) refers to as 'bricolage' – between art (offering more 'sensibility') and science (offering more 'sense') is needed in telling more meaningful, multi-sensorial stories about 'others' and ourselves. Educators have a particularly important function in bringing together art and science in facilitating this new 'sense and sensibility' (O'Brien, 2016) in classrooms and lecture halls. From the findings of this research study, as well as the findings of inspirational

social art projects (e.g. King and Murphy, 2017), we believe that there is an important opportunity for educators to forge closer art-science connections in pursuit of a more just and equal society. Currently in the fourth phase of our 'Id Est' project, we are supporting student teachers and their pupils in their collective efforts to create a new public art exhibition on Development Education. By means of this creative project, we hope to widely communicate the power of critical pedagogy and to positively (perhaps sustainably) shape the 'life politics' of beginning teachers and their pupils.

The theoretical meeting points of Critical Multicultural Education and Development Education offer educators a 're-reading' of this new world order. Teachers who are informed by CME/DE ideals purposefully connect schooling with real world events. They concern themselves with educating for greater social justice and equality (McCloskey, 2017). And they model the ideals of participatory democracy by practising active citizenship with their pupils and promoting democratic action (Apple and Beane, 2007). But teachers – as operative state workers (Dale, 1989) - face serious inclusive challenges from *within* the education system. Critical pedagogues, in particular, are likely to experience marginalisation, especially while CME/DE remains on the margins of the broader school (and higher education) curriculum and while 'softer' approaches to CME/DE delivery prevail (Bryan and Bracken, 2011).

DE is also concentrated in specific subject areas, such as Geography and CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education) in post-primary education, and is therefore not evenly shared (e.g. via an integrated curriculum) between teachers. And DE generally appears to have lower visibility and status in school planning, as it is often left to the goodwill of individual teachers to champion its cause (Doggett et al., 2016). It is important to recognise, therefore, that all teachers need to be supported in 'reading' (and 're-reading') the world. Equally, it is important to acknowledge that critical pedagogues need to be supported in the system to do this important work. As our study hopes to show,

student teachers need particular critical/cultural literacy supports in this regard.

What can we hope to achieve in ITE? We can, as we have done in our own institution, try to integrate CME/DE principles and practices into some programme modules. We have also recently fore-fronted 'the foundations' in the second year of teacher education (see Kerr et al., 2011) to try to help student teachers to ask some 'big' questions - how do I identify as a teacher?; how do I understand the school's place in society?; how do I include diverse learner groups?; and how can I develop my own and others' critical/cultural literacy? This foundational work is important because, as the aforementioned studies (e.g. Baily, O'Flaherty and Hogan, 2017) and this research study demonstrate, student teachers need to work on their own identity (who they are and who 'others' are). They need to understand that they are systemic workers who both include and exclude certain perspectives and experiences. And they need to begin to re-present education as 'meaning-full' and act upon its social change purpose.

But all this foundational work is far from certain, even within the university space. Teacher educators face a number of structural and cultural challenges in their attempts to integrate CME/DE in ITE. Indeed, the education project itself faces a most profound challenge. Thus, Niamh Gaynor (2016: 1) asks if 'talk of civic values, justice, transformation and flourishing' has not been replaced 'with talk of efficiency, performance, competition, and employment'; if doing this kind of work within this kind of system 'is akin to attempting to drive a round peg into a square hole'. As an integral part of the education system, ITE is faced with specific inclusive challenges. What value do teacher educators - including new entrants whose professional learning needs are not well met (see Czerniawski et al, 2018) - really place on CME/DE and how do they practise critical forms of education across humanities *and* STEM divides? How does the institution support dedicated research in CME/DE and go beyond 'research-informed' practices that tend to focus on 'what works'?

(Gerwitz, 2013)? And how do those *within* ITE re-orientate themselves away from the dominant technical foci and concerns of the ‘new professionalism’ (Gleeson, Sugrue and O’Flaherty, 2017)? Teacher educators too need more (formative) learning time and space. And they need to be supported and encouraged in their efforts to become and develop critical researchers ‘of and for our times’.

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