

# THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER MODEL AS A MEANS OF EVALUATING DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION PRACTICE: POST-PRIMARY TEACHERS' SELF-REFLECTIONS ON 'DOING' DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

In this article, **Melíosa Bracken** and **Audrey Bryan** explore the usefulness of reflective practice as a self-evaluative learning tool for development educators involved in formal education settings. Drawing on data derived from the reflective practice portfolios of students enrolled in an initial teacher education programme as well as from in-depth interviews with in-career teachers, insights are offered into some of the pedagogical struggles, uncertainties and dilemmas faced by teachers of development or global issues in post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. The findings are drawn from a much larger forthcoming study supported by Irish Aid which critically explores how the so-called 'developing world' gets constructed as 'knowable' to young people in an Irish context.

## Introduction

Popularised by Schön (1983; 1987; 1996), the term reflective practice refers to the active process of examining one's own experiences to create opportunities for learning. In a teaching context, reflective practice involves a willingness to actively participate in a perpetual growing process requiring ongoing critical reflection on both classroom practices and core beliefs (Larrivee, 2010). Similarly, development education (DE) seeks to engage participants in a process of 'analysis, reflection and action' with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding of the world we live in (Irish Aid, 2007), signifying a strong connection between the goals of DE and the requirements of reflective practice. While critical analysis and reflection are generally considered successful outcomes of DE, this article explores the value of reflective practice as a professional learning tool for those who also act as development educators in formal education.

The purpose of this article is three-fold: firstly, it seeks to offer insights into the practice of post-primary teachers who are delivering DE at the 'chalkface'. Secondly, it seeks to facilitate the development of supportive DE frameworks within the context of teacher education by shedding light on some of the most common pedagogical challenges post-primary teachers are likely to encounter in their own classrooms when engaging students with global justice

themes and issues. Thirdly, it presents the reflective-practitioner model as an evaluative framework for DE interventions in formal education settings.

Despite this article's emphasis on some of the difficulties and dilemmas that teachers experience while delivering DE at post-primary level, the findings presented here should not be taken as representative of the broader spectrum of teachers' experiences. They are derived from a much larger study which suggests that teachers are subject to a range of complex emotions when teaching DE, but are predominantly enthusiastic and passionate about incorporating global justice themes and issues in their teaching. Likewise, the research suggests that many post-primary students are deeply interested in global themes and issues and find the active learning dimensions of DE enjoyable and informative (Bryan & Bracken, forthcoming). This article, however, seeks to highlight some of the difficulties teachers are likely to experience with a view to informing ongoing attempts to mainstream DE within teacher education programmes.

The article begins by providing an overview of DE within the post-primary sector and within teacher education in the Republic of Ireland, the foci of the research. It then examines the inherent 'knottiness' of evaluating DE with its complex and radical aims and longer-term objectives, and highlights the inherent limitations of more standardised evaluative tools and techniques. It then presents the findings which highlight a range of difficulties and dilemmas encountered by both in-career and pre-service teachers delivering DE at post-primary level. These findings are discussed in terms of implications for teacher education programmes and the potential for self-evaluation and reflective practice in guiding and supporting teachers' ongoing attempts to deliver DE in Irish post-primary schools.

### **The 'mainstreaming' of development education?**

Recent years have witnessed a significant increase in government support for a range of initiatives in both formal and non-formal educational sectors, designed to 'mainstream' a global ethic and deepen learners' understandings about 'global' and 'development' issues (Smith, 2004). In addition, DE has a more radical agenda that aims to support people in 'understanding, and in acting to transform the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives and the lives of others at personal, community, national and international levels' (Irish Aid, 2007:4). The promotion of DE within post-primary schools is deemed a strategic priority for the Irish government's

official aid programme (Irish Aid, 2007:11). Initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in particular are seen as having a key role in equipping teachers with the necessary competency to promote concern and action for equal opportunities, social justice and sustainable development in their schools (Holden & Hicks, 2007; Robbins, Francis & Elliot, 2003). In addition to its intrinsic value, incorporating DE within teacher education is seen to have a significant ‘multiplier effect’. Equipping teachers with appropriate knowledge and strategies to successfully facilitate DE in their own classrooms is often presumed by policy-makers to be an efficient and cost-effective means of reaching and impacting on a ‘captive audience’ of thousands of students.

While support for DE amongst teachers in Ireland is generally high, (Bryan, Clarke & Drudy, 2009; Gleeson, King, O’Driscoll & Tormey, 2007), recent research suggests that a number of constraints frustrate the successful integration or ‘mainstreaming’ of DE in Irish post-primary schools. These include, inter alia, a crowded curriculum which promotes minimal, superficial or sanitised understandings of development issues and a lack of confidence amongst teachers in their ability to address complex global and justice themes (Bryan & Bracken, forthcoming; Dillon & O’ Shea, 2009; Bryan, Clarke & Drudy, 2009; Irish Aid, 2007). The extent to which development issues are addressed within the formal curriculum therefore, is largely dependent on the commitment and confidence of individual teachers to ‘bring development’ into their teaching and on their ability to make connections between development themes and pre-existing elements of the curriculum (Bryan & Bracken, forthcoming).

Despite these challenges, mainstreaming initiatives are grounded in the belief that newly qualified teachers will successfully integrate DE into their classroom practice by using active learning methodologies to create and implement lessons that will encourage students to engage in a critical reflection of complex global issues. The realisation of this goal is contingent upon the presence of some or all of the following factors:

- The teacher is confident of his/her knowledge and expertise in DE issues;
- The teacher believes DE is a relevant and important topic for his/her class;
- The teacher’s subject specialisation lends itself easily to DE;
- Whole-school support for DE is high;
- Whole-school support for active learning methodologies is high;

- An adequate time-frame is available for the teacher to cover exam syllabus and integrate DE topics that may not be relevant for examination purposes (Bryan & Bracken, forthcoming; Bryan, Clarke & Drudy, 2009; Gleeson, King, O' Driscoll & Tormey, 2007; Reynolds, Knipe & Milner, 2004).

Where most or all of these conditions are met, student teachers will probably be well-equipped to overcome any additional challenges faced when delivering development education. Where they are absent, or weakened by additional internal or external constraints, the likelihood of DE becoming 'mainstream' is slim, and teachers - particularly those who are new to the field - may need additional guidance and support in becoming effective DE practitioners.

School-level challenges associated with mainstreaming are compounded by the fact that DE continues to occupy a marginal status within the post-primary teacher education curriculum, often taking the form of 'add-development and stir' introductory lectures and/or 'development education weeks', thereby rendering critical, sustained engagement with DE hard to achieve (Bryan, Drudy & Clarke, 2009). Consequently, many student teachers often have only limited exposure to development themes and methods before being expected to translate them into classroom practice. While limited interventions may be preferential to no DE interventions at all, teachers new to DE need pedagogical spaces where they can engage more deeply with the complexities of global injustice or critically reflect on their own assumptions about development (Andreotti, 2006; Bryan, Clarke & Drudy, 2009). In the absence of such spaces, teacher educators run the risk of reinforcing, rather than challenging, unequal power relations and colonial assumptions, and promoting uncritical forms of development action (Andreotti, 2006; Bryan, Clarke & Drudy, 2009).

Despite the identification of these challenges, very little published research evidence is available on how teachers working in schools in Ireland actually deliver DE in the classroom or how they feel about it afterwards. This article presents data from the self-reflections of both pre-service and in-service teachers who documented or narrated specific experiences of teaching DE in schools. We argue that opportunities to engage in and learn from reflective practice offer important insights for both informing the future delivery of development education and offering an ongoing support and guidance framework for both novice and more experienced educators. The next section seeks to provide a broader context by highlighting the complexities of evaluating

and assessing the often intangible outcomes of an educational process with a transformative agenda.

### **Context: The complexities of evaluating the ‘burden of awareness’**

Assessing the long-term impact of any educational intervention is a complicated and often expensive process. This is perhaps especially true of DE, which strives to change the way people both think and act towards a more just and equitable world. In other words, there is an inherent ‘knottiness’ to evaluating any intervention designed to raise learners’ ‘burden of awareness’, of both the complexities and uneven consequences of globalising forces and the possibilities of working together towards other and better worlds (Tuan, 1996; cited in Sheppard, Porter, Faust & Nagar, 2009:5). As highlighted in a recent review of evaluation methods in DE: ‘demands from evaluation often exceed its capacity, especially in terms of attributing the impact of awareness-raising strategies to specific activities, and more long-term changes in attitudes and behaviour’ (Scheunflug & McDonnell, 2008:23). And yet, in an era of performativity and accountability, educators are under increasing pressure to demonstrate the value and cost-effectiveness of their programmes, often within a very short timeframe. The pressure to provide evidence of short-term impact is arguably incompatible with the goals of an educational process concerned with longer term evolution of awareness and an interrogative attitude towards development.

Moreover, while quantitative survey instruments are often advocated as a relatively ‘doable’, ‘quick and dirty’ means of assessing attitudinal or behavioural change, the nature of DE is such that uniform, standardised measures are unlikely to adequately capture the real impact of specific DE initiatives. Additional challenges arise from the unpredictable interaction of particular DE interventions with each learner’s unique biography, predispositions and level of interest. In other words, teasing out the effects of a given DE intervention can be complicated by the fact that individuals differ in what they bring to particular educational programmes, how they experience them, and what they take from them (Halpern, 2006).

The externally-funded nature of many DE initiatives adds an additional layer of complexity to the evaluation process. In this context, continued funding for a given programme can become contingent on positive results, and evaluation can thus become an instrument of control, pressure and power (Belgian Development Cooperation, 2005). In an era of fiscal austerity measures, from which the Official Development Assistance budget has not been

immune, the pressure to produce visible and demonstrable impact has the potential to divert attention from the less easily quantifiable, more intangible dimensions of the learning process at the heart of DE. As Bourn (2007) states:

“...evaluating and measuring success of the impact of global and development education programmes can only be located within the learning processes and learning. We can and should not lose sight of the relationship between the ‘development’ agenda and the ‘learning’ agenda” (cited in Scheunpflug & McDonnell, 2008:14).

Identifying the impact and outcomes of DE interventions is a real concern for development educators, irrespective of whether formal evaluation mechanisms from funders or other sources are required. The remainder of this article examines self-evaluation and reflective practice as related means of informing the preparation of teachers working in the formal education sector. It argues that important insights on how to prepare learners for the kinds of challenges, dilemmas and uncertainties they are likely to encounter in schools can be gleaned from both novice and experienced teachers’ reflections on their experiences of delivering DE in real-world classroom situations. Analysing teachers’ candid self-reflections on their experiences of applying DE content and method in post-primary schools provided important insights into the kinds of personal as well as pedagogical challenges, resistances, moral complexities and dilemmas that development educators are likely to encounter within the context of their everyday teaching practice. Based on these findings, the authors argue that evaluation through self-reflection is a valuable tool on two distinct levels: firstly, as a guide and support for teachers to learn from past experiences in order to improve their effectiveness as DE practitioners, secondly, as a framework for evaluating DE within the context of teacher education programmes.

## **Methodology**

The findings presented here are drawn from a much larger study which combined critical discourse analysis of development-related curriculum materials, in-depth interviews with 26 practicing teachers and an analysis of 75 development education lesson plans and reflections created by pre-service teachers enrolled in a Postgraduate Diploma in Education Programme (PGDE) in the Republic of Ireland. While over 200 students were enrolled in the PGDE programme, only the lesson plans and evaluations of those who provided written, informed consent to participate in the study were analysed.

The overarching purpose of the broader study is to provide deeper and more nuanced understandings of how global and international development themes are communicated in Irish post-primary schools. This paper focuses on data derived from two principal sources: self-evaluations of DE lesson plans prepared and implemented during teaching practice by pre-service teachers and in-depth interviews with practising post-primary teachers (see Bryan & Bracken, forthcoming, for a more detailed description of the study's methodology and sample profile).

There is a significant corpus of literature on the importance of reflective practice within the context of teacher education, and the reflective practitioner model has become deeply embedded as a learning tool within teacher education programmes in Ireland and elsewhere in recent decades. The reflective practitioner model seeks to provide teachers with opportunities to capture their real-life classroom experiences so that they can learn from them. In the case of ITE programmes, student teachers are introduced to the importance of their professional development as reflective practitioners from the outset. This professional development is typically assessed through the submission of action research assignments and a reflective teaching portfolio (Macruairc & Harford, 2009). As part of their exposure to DE, PGDE students were required to create a DE lesson plan, deliver it as part of their teaching practice and provide critical self-reflection on their experience. The lesson plan, along with examples of resources and materials used in class and the written evaluation, were included in students' teaching practice portfolios, submitted for assessment purposes at the end of the academic year. The decision to use data from student teachers' teaching portfolios was grounded in the belief that teaching portfolios can 'provide a connection to the contexts and personal histories of real teaching and make it possible to document the unfolding of both teaching and learning over time' (Wolf, 1991:129).

Most of the lesson plans followed a generic template common to all lesson plans developed by students as part of their ITE training, which includes information on the title and theme of the lesson, objective, materials and resources utilised, detailed timetable and an open space for student teachers to review and evaluate the lessons post-implementation. The reflective portfolio work was a compulsory element of the evaluation process for student teachers wishing to gain a post-primary teaching qualification. As student teachers were aware that their DE lesson plans would be graded as part of their overall competence in teaching practice, there was a risk that the lesson plan evaluations would contain falsely-positive representations. However, upon

scrutiny, the evaluative comments made by the majority of student teachers were found to be candid appraisals of what was for many students their first experience of delivering a DE lesson. By and large, participants engaged in a sincere and reflective account, detailing their reservations and uncertainties about their ability to successfully implement a DE lesson and highlighting the challenges they encountered in translating theory into practice.

In the case of experienced teachers, formal opportunities for reflective practice are less common within the context of their everyday experiences. Conducting individual interviews with in-career teachers on how they experience, understand, and integrate development knowledge within their own teaching is one means of capturing the perceived 'multiplier effect' associated with DE 'in action'.

## Findings

### *The challenges of active learning methodologies*

Recent research suggests that student teachers theoretically embrace active and participatory methods and are supportive of its practical value in the classroom (Bryan, Clarke & Drudy, 2009). This finding was corroborated, to some extent, by the high number of participants (54 out of 75) who incorporated active learning methodologies into their DE lesson plans. However, participants' post-hoc evaluations of implemented DE lessons highlight the complexity of translating theoretical approaches into the real-life 'messiness' of a classroom setting. A number of participants experienced a pedagogical conflict between the perceived need to maintain classroom control or manage students' behaviour and the 'productive noise' which is often central to the active learning process:

"Today was one of the most difficult to organise and keep on track...it was very difficult to keep the class calm and to keep the noise levels down when they were doing [DE-related group work]" (History teacher, pre-service, female).

"My head is busting after all that. At times there was so much noise. It was the first time that I did something like this. I had to ask the students to lower their voice a number of times. I found myself going around the class telling them to be quiet rather than helping them out with the [role-playing] game" (Geography teacher, pre-service, male).

Student teachers' anxiety over noise levels and student behaviour is understandable given their fledgling status in schools. McCormack and O'Flaherty found, for example, that student teachers were often reluctant to implement participatory learning modalities over concerns about being viewed as ineffective or unable to impose discipline (2006:3). However, interviews with highly-experienced teachers revealed similar challenges:

“Well, I suppose the method we would use always was participatory, now it's quite difficult to do it because if you're going to do that, you're going to have a certain amount of rí-rá , you're not going to have them all sitting there in their seats. So if the principal comes in and they're all standing around there talking, or if you have a teacher beside you that wants silence and they're saying 'what is going on in that class?' And I understand that, so depending on the room you're in or whatever, it can be very difficult” (Religion teacher, in-career, female).

Experiences of this nature suggest that while teachers may want to implement less didactic teaching methods for DE lessons, the inherent liveliness and unstructured nature of active learning in groups has the potential to reflect badly upon their professional reputation. McMorrow's study of active learning in practice similarly found that norms of 'predominantly silent, orderly classrooms' acted as significant barriers to its use in Irish classrooms and that 'noise' was the constraint most frequently mentioned by teachers (2006:328). Such findings suggest that active learning methods – key elements in DE practice – are likely to be avoided or watered down if teachers are concerned about appearing incompetent or ineffectual or need to appease colleagues with more traditional understandings about what constitutes 'learning' or good teaching practice.

### ***Student resistance/apathy to development education themes***

As the following vignettes demonstrate, apathy or resistance to international development or 'global' themes on the part of some students was another common challenge identified by teachers. It is, perhaps, unsurprising that some students will feel apathetic towards social justice and global issues, given that the world's poverty and problems are perceived as remote for many people in the North and that psychological barriers are often erected by wealthier populations against distressing or morally challenging issues (Wilson, 2010). While student dissenters were usually in the minority, both pre-service and in-service teachers reported feeling frustrated and/or de-motivated by negative or sceptical comments:

“And then you have your students who just don't care, so you know you do have that definitely, you've kids who are like I don't care and they're like “oh why do we have to learn about all these people who are far away” (CSPE in-career teacher, female).

”Some of the students were sceptical as to what had happened” (in a DVD about blood diamonds shown to the class) (Science teacher, pre-service, female).

In addition, many of these issues, such as global warming are trends, not catastrophic events (McMichael, 1993). As such, some students perceive them as marginal issues that do not require urgent or immediate action:

“Some students were very negative towards the videos [on global warming] stating that it doesn't concern them so why are we bothering....One student seemed convinced it didn't directly concern him. This student commented ‘when it affects me directly I'll get back to you for information’” (Science teacher, pre-service, female).

In some cases, students appeared caught in a ‘them or us’ view of social justice, prioritising problems at home over crises in ‘far-away’ countries:

“One of the students highlighted an issue ‘why don't we/these charities put more emphasis on helping people at home (Ireland) who need aid?’ Clearly this opinion reflects many others in society so I decided that I should take their opinions on board and not just dismiss them. However, this started a group discussion which required some critical thinking and effective re-arrangement of questions. I somehow managed to keep the students focused on the topic...” (CSPE teacher, pre-service, female).

“...you know they're really very focused on their own experience and if it's not they get quite annoyed that we're not doing things about Ireland and we keep talking about people far away. They can't seem to, they don't have the same kind of big world view I suppose that an adult who's travelled I suppose” (CSPE teacher, in-career, female).

Against a backdrop of increasing cuts in public expenditure and growing unemployment figures, it is possible that the stance adopted by the

students in the above narrative will gain ground, placing more teachers in the difficult position of ‘defending’ DE interventions. By the same token, offering students a safe space to tease out the implications of adopting a particular stance is all the more crucial when recent reductions to the aid budgets suggests an ‘us or them’ attitude is, to some extent, politically endorsed. These findings suggest that teachers would benefit from being exposed to a range of pedagogical strategies which would enable them to transform hostile or resistant responses into springboards for deeper explorations and discussions. The foregoing example detailing students’ resistance to the notion of climate change highlights that teachers need to be able to effectively demonstrate, through content knowledge and pedagogical tools, the extent to which ‘the struggle is not about “us” and “them”, but about “us all”, always’ (Andreotti & Dowling, 2004:611).

### ***Critical engagement vs. superficial understandings***

Other participants did not encounter open or active resistance but did struggle with getting pupils past weak or superficial understandings of global or social justice issues:

“I have some misgivings regarding the fact that I am unsure as to whether or not I really achieved the aims and objectives I had set out for the class. I feel that in some respects, although the students really enjoyed reading and discussing the articles, I am not sure they understood quite what I was trying to get across to them. We discussed in our development education workshops how the point is not to make our students feel guilty for what they have or to merely make them sympathetic towards those less fortunate and yet this is how I believe the students felt at the end of the lesson. My objective had been, as we discussed in our lectures, to enable the students to think about, reflect on and therefore feel a responsibility towards other people. I feel for this reason that this lesson was not entirely successful and will have to reflect on how to rectify this” (English teacher, pre-service, female).

“The students found it hard to relate [the experiential learning exercise] to other examples in the wider community or globally. They have a poor understanding of global issues so that part of the discussion was not good. With a lot of prompting the girls could eventually relate to the fact that what they do affects others all around the world” (Science teacher, in-career, female).

In other cases, teachers themselves felt torn between engaging students with some of the more challenging and intractable dimensions of DE, and presenting a more sanitised version of reality. One participant explained how she felt conflicted between presenting an ‘over-simplified’ understanding of development issues and distressing her students with ‘the ugly truth’:

“And I think that's the thing with aid, it's so complicated. Like, it's so, I think it's such a complex issue, so complex, so how on earth do you simplify it so teenagers can understand it...but still be true? So I think I always end up with either choice. I always either oversimplify it and then walk away thinking I didn't tell them the truth at all, or else I tell them the truth and walk away thinking I've completely depressed them and I don't think any of them will get involved in charity because I told them the ugly truth. So I don't know what the balance is, I haven't figured out how to try and tell them the truth but in a way that doesn't depress or discourage them” (CSPE teacher, in-career, female).

These fears are further compounded by the positioning of teachers as ‘experts’ in classroom settings who are expected to have all the ‘right’ answers. While this may be appropriate, if not necessary, when teaching mathematical formulae or scientific tables, DE defies precise explanations and tidy solutions, leaving teachers vulnerable to feelings of inadequacy and helplessness:

“Sometimes when I'm teaching I feel a bit despondent in relation to development education throughout the world. And teaching them all and making them aware of inequality, but I don't know the way forward, and I'm not able to give them any answers. And you know, am I just, letting them aware of what's wrong but not letting them know how we can solve the problem?” (Geography teacher, in-career, female)

The following, highly-experienced teacher eloquently describes her own, self-perceived, shortcomings in tackling the underlying complexities of development issues:

“Um, so from a CSPE perspective, I think we don't question enough. When we read a piece about a developing community and the fact that they do not have health care, they do not have a, a good education system, that they must pay for their education, that they have child labour, often I think we don't really analyse why that is. And we do come from a certain perception that somehow they're not able to get

their education system going, it must be corrupt or incapable government. We don't look at the real obstacles to development within the country and created by colonialism, by the political system, by globalisation, by the exploitation of workers, and those are huge issues. And they're probably too complex or at least we don't have, I personally don't feel I have perhaps, the skills and the really accurate information and resources to delve into that and explore it, in a way that is accessible for young students" (CSPE teacher, in-career, female).

This participant went on to discuss the tension she perceived between the educative and active dimensions of DE, explaining how within real-life classroom situations there is a need to present development content knowledge both complex enough to allow for deep engagement and not too complicated to prevent an active response. She also expressed concern about what she perceived as the potentially disempowering effects of a particular 'academic' approach to DE, wherein the magnitude of development problems is addressed without accompanying ideas on how one might go about altering the existing system or ameliorating these problems:

"And it dumps an awful lot onto the students if you're telling them so many people are dying in the third world of AIDS, or so many people are dying of poverty, or children can't get education and then you walk out of the classroom and you don't leave them with any empowerment to make to change that system" (CSPE teacher, in-career, female).

Comments of this nature speak directly to the sheer enormity of the task of facilitating effective engagement in an educational process like DE, which has at its heart an explicitly radical and socially transformative agenda, within the very limited time periods allocated to subject areas like CSPE in the post-primary syllabus. The vignettes presented here highlight some of the gaps and pitfalls between theoretical expectations and real-life corollaries of delivering DE in Irish post-primary classrooms. The next section attempts to tease out some of the implications of the above findings in terms of how more supportive DE frameworks can be developed within the context of teacher education.

## Discussion

"In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of

research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution” (Schön, 1987:3).

Schön’s evocative description of ‘swampy lowlands’ captures the messy, confusing, grey areas that teachers of DE must contend with when introducing complex issues relating to social justice, development, global citizenship, diversity and interdependence. While DE interventions aim to supply student teachers with knowledge and resources for engaging with these issues, the findings revealed varying levels of uncertainty, confusion and conflict. Even where teachers were experienced in classroom environments, attempts to introduce complex and contentious issues in an active and participatory manner led to unpredictable outcomes and unanticipated dilemmas. Boud and Walker (1998) argue that ‘reflection on demand’ can sometimes be reduced to a ‘check-listing’ exercise that students work through in a mechanical fashion. However, in this case there was strong evidence to suggest that the opportunity to engage in a reflective evaluation of their DE lessons was a beneficial exercise for both novice and more experienced teachers. All participants were able to critically reflect on their teaching and eloquently articulated the anxieties, difficulties and moral complexities associated with delivering DE, as well as their passion and commitment to the field. While ‘quick-and-dirty’ quantitative research instruments may produce fairly immediate, measurable evidence of impact, the snapshot presented here suggest that much can be gained from alternative, more qualitative approaches to evaluating DE interventions in university and / or post-primary settings.

This article has attempted to demonstrate the utility of critical self-reflection and self-evaluation as valuable learning tools for teacher educators concerned with the question of how best to prepare pre-service teachers for delivering DE at post-primary level. To best prepare their students, teacher educators need to understand the difficulties post-primary teachers are likely to encounter as they attempt to engage their own students with ‘big’ and complex issues. At a personal level, some teachers spoke of their difficulty in overcoming feelings of inadequacy or uncertainty while others were reluctant to upset students with distressing information. At a school level, professional expectations of teachers maintaining ‘control’ (read: quiet, orderly classrooms) conflicted with the practicalities of implementing the participative learning methodologies that are central to DE practice. At student level, some teachers struggled with getting past pupils’ simplistic understandings and limited worldviews. Other teachers encountered a range of negative responses to DE issues. While only a small minority of students expressed apathy, scepticism or

antagonism, disparaging comments appeared to have a disproportionately strong effect on teachers' motivation and confidence in delivering DE.

The article also highlights the major difficulties posed by the overcrowded nature of the curriculum in both post-primary and teacher education settings for the realisation of DE's radical agenda. The 'add-development and stir' approach - which is often all that the existing timetable and curricula in schools and colleges will allow - creates insufficient opportunities for genuine and deep critical engagement with issues of global injustice. In the absence of more critical framings of development issues, it becomes all too easy to perceive development crises as 'theirs' and not 'ours', as evident in the foregoing example of those students who dismissed the relevance of climate change to their own lives. Creating spaces for more critical engagement is crucial, for example, if students are to grasp the reality that issues of climate justice, do, in fact have everything to do with them, to the extent that environmental policies and consumer practices in one part of the world can profoundly impact on lives in another, and that 'our' lifestyle conveniences and choices in the global North are deeply implicated in the evolution of 'strange weather' patterns and desertification in the global South.

Another implication is that teachers' fears about the disempowering effects of particular forms of development knowledge may result in them shying away from more complex development narratives towards 'overly-simplistic' or sanitised, easily-solvable, versions of DE. Although it is perfectly understandable and admirable that teachers do not want students to feel powerless to intervene as individuals, without opportunities for more sustained engagement with development education in their training and within their own classrooms, teachers may resort to promoting symptomatic, as opposed to diagnostic approaches to DE. In other words, teachers who lack anything more than a superficial understanding of DE themselves are likely to promote forms of development knowledge and activism which address the symptoms of global poverty, without illuminating or transforming students' understanding of the problem or challenging the assumptions which underlie symptomatic responses. Underscoring the ways in which symptomatic pedagogical approaches actively frustrate the realisation of DE's more radical goals is something that teacher educators should strive to communicate, even within the confined spaces of ITE programmes.

In the absence of these much needed pedagogical spaces for sustained critical engagement with DE, there are other things that teacher educators can

do to reassure their students of the efficacy of their DE interventions. Novice teachers may need frequent reassurance, for example, that noise in classroom settings is 'OK', and can be productive and even advantageous to the learning process. In other words, they may need to be regularly encouraged to experiment with a range of methods, even in those environments where they are new and understandably anxious about 'rocking the boat' or making a bad impression.

The findings suggest that current teacher education programmes may need to explore ways to encourage and support teachers before, during and after integrating DE into their teaching practice. Effective DE requires teachers to have more than a bag of teaching tricks and a grasp of DE issues. These alone are insufficient in addressing the complex issues that arise in the real-world setting of an Irish post-primary classroom. Encouraging teachers new to DE to adopt a reflective approach might help allay anxieties and restore confidence. For example, it could be helpful for teacher educators to engage pre-service teachers in discussions around how best to gauge the effectiveness of classroom-based DE. These discussions would be particularly useful if they facilitated pre-service teachers in developing a range of relevant markers to be used as a touchstone for future DE class-based interventions. If teachers new to DE can be encouraged to adopt such reflective strategies, they may avoid being trapped in 'unexamined judgements, interpretations, assumptions and expectations' (Larrivee, 2010:294), which may, in turn, lead to frustration and uncertainty. Equally important is that student teachers are encouraged to view DE as a learning process for themselves as much as for their pupils, thus freeing themselves of unrealistic expectations of instant success. It is in this context that the role of self-evaluation and reflective practice becomes clear. Engaging in an ongoing process of reflection and evaluation could assist teachers new to DE navigate their way through Schön's 'swampy lowlands'.

The preceding analysis is not intended to overstate the difficulties attached to teaching DE in Irish post-primary schools. Many teachers spoke about valuable and rewarding outcomes arising from their DE interventions and the vast majority retained a positive attitude towards integrating DE into their teaching in the future, even amongst those who had less than ideal experiences. Instead, it is hoped that the findings presented here can be used to inform ongoing attempts to mainstream DE within teacher education programmes. Searching questions may need to be asked about the possible risks attached to sending insufficiently-prepared teachers into classrooms charged with the responsibility of introducing young students to intricately complicated global

issues. Moreover, the findings suggest a crucial need for further research into the possible disconnects between curriculum intent and practice to identify contributing factors and possible solutions.

The final words of the article come from a student teacher who initially struggled with discipline and behaviour issues in her class. After implementing a DE lesson, she focuses her comments on her own learning, revealing just how powerful and important self-evaluation can be in becoming a successful DE practitioner:

“Following today’s lesson I saw a different side to the class. They actually seemed human to me! The visual stimulus of a video clip worked tremendously with this group as I expected it would. Quite a number of them have issues with reading and writing but the video worked as something they could focus on easily and absorb as easily as the rest of the class. They showed participation in a way that I didn’t realise they were capable of. It actually made me a little sad as I understand now that these girls act out because they are frustrated rather than because they want to be nasty. The development education lesson illustrated to me that teaching goes beyond examinations” (CSPE Teacher, pre-service, female).

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