

ILLUMINATING THE EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT THROUGH THE LENS OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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Abstract: Citizenship Education has been suggested as a means of addressing conflict, both as an issue for the island of Ireland, and more recently as a global matter. With the challenges presented by national forms of citizenship, particularly in Northern Ireland (NI), educators have considered models of citizenship which engage with broader forms of identity (Kerr, McCarthy and Smith, 2002; McCully, 2008; Smith, 2003). As one such approach, Global Citizenship Education (GCE) seeks to deepen understanding of global injustice and to promote transformative action (Bourn, 2015; Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Davies, 2006; Griffiths, 1998).

GCE can also be considered as education for peacebuilding which addresses violence at local and global levels (Ardizzone, 2003; Harris, 2004; Smith, 2010; Reilly and Niens, 2014). Indeed, peacebuilding has been identified as a specific focus for several approaches to GCE (Davies, 2006; Goren and Yemini, 2018; Niens and Reilly, 2010; Reardon, 1988; Noddings, 2005) yet research into such approaches remains scarce.

This article draws on a qualitative doctoral research study which explored the theoretical frameworks underpinning 13 peacebuilding education programmes developed for schools in NI and the Republic of Ireland (RoI), to consider how the global dimension of conflict is addressed within such interventions. The article finds that GCE provides an important framework for exploring conflict. A focus on distant conflict is perceived as a less controversial entry point into teaching and learning about conflict. The process of reflecting back onto local issues presents challenges, yet Education for Humanitarian Law (EHL) offers a robust and agreed framework where distant conflicts can be analysed and introspection is possible. This is particularly important when a critical GCE lens is applied to

the space between the local and the global, and interconnections, problematic allegiances and notable absences are revealed.

Key words: Peacebuilding Education; Global Citizenship Education; Education for Humanitarian Law; War.

Introduction

Global Citizenship Education (often used interchangeably with Development Education within the Irish context, and throughout this article) seeks to empower learners to develop their understanding of local and global injustices and act to create a fairer world (Bourn, 2015; Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Davies, 2006; Griffiths, 1998). Approaches to GCE, structured around the work of Galtung and Freire explore conflict as a matter of injustice perpetrated through direct and structural violence (Harris, 2004). From this perspective, GCE is education for peacebuilding which addresses violence at local and global levels (Ardizzone, 2003; Harris, 2004; Smith, 2010; Reilly and Niens, 2014). Indeed, peacebuilding has been identified as a specific focus for several approaches to GCE (Davies, 2006; Goren and Yemini, 2018; Niens and Reilly, 2010; Reardon, 1988; Noddings, 2005). The relationship between globalisation and violent conflict has prompted calls for education systems to attend to GCE (Peters and Thayer, 2013; Pigozzi, 2006). As Davies explains:

“global citizenship identity is the recognition that conflict and peace are firstly rarely confined to national boundaries, and secondly that even stable societies are implicated in war elsewhere - whether by default (choosing not to intervene) or actively in terms of aggression and invasion” (2006: 10).

Importantly, existing research suggests that many young people are inquisitive about the causes and consequences of conflict (Davies, Harber and Yamashita, 2005; Niens and Reilly, 2010; Yamashita, 2006).

Education has been promoted as a means of addressing violence across the island of Ireland (Dunn, 1986; Smith, 1995; Pollak, 2005) with programmes focused on the development of cross-community relations, particularly within NI (Cairns and Cairns, 1995; Duffy, 2000; Robinson, 1983; Smith, 1995). Increasing numbers of Citizenship Education programmes, often developed and facilitated by outside agencies have been noted (Richardson, 2008; Rooney, 2008; Smith, 2003) yet there has been limited research exploring how such approaches are developed and delivered (Bajaj, 2004; Gill and Niens, 2014; Novelli and Smith, 2011). This article draws on the findings of a doctoral research study which addressed the research question: what theoretical frameworks underpin the design and practice of peacebuilding education programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland?

The programmes in this study addressed different dimensions of conflict including conflict at an interpersonal level, a consideration of the Irish conflict, and engagement with the global dimension of conflict, which considers violent conflicts outside of the island of Ireland, but, as is considered shortly, which may be deeply connected to local issues. This article explores how conflict, as a global theme, is conceptualised in the development of peacebuilding education programmes and seeks to provide an analysis of the potential of such approaches in supporting young people to better understand violent conflict and to act for a more peaceful world.

Education for conflict or education for peace?

International research argues that educational policies and practices may perpetuate conflict (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2004a; Harber, 2004; Sommers, 2002; Smith and Vaux, 2003; Smith, 2005, 2011; Tawil and Harley, 2004; Buckland, 2006). Education has at times fuelled conflict by increasing inequality and reducing social cohesion (Brown, 2011). Schools are places where direct violence occurs (Harber, 2004; Cremin, 2015). In her 'Typology for Teaching and Learning about Conflict', Davies (2005a) argues that different educational practices can contribute to negative conflict. Further supported by more recent literature, these include the omission of

conflict from the classroom (Cole, 2007; Salmi, 2000; Sánchez Meertens, 2013), instances where war is portrayed as routine and peacebuilding ignored (Davis, 2002; Perera, Wijetunge and Balasooriya, 2004), teaching of stereotypes and promotion of negative international allegiances (Davies, Harber and Schweisfurth, 2002), teaching for militarisation (Davies, 1999, Gor, 2003; Najcevska, 2000) and at the most extreme, educational approaches which promote hate by denigrating other groups (Bar-Tal 1996; Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009; Du Preez, 2014; Firer and Adwan 2004; Frayha, 2004; Mitter, 2001; Papadakis, 2008; Stabback, 2004). Indeed, Davies (2005c) suggests that ‘without a massive dismantling of the examination system and a radical rethinking of the goals of education, the most it could probably do is to do no further harm’ (639).

Nevertheless, educators attempt to tackle the complexities of violent conflict in the classroom, and there is increasing global interest in the potential role of education in supporting peacebuilding processes, particularly in post-conflict societies (Akar, 2014; Novelli and Higgins, 2016). Davies (2005a) suggests that teaching and learning for peacebuilding has often focused on tolerance (Bar-Tal, Rosen and Nets-Zehngut, 2010; Dunn, 1986; Harris, 2004; Salomon, 2002, 2006), personal conflict resolution (Salomon, 2006), humanitarian law (Tawil, 2001), dialogic approaches (du Preez, 2014; Gill and Niens, 2014; Quaynor, 2012) and finally encounter, which has received much attention in the NI context (e.g. Cairns, 1982; Hewstone, et al., 2006). However, peacebuilding education programmes are perceived as difficult to develop (Kupermintz and Salomon 2005; Firer 2008; Maoz, 2011) and there is a need for research which offers a deeper exploration of educational interventions aimed at building peace (Buckland, 2006; Davies, 2005a, 2010a; Tomlinson and Benefield, 2005; Salomon, 2002, 2004, 2006).

Curricular GCE in RoI and NI

Increased ethnic diversity within the RoI had prompted questioning of national-oriented forms of citizenship, and alongside developing European Union (EU) membership, provided the context for the emergence of active participatory forms of citizenship education (Hammond and Looney, 2000;

Kerr, McCarthy and Smith, 2002). The 2003 inclusion of the Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) syllabus within the RoI curriculum provided an important avenue for GCE. Alongside the participatory methodologies which underpinned the syllabus, the inclusion of an action project component was an important milestone (Jeffers, 2008; Redmond and Butler, 2003). An emphasis on fundraising constituted a quarter of action projects; however war and conflict were increasingly noted as common themes (Wilson, 2008). Several civil society and political groups supported the curricular and extra-curricular delivery of GCE within schools (Barry, 2008; Tormey, 2006). The work of these organisations is recognised as important in shaping GCE in formal education in Ireland (Bryan and Bracken, 2011) and requires consideration within any exploration of educational programmes.

Developing the practice of Citizenship Education in a divided society such as NI posed several challenges (Smith, 2003). With a history of political conflict, the relationship between nationalism and violent conflict threw doubt on the appropriateness of national-oriented forms of Citizenship Education, yet there remained a belief in the potential of alternative approaches (Niens and McIlrath, 2010). Gradually, NI moved from the Education for Mutual Understanding programme to a curriculum-based model though the piloting of Social, Civic and Political Education and in 2007 to Local and Global Citizenship (Arlow, 1999, 2004; Richardson, 2008). Centred on diversity, democracy, equality and human rights this curriculum sought to provide a balance between rights and civic republicanism and the opportunity to move beyond disputed national identities (McCully, 2008).

The global dimension was considered an important asset of this curriculum in NI, particularly in relation to issues of conflict. McCully (2006) argues that exploring other conflicts at a distance, in contexts geographically and temporally divorced from the sensitivity of local and national issues may give young people the opportunity to consider controversial themes in a manner which avoids overemphasis on local and national issues. More recently, McCully (2008) suggests that turning the

gaze back upon NI has, when structured carefully, facilitated deeper understandings of conflict closer to home. How the connections and reflections between conflict within local and global contexts requires deeper exploration.

Methodology

This article draws on a research study which sought to investigate the theories underpinning the development of peacebuilding education programmes designed for schools across the island of Ireland. After gaining university ethical approval, the study employed a qualitative approach to undertake deeper examination of both peacebuilding education (McEvoy-Levy, 2001) and GCE practice (Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Fiedler et al., 2011). More specifically, it explored the perspectives and experiences of 15 educators involved in the development and delivery of 13 school-based peacebuilding education programmes. This research employed a combination sampling approach (Cohen and Arieli, 2011) utilising quota sampling, where advertised programmes were identified and approached, alongside parallel snowball sampling, where existing participants suggested potential participants (Cohen and Arieli, 2011; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Wessel and Hirtum, 2013). Such an approach has been utilised successfully with existing research focused on GCE (Bryan and Bracken, 2011) and peacebuilding education (Bickmore, 2005a, 2005b, 2010; Levy, 2014; Nasser, Abu-Nimer and Mahmoud, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifteen consenting educators to explore the theoretical frameworks which had shaped the design of peacebuilding education programmes. These audio-recorded interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes and were transcribed verbatim. Documents pertaining to the programmes were also collected to provide an opportunity to compare data (Angrosino, 2007; Flick, 2007). Data were analysed through the NVivo qualitative software package using a framework of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This involved a reading and re-reading of data, an initial descriptive coding which attributed labels to

sections of data, followed by the development and refinement of key themes, which included the global dimension of conflict.

Findings

Overview of the programmes

The 13 programmes explored within the study were developed by agencies outside of the schools which they served. These organisations were primarily non-governmental organisations (NGOs), but also included education bodies such as third level institutions. Whilst each of the programmes served post-primary schools across the island of Ireland, two programmes also engaged with primary schools in both jurisdictions. All but one of the 13 programmes directly worked with children and young people in the classroom, delivering student workshops, utilising specially developed learning resources and, for seven of the programmes, facilitating opportunities for students to meet and work with students from other backgrounds. Eight of the programmes also offered some aspect of teacher education.

Participants identified citizenship components of the post-primary curricula in both jurisdictions (CSPE in RoI and Local and Global Citizenship in NI) as important points of connection for their programmes, with the Transition Year programme, a one year post-Junior Cycle course for schools in RoI, identified as an important space for teaching about conflict in line with existing research (Honan, 2005; Kinlen et al. 2013). Most programmes identified extracurricular time as important for the delivery of the programme in some schools. Throughout the study, programmes included a focus on several ongoing conflicts in Israel-Palestine, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Lebanon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as referring to historical conflicts.

There were contrasting ways in which the global dimension of peacebuilding was approached both within and between programmes; however, it appeared that educators have sought to move beyond the acritical addition of international material to citizenship education programmes, or raising ‘global awareness’ (Davies, 2006; Davies, Evans and Reid, 2005).

This article now considers how the exploration of distant conflicts is perceived as a meaningful and less controversial engagement with conflict. It then explores how such learning might be reflected on to local issues, before utilising a critical GCE lens to consider issues of interdependence, allegiance and absence within the space between the local and global.

Distant conflicts and the challenges of local reflection

Although young people express desire to know more about conflict (Davies, 2005a), addressing conflict within Citizenship Education classrooms is often perceived as deeply challenging and controversial, particularly within post-conflict societies (Arlow, 2004; Davies, 2005a; Smith and Robinson, 1996; McCully, 2008). However, for programmes within this study, providing an opportunity for young people to engage with such issues was a key aim:

“[Through a global focus] they develop a better understanding of what conflict really means, you know?” (Fergal, Peace Initiative, pseudonyms here and throughout).

Such an approach was perceived as providing young people with the opportunity to compare the causes and consequences of violent conflict in different contexts throughout the world. For some participants, a focus on distant conflicts provided an opportunity to shift focus away from the Irish conflict and ‘relentless introspection’ (McCully, 2008: 4):

“I think [global perspectives] are important because I think in Northern Ireland we are quite insular. [Northern Ireland] gets very set in its ways. I think with the other work you definitely get a different perspective and they are not so caught up with community relations” (Iris, Building Peace).

There was also the perception that focusing on distant conflicts might lessen the discomfort often associated with addressing local conflict in Northern Ireland.

“We weren’t honing in on Northern Ireland, the island of Ireland. We were bringing it in by default, we were sneaking it in the back door if you like ... Well, focusing on the outside can help to deflect the difficulties, or the discomfort” (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools).

Within the Peacebuilding Schools programme, the initial exploration of conflict concentrated beyond the island of Ireland, before returning to local issues. Using distant conflicts to reflect on to local issues, as suggested by McCully (2006), was perceived as a viable strategy within some of the peacebuilding programmes. More specifically, programmes considered controversial themes in a manner which avoided an overemphasis on local issues. Several participants referenced the potential of a comparative approach, not only to the violence associated with conflicts further afield, but also to the peacebuilding processes associated with such events:

“I was conscious, when we talked about examples of peacebuilding in the past, which we hadn’t had time to explore properly. One example was when France and Germany got together to ensure there was a peace process” (Brendan, Peace and Reconciliation).

Speaking of his lengthy experience in the area, Brendan expressed belief in the importance of exploring peace processes beyond the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. Fiona similarly noted that common features of peace processes could be important avenues for exploration with young people:

“[Commonalities between peace processes include] I suppose that the notion that you have to bring people to the table. There has to be some kind of give and take. There has to be some kind of negotiation on it, some kind of implications for everyone. I think that can go across the board” (Fiona, Transform).

With a focus on peacebuilding processes in other contexts, these programmes provide a contrast educational approaches criticised for a focus on violence in

conflict at the expense of the work done by individuals and organisations building peace (Davis, 2002; Perera, Wijetunge and Balasooriya, 2004).

Education for humanitarian law as a framework for conflict analysis

Drawing on the work of Tawil (2001), Davies (2005a) identifies that educational approaches built around International Humanitarian Law (IHL) have been utilised in Djibouti, NI, Lebanon, South Africa and Morocco. Focused explicitly on IHL enacted in times of war, Education for Humanitarian Law (EHL) aims to support learners to view complex local and global conflicts with a humanitarian perspective, and to facilitate action around the protection and promotion of humanitarian attitudes (Tawil, 2000). Both Peace Blocks and Transform were peacebuilding education programmes developed around frameworks of IHL. However, as Eileen explained, young people often knew little of the rules governing conflict situations:

“Not enough people know what the law is. Young people should know that there are limits in armed conflicts, and humanitarian consequences for the people involved” (Eileen, Peace Blocks).

Despite the challenge of young people’s lack of prior knowledge, an approach rooted in law provides a robust framework for the analysis of conflict. This solidity was of importance as the Progress Peace programme explored the conflict between Palestine and Israel:

“It was important to hang [the programme] on a framework because for some people it’s a very contentious issue. It’s reported in the media a lot in a certain way and people can have certain personal feelings about it” (Fiona, Transform).

Humanitarian law provided the programme with a widely agreed framework for a critical analysis of incidents within the Israel-Palestine conflict. For the Peace Blocks programme, Eileen explained that maintaining such a stance sometimes presented challenges: ‘things like impartiality and neutrality can

be quite difficult in different situations’ (Eileen, *Peace Blocks*). Importantly, Fiona perceived that using an IHL framework was a means of assuaging any possible criticisms of bias.

“[The programme] couldn’t be seen as lobbying or forcing people into viewing the conflict in a certain way. Whether it was to come down on the Israeli side or the Palestinian side, it had to be, ‘You’re looking at the facts. You’re looking at international law. What are you going to do?’... It’s like you’re on a tightrope and you have to try and keep everybody happy and not stray too far (Fiona, Transform).

Fiona’s attempts to avoid accusations of bias resonate with those educators attempting to develop a neutral or politically balanced programme (Solhaug, 2013). However, whether educators can come close to impartiality or neutrality is deeply contested (McCully, 2006; McCully and Barton, 2010). Indeed, peacebuilding programmes with a specific focus on the Irish conflict have been criticised for claiming to hold a neutral position (Emerson, 2012). The ‘tight-rope’ that Fiona describes appears to come about as she navigates two positions. Firstly, there is the need to communicate how failure to adhere to international humanitarian law has resulted in death and destruction. Secondly, there is the need to avoid employing, or being perceived to employ, an educational approach which perpetuates negative conflict through allegiance (Davies, 2005a).

Within her practice, Patricia had considered the extent to which EHL focused on distant conflicts could be developed to offer a reflective lens:

“I guess it is something we have been talking about and discussing. How does [international humanitarian law] relate to [the Irish Conflict]? For me personally, you can look at some of the activities and in your debrief, bring it back to ‘What about here? What if that was in your own context? If there was a violent conflict here, who

should be protected? Do you think there should be rules to protect people if there's violent situations?" (Patricia, Peace Blocks).

McCully (2008) argues that any global-local reflection requires careful planning and, within these examples, EHL appeared to offer a powerful framework by which young people could deepen their knowledge and understanding of IHL, develop the skills of critical analysis across different conflict contexts, and could critically reflect onto conflict on the island of Ireland.

Critical Global Citizenship Education and conflict-related interdependence

Despite increased recognition in both NI and ROI, there remain significant barriers to the implementation of more critical forms of GCE (Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Reilly and Niens, 2014). With citizenship in NI often concerned with addressing the challenges of education in a post-conflict society, Deborah suggested that looking across the border offered alternative perspectives:

“I just find it useful from a development education angle, the work with organisations [in the ROI]. I think that a global justice campaign is stronger in the south than it is in the north. There's a lot [Northern Ireland] can learn from that you know” (Deborah, Point Forward).

GCE has been an important aspect of the educational landscape of the ROI since the 1970s (Connolly, 1979; Lane, 1978) and Deborah suggested that this experience offered an interesting contrast and compliment to the existing peacebuilding approaches in NI. Drawing on critical approaches to GCE, some programmes offered a different view of the relationship between the local and global dimensions of conflict:

“There's the local focus and the global focus. Young people are living in a globally interdependent world where they see these conflicts on the news. They seem so distant to them and might seem

that they're not relevant... British armed forces could be involved in these conflicts. These young people could end up in the armed forces. They are going to be voters one day who are making decisions. This is relevant" (Patricia, Peace Blocks).

The identification of conflict-related interconnections also provided fruitful focus for other programmes:

"We would give them a little bit of input on, for example how much money is spent on weapons in the world. So young people have some sense of the money that's spent on weapons versus money that's spent on anti-poverty work in developing countries. That's always something they get quite engaged with" (Fergal, Peace Initiative).

The interviews revealed that some programmes would emphasise the exploration of the interconnections between local spaces and wider conflict-related themes.

The development of such interconnections is deemed a central component of educational approaches concerned with both understanding violence (Salmi, 2000) and building peace (Niens and Reilly, 2010; Reilly and Niens, 2014; Synott, 2005). Furthermore, exploring the interconnection between local and global issues is seen as a prerequisite of 'critical' forms of citizenship education (Bryan and Bracken, 2011). Ideas of interdependence move beyond what Andreotti (2006) defines as the 'soft' forms of GCE and equal interconnection, to consider the critical aspects of GCE, as asymmetrical relationships connected to globalisation and military action. Certainly for the Peace Initiative and Peace Blocks, exploring interconnection offered the opportunity to consider national issues, such as military budget or policy, which have often been left out of those peacebuilding approaches which jump from personal conflict to global issues without considering the problematic national level involvement in armed conflict (Davies, 2005b). Furthermore, the direct engagement with themes

such as militarisation suggests a clear challenge to themes associated with negative conflict such as education for ‘defence’ or ‘militarisation’ (Davies, 2005a; Gor, 2003; Najcevska, 2000).

Eugene explained that the Peacebuilding Schools programme had unearthed several interconnections between local spaces on the island of Ireland and the Israel-Palestine conflict:

“And the other interdependence point is that there are Israeli companies in Ireland. There’s the whole question of the boycott. There are Irish people going out on pilgrimages out there. There are Israeli holiday makers over here. We’re involved with the European Union. There are the United Nations Irish troops in Lebanon ... We need to work more on the interdependence idea a little bit more, make it clear” (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools).

Participants revealed the importance of critical analyses of the relationships between NI, RoI and elsewhere across the globe. Indeed, the action or inaction of countries in relation to violent conflict is seen as an important component of peacebuilding forms of GCE (Davies, 2006). In addressing peacebuilding in both NI and RoI, these programmes offer an important opportunity for young people in both jurisdictions to consider how local spaces, national policies and global issues are interconnected, and propose a challenge to the ‘omission of the national’ (Davies, 2005a: 29), or the gap between personal conflict and large-scale violent conflict.

In a divergent example, Deborah suggested that exploring cross-border interconnection between NI and RoI could serve as a stepping stone to exploring interconnections with global issues and themes. She explained:

“And where better than to start on an island that's really divided? I mean to create that sense of interconnectedness, solidarity, spread that out all across the world” (Deborah, Point Forward).

Indeed, educational programmes tasked with overcoming the numerous challenges of division and conflict on the island of Ireland, may indeed offer a great deal in terms of informing the challenge of developing broader conceptualisations of interdependence and interconnectedness. Finally, it is important to note that these interconnections are a means of connecting local spaces to global issues, whilst at the same time illuminating how national themes are deeply connected to violent conflict. The exploration of such interconnections would also appear to correspond to the ‘knowledge for global survival’ that Davies (2005a: 30) argues can underpin students’ positive action and which appear pressing when consideration is given to ineffective responses to the forced migration of people fleeing conflicts across the world (Park, 2015), damaging EU trade practices connected to violent conflict, such as the relationship between timber export and the conflict in the Central African Republic (Global Witness, 2015) and the involvement of EU member states in arms production and trade underpinning contemporary conflicts across the globe (Valero, 2015).

Global Citizenship as negative allegiance

Whilst many participants considered the development of local-global interconnections to be a positive tool for exploring conflict and supporting young people’s deeper understanding of complex issues, there was one incident which raised questions about the relationship between local and distant conflicts. Eugene described an introductory session to the Peacebuilding Schools programme which took place in a school in Belfast. He was introducing the Israel-Palestine conflict which included sharing basic information about Israel and Palestine such as the respective flags:

“I’ll never forget the girl, a Belfast girl, when I showed the two flags. [I said] ‘Have you seen these flags before?’ And the girl said ‘My Da has that [Israeli flag] on the roof of the house. I don’t even know what’s it’s about’” (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools).

The young person participating in the programme identified that an Israeli flag flew on the roof of her father’s house. Although she appeared unable to

explain why it was placed there at the time, the presence of such a flag within the local space symbolised existing connections between the Irish conflict and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Hill and White (2008) have identified that both Israeli and Palestinian flags have been flown in certain areas of NI since 2002, signifying a perceived allegiance between communities in the conflict-affected regions.

This highlights two challenges faced by peacebuilding programmes which explore conflicts beyond the island of Ireland. Firstly, young people within programmes across the island of Ireland may have evolving understandings of the Israel-Palestine conflict which may take the form of allegiance to one side or another. Davies (2005a) argues that allegiances are a contemporary feature of certain conflicts, with individuals or groups announcing solidarity with groups involved in violent conflict elsewhere in the world. These allegiances may be forms of identity which transcend legally defined citizenships (Heater, 1997). In one example, Davies, Harber and Schweisfurth (2002) found evidence of young people in Qatar demonstrating solidarity with Palestinians through the burning of the Israeli flag. Furthermore, Niens and Reilly (2012) identified that within a study on young people's experiences of GCE, Gaza was addressed as a topic within two maintained schools and that even the choice of conflict topic may represent allegiance.

The second factor here is the impact of negative allegiances with distant conflicts upon local conflict. The flying of Israeli or Palestinian flags not only highlights the existence of allegiances, but also represents how these symbols are drawn upon to reinforce existing divisions in relation to the Irish conflict (Hill and White, 2008; Nolan and Bryan, 2016). As such, there would appear to be a risk that young people may utilise distant conflicts to reinforce negative local conflict within the Irish context. On one hand, in addressing conflicts beyond the island of Ireland, there is a possibility that certain educational approaches could increase the risk of young people forming negative allegiances which undermine peacebuilding and perpetuate violent conflict. On the other, the negative connections between violent

conflicts may already shape young people's understanding in this area and should not be omitted.

Although research has suggested that incorporating proximal and remote conflicts within peacebuilding education may provide an important opportunity for learners to broaden their understanding (Kupermintz and Salomon, 2005), evidence within this study suggests the need for a deeper exploration of the connections between conflicts, such as the Irish (proximal) and Israel-Palestine (remote) conflicts, which feature within certain education programmes. Certainly, this reinforces the need for careful planning of peacebuilding education approaches which involve apparently abstract conflicts (McCully, 2006). It also supports the call for GCE 'which is inclusive of local identities and divisions' (Reilly and Niens, 2014: 72). Furthermore, it places added importance on placing young people and their local spaces at the centre of peacebuilding approaches, for it is within these local spaces that the interconnections between violent conflicts may appear.

The inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background

Although both the RoI and NI have experienced increasing ethnic diversity in recent years, the limited educational inclusion of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds remains alarming (Bryan, 2010; Biggart, O'Hare and Connolly, 2013). Approaches to peacebuilding have engaged with a bifurcated perspective on conflict as an issue for those living on the island of Ireland. Indeed, programmes featured in this study had been developed with sensitivity to how some young people's understanding of conflict and peace may have been affected by familial and community connections to the Irish conflict (an analysis of which is beyond the scope of this paper). But it is important to recognise that participants also questioned who was being excluded from both peacebuilding education and broader approaches to building peace. Brigid explained that although Founding Peace was not developed with the inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background in mind, it was part of a broader network of peacebuilding approaches which sought to include alternative local perspectives including perspectives from members of the Traveller Community.

The inclusion of minority ethnic individuals and communities signified the development of a more inclusive approach to peacebuilding citizenship education. Indeed, some participants highlighted the need to ensure an inclusive approach to citizenship education which involved the full diversity of the island of Ireland, not just those from a nationalist/republican/catholic or unionist/loyalist/protestant background. Frank suggested that the inclusion of the perspectives of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds was an important component of successful peacebuilding Citizenship Education, when employing methodologies based around dialogue, which required ‘diverse people in the room’ (Frank, Progress Peace). Iris suggested that peacebuilding education was beginning to expand its focus beyond the identities central to the Irish conflict:

“[Peacebuilding education] is starting to recognise other ethnic minorities ... It was always protestant or catholic. I just always feel like young people are just fed up with the protestant/catholic thing. You know, that there are other issues we could look at even together” (Iris, Building Peace).

Within an Irish context, Gallagher (2004) has called for an engagement with the ‘voices and perspectives that have been traditionally excluded’ (155). Indeed, the inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background is considered a vital component of critical peacebuilding education, yet in many cases their perceptions and experiences are undervalued and ignored (Bickmore, 2012). In a CE study in the UK, Warwick (2008) identifies that for some young people, a concern about war stemmed from personal and familial connections to regions affected by conflict. It is important that education approaches seeking to address conflict should be inclusive of the perspectives and experiences of young people across the island of Ireland whose local understanding of conflict may be informed by personal, family and community experiences of the Irish conflict, but also conflicts in regions beyond the island of Ireland.

At another level, a specific focus on the inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background would support wider social inclusion central to conflict transformation (Dupuy, 2008). In failing to include the perspectives of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, there is danger that peacebuilding education approaches may mirror the national-oriented forms of citizenship education recognised for excluding certain minority groups (Niens, O'Connor and Smith, 2013; Scott and Lawson, 2002) which, within certain contexts, have served as a basis for violent conflict (Banks, 2004). For peacebuilding education to function as a transformative form of citizenship it must recognise young people's cultural identities (Banks, 2008) and balance engagement with conflict and addressing other forms of social division (Niens, O'Connor and Smith, 2013).

Conclusion

In providing the opportunity for young people in schools across the island of Ireland to engage with peacebuilding education, the educators and programmes in this study present a challenge to the omission of conflict from formal education (Davies (2005a). Levy (2014) argues that research which explores the teaching and learning of conflict must consider all levels of conflict and those programmes including a global dimension within their study of conflict offer an important contribution in that regard. Furthermore, a focus on peacebuilding as well as violent processes offers a challenge to the ideas of war as routine (Davies, 2005a) and the continued development of such spaces for young people to develop their understanding of both conflict and peacebuilding is imperative.

McCully (2006) argues that focusing on distant contexts may allow young people in NI to explore violent conflict without the need to immediately engage with controversial local and national issues. Some programme developers reasoned that in focusing on conflicts further afield, programmes had provided young people, particularly from NI, with a deeper general understanding of conflict, without having to consider more controversial local issues. McCully (2008) also suggests that a global focus

may support a meaningful reflection on local issues. Whilst this approach was a consideration for some programmes, a particularly robust framework for this reflection appeared to be through EHL and a focus on IHL in times of conflict. Such an approach may offer a valuable introduction for educators seeking to grapple with addressing conflict within the classroom.

The lens of critical GCE within peacebuilding education clearly illuminates issues of conflict-related interconnection and interdependence within a globalised world and raises questions of what types of action required to support a global peacebuilding. Several educators made strong arguments that any focus on distant issues of conflict should highlight issues of interconnection and interdependence. GCE offers a valuable opportunity for young people to consider local peacebuilding issues and cosmopolitan global themes (Kupermintz and Salomon, 2005; Reilly and Niens, 2014) as well as a consideration of implicatedness in conflict in a globalised world. Whilst connecting local and global themes is recognised as an important aspect of peacebuilding education (Synnott, 2005; Niens and Reilly, 2010; Reilly and Niens, 2014) further research is required to explore whether distant conflict-related issues being taught as a means of local reflection can operate alongside exploration of interconnection, interdependence and critical GCE (Andreotti, 2006; Bryan and Bracken, 2011).

Whereas national-oriented forms of citizenship education are criticised for a failure to develop practice inclusive of minority ethnic students (Niens, O'Connor and Smith, 2013; Scott and Lawson, 2002), the inclusion of the perspectives of young people from marginalised backgrounds is recognised as an important issue for GCE (Banks, 2004) and peacebuilding education (Bickmore and Parker, 2014; Bickmore and Kovalchuk, 2012). However, in this study, a significant minority of programme developers questioned the extent to which young people from minority ethnic backgrounds were considered in the design and practice of peacebuilding education. This has important implications for how 'the local' is considered within peacebuilding and citizenship education, and more specifically, who is excluded from these spaces (Schierenbeck, 2015).

Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds may have experiences of both local conflict and conflicts in other regions of the globe (Warwick, 2008). Aside from a right to inclusion within peacebuilding GCE, the experiences of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds would enrich the peacebuilding education process (Bickmore, 2012; Gallagher, 2004). There is an urgent need to ensure the inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background within the planning and practice of peacebuilding education, and at a broader level to consider how their perceptions and experiences can contribute towards peacebuilding. Ultimately, a failure to include young people from minority ethnic backgrounds is failure to engage with the full range of factors underpinning a positive peace (Niens, O'Connor and Smith, 2013).

A focus on cosmopolitan forms of GCE must not ignore young people's attachment to their political or local communities (Niens and Reilly, 2012; Parekh, 2003). In an important vignette, one programme developer explained how a young participant on the Peacebuilding Schools programme revealed that her father had flown an Israeli flag from the roof of their house. The flying of Israeli or Palestinian flags in NI represents an allegiance taken up by Unionist and Nationalist communities respectively which reinforces existing conflict (Hill and White, 2008; Nolan and Bryan, 2016). This example has important implications. Whilst exploring conflict in another context may appear to avoid problematic local issues, there are occasions where local and distant conflicts are linked. In such circumstances, even if the connections are symbolic, peacebuilding education should consider young people's existing understandings and experiences of distant conflicts and their connections to local issues.

Certainly, peacebuilding education programmes must ensure that in teaching about distant conflict young people are not strengthening stereotypes of national and transnational groups, and in doing so forming allegiances which reinforce negative conflict (Davies, 2005a; Davies, Harber and Schweisfurth, 2002). As Niens and Reilly (2012) identify, there remains

a challenge for teachers, teacher educators and policy makers in developing global citizenship without reinforcing conflicting identities.

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