

Disclaimer

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Note on cover image

The cover image was created by one of the pupil participants in the study in response to a prompt in a lesson which asked them to draw and discuss a picture of themselves in the future in their dream role/job/occupation.

Note to readers: Quotes from participants are included verbatim as they were audio recorded. The researchers have not changed the language used.

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Abbreviations and Glossary

CPD – Continuing professional development

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools: Action Plan for Educational Inclusion. There are 852 Primary Level and Second Level Schools in the DEIS initiative (ROI).

ECT – Early Career Teacher (NI)

ESRI - Economic and Social Research Institute

GTCNI - General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland – a statutory, independent, regulatory body for the teaching profession in Northern Ireland.

IRC - The Irish Research Council

ITE -Initial Teacher Education

NI – Northern Ireland or referred to in the report as the ‘North’

NQT- Newly Qualified Teacher (ROI)

OECD- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ROI- Republic of Ireland or referred to in the report as the ‘South’

SCoTENS – Standing Committee for Teacher Education North and South

SESE - Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (ROI): Curriculum area consisting of Science, Geography and History.

SHARED - Student Hopes: Achievement, Research, Equity and Diversity

ST – Student teacher

TE – Teacher educator

Teaching Council – Professional standards body for teaching profession in the Republic of Ireland

WAU – The World Around Us (NI): Curriculum area focusing on Geography, History and Science and Technology

Executive Summary

Introduction

The SHARED research study explored how teacher educators can prepare and support student teachers to negotiate and engage with social justice issues, including educational disadvantage, attainment and achievement while on their school placement.

Context

This research project was jointly funded by the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) and the Shared Island Unit of the Department of the Taoiseach. Funding was awarded under the call for cross border research that focused specifically on enhancing educational attainment through sharing experiences and learning on a shared island. The research was located in initial teacher education contexts both North and South of the border in St Mary's University College in Belfast and in Marino Institute of Education in Dublin.

The Research Study

The SHARED research study used an action research approach. The overarching research question guiding the research was;

- How can teacher educators support student teachers to engage with social justice, intersectionality and interconnectedness on their school placement experiences to enhance and benefit primary school pupils' shared hopes, ambitions and aspirations?

This research question is further explored through seven sub-questions:

- i. How do student teachers perceive/understand concepts of social justice?
- ii. What do student teachers identify as social justice based pedagogical approaches?
- iii. How do primary school pupils respond to concepts of social justice?
- iv. How do student teachers experience the development of their teacher agency on placement?
- v. How do student teachers implement social justice-based pedagogies on placement?
- vi. How does a social justice-based pedagogical approach influence student teachers' professional learning and teaching practices?
- vii. How do student teachers negotiate the lived reality of teaching for social justice?

A multi-layered project design supported the implementation of this research project.

Literature Review

O'Toole et al. (2019) drawing on the work of Alanen, Brooker and Mayell (2015) underscore the importance of education research in 'understanding children's learning as embedded in the social, cultural and family contexts in which it occurs (p.3). In keeping with the focus of this research project, the literature reviewed for the SHARED research project centred on the key elements that may interplay specifically in the classroom of a student teacher –

- The family, the school, community links and habitus
- Social justice pedagogy and curriculum
- Pupil agency and social justice
- Teacher identity and agency
- Educational (dis)advantage, equality and inclusion

Data Tapestry

A rich data tapestry was created through the research project and was used to generate the findings and recommendations of the project.

The qualitative data collected included focus groups (with student teachers and with pupils in placement schools), lesson plans/evaluations and reflections. The data generated through the focus group interviews foregrounds the study and is contextualised by the backdrop of student teacher lesson plans/evaluations, reflections and research team reflections data. Key findings were extrapolated using a Braun and Clarke thematic analysis (2006, 2020). Cross tabulations of visual and audio data are woven throughout the analysis, and contours between data sets were traversed iteratively. Triangulation was ensured through the inclusion of the various methodological layers.

Key Findings

- Student teachers have strong perceptions and understanding of school and family but less developed understanding of equality, equity and justice.
- Student teachers reported being facilitators of learning and experiencing enhanced pupil agency when using focus groups and visual data as stimuli for discourse in the classroom. Significant support was required from teacher educators at the initial stages.
- Pupils demonstrated an awareness of cultural diversity that many student teachers did not expect and were very open to accepting the differences between individuals.
- The project challenged participants to engage in critical reflection on their teaching practices including their underlying beliefs and values. They reported a positive mind-set shift about social justice teaching.
- Challenges reported by student teachers included their own emotional regulation when responding to pupils, lack of time and resources and selecting age-appropriate language and not reinforcing existing beliefs and values when reflecting on planning and practice.
- Significant time is required to adequately prepare student teachers to plan and teach through a social justice lens. Additional time was required for foundational exploration by student teachers of their experiences and practices.

- Teacher educators need to work collaboratively to ensure consistency in allowing student teachers time to reflect and take appropriate action in relation to teaching for social justice.

Sample of Key Recommendations

Level	Key Recommendation: there is a need for
Teacher educator	teacher educators to support student teachers to achieve more congruent alignment between their conceptual understanding of social justice and the lived reality of teaching for social justice.
Student teacher	student teachers to take responsibility to 'value their values' in relation to issues of social justice .
Induction	induction both North and South to support NQTs/ECTs to develop the agility and flexibility needed to deal with the rapid changes in social justice issues.
Teacher CPD	cross-border CPD to be developed in order to facilitate shared learning, mirroring the SCoTENS student teacher virtual exchange programme.
Policy	a greater balance to be encouraged in teacher education policies between social justice aspects and global teacher education accountability agendas.
Curriculum	ITE providers to ensure that social justice learning outcomes are explicit, and implemented/assessed across modules.
Shared Island	further cross border research to be conducted focused on practising teachers' perspectives and understanding of social justice education.

Project Outputs

There are four main outputs from the SHARED research project which can be used by teacher educators, student teachers, teachers and policy makers: A pre-placement programme - research methods, sociology, using visual data methods, social justice; a Padlet with resources to support teaching for social justice; an eBook comprising the collection of visual artefacts and an accompanying video.

Section 1: Introduction

Teaching in the third decade of the 21st century on our shared island has already developed many key characteristics that will long be referred to in the history books; the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy crisis, the war in Ukraine, the status of the Northern Ireland assembly, climate change, Brexit, social and environmental protest movements and extensive homelessness. The preparation of teachers to teach in this ever dynamic and ever evolving vista is both a challenge and an opportunity. In the recent past, teacher education programmes both North and South have undergone a myriad of reviews and realignments informed and influenced by both national and global policy priorities and teacher education reform agendas. Within educational reform agendas the orthodoxy amongst policy makers and stakeholders is to tackle and address issues of (in)equality, (dis)advantage and social (in)justice. The reality of how in practical terms that may happen on an equitable basis remains a challenge. Reay (2022) argues that globally ‘there has been more of an endorsement than challenge of social mobility as the main mechanism of social justice in education’ (p.425). Reay (2022) refers to McNamara et al. (2021) who state that the OECD has had a powerful steering role in prioritising the economic over the social purposes of education, ‘instigating more testing, measuring, rankings and comparisons’ which Reay (2022) argues may actually have hindered rather than progressed improvements in educational equality. As in other jurisdictions, issues and challenges of social (in)justice and (in)equality, educational (dis)advantage, attainment, marginalised groups and communities in education systems in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland (NI) are manifold. The key to understanding educational (in)equality and (dis)advantage is to establish an acceptance that it is, as Reay (2022) puts it, “not one thing”, but “an intricate and complicated amalgam of many different factors” (p. 425) with multiple interconnected variables. Understanding the complexities therefore is critical but conceptualising mechanisms and practical ways and approaches for teachers to influence outcomes and change trajectories is an even greater priority. Teacher education programmes on our shared island offer an opportunity to prioritise the preparation of teachers to teach for social justice first and foremost by foregrounding the promotion of socially just and fair norms and mores as the basis on which their pedagogy and teaching are founded.

The SHARED research project shines a light on how teacher educators can prepare and support student teachers (STs) to negotiate and engage with ever emerging social justice issues, including educational disadvantage, attainment, achievement and inclusion while on their school placement. SHARED is embedded in collaborative interactions between teacher educators and STs from two primary higher education institutions North and South. The research team identified an opportunity in this project to support and prepare STs in advance of and during their placement experiences to activate their own agency and make a difference in the lives of their pupils and in optimising their educational outcomes. Student Teachers (STs), who are typically young adults are ‘active agents of

social change... and it is essential to provide them with opportunities to critically engage in informed discussion and debate on the issues and problems facing society locally and globally and to provide opportunities for them to take action to challenge inequality and promote human rights, solidarity and justice' (Kavanagh et al., 2021, p.1).

This project, which utilised an action research approach was underpinned by a teacher education framework that promotes teacher education for social justice and aimed to raise STs' awareness of their individual and collective potential to change and influence educational trajectories and impact positively on educational outcomes through positive and active social justice underpinned pedagogy. The project also aimed to share experiences and learning from the practicum elements of undergraduate primary teacher education programmes North and South as experienced by our STs and by the pupils they taught whilst on placement.

SHARED stands for Student Hopes: Achievement, Research, Equity and Diversity. In keeping with this acronym, the research is underpinned by a sociological framework and explores sociological concepts, including; family and family influence on engagement in education, community, culture, identity, inclusion, diversity, and equity. The overarching research question guiding the research is:

- How can teacher educators support student teachers to engage with social justice, intersectionality and interconnectedness on their school placement experiences to enhance and benefit primary school pupils' shared hopes, ambitions and aspirations?

This research question is further explored through seven sub-questions:

- i. How do student teachers perceive/understand concepts of social justice?
- ii. What do student teachers identify as social justice based pedagogical approaches?
- iii. How do primary school pupils respond to concepts of social justice?
- iv. How do student teachers experience the development of their teacher agency on placement?
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- vi. How does a social justice based pedagogical approach influence student teachers' professional learning and teaching practices?
- vii. How do student teachers negotiate the lived reality of teaching for social justice?

These research questions were investigated and explored through 4 phases of a cyclical action research project which is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

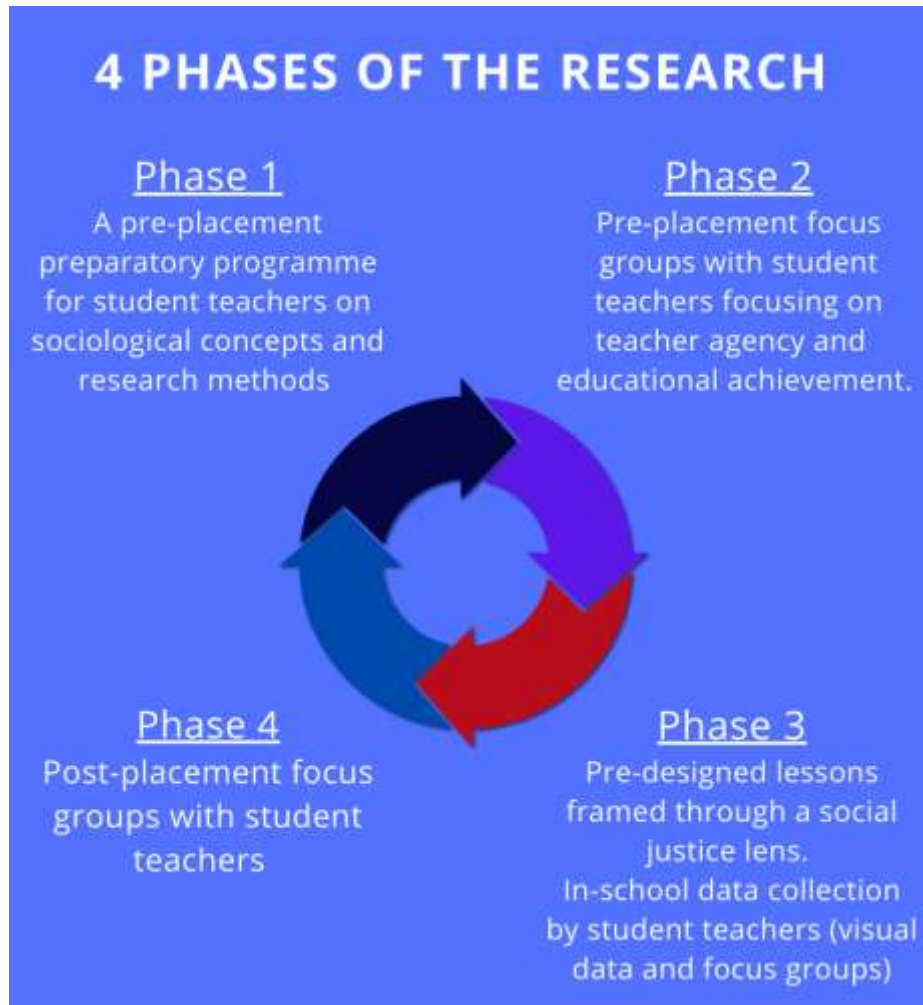


Figure 1 Four phases of the SHARED research project

This report is presented across seven main sections. The first section introduces the research project. This is then followed by an exploration of the very specific research context of a cross border teacher education research project. A literature review follows to ground the research project in a nuanced literature base. The research design is outlined in section four. The fifth section of the report focuses on the data analysis stage of the research, with the findings and discussion presented in section six. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for teacher education policy and practice North and South.

Section 2: Research Context

2.1 Introduction to the research context

This research project was jointly funded by the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) and the Shared Island Unit of the Department of the Taoiseach. SCoTENS was established in 2003 with the aim to ‘create a safe space for teacher educators – North and South– to come together and discuss issues of common interest and explore ways of co-operating closely together.’ (www.SCoTENS.org). Similarly, the Shared Island initiative, which was launched by an Taoiseach, Mícheál Martin in late 2020 aims ‘to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future.’ (www.gov.ie). Shared island research is one of the key activities of the Shared Island Initiative and ‘a comprehensive research programme to provide high quality evidence-based analysis across a range of areas to inform Government policy priorities and public discussion on building a shared island and consensus around a shared future’ (www.gov.ie) is enabled through collaborations with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), the Irish Research Council (IRC), the National Economic and Social Council and SCoTENS.

The SHARED research project was awarded funding under the call that focused specifically on enhancing educational attainment through *sharing experiences and learning* on a shared island. The research is located in initial teacher education contexts both North and South of the border in St Mary’s University College in Belfast and in Marino Institute of Education in Dublin.

SHARED is a unique research project that draws together a number of key contextual factors- Shared Island collaboration; initial teacher education; and the practicum experience.

2.2 The SHARED research project concept map

The SHARED research project draws on a number of key concepts, which were categorised by the research team in terms of context, participants, social justice and the sociology of education. These are outlined in Figure 2 below:

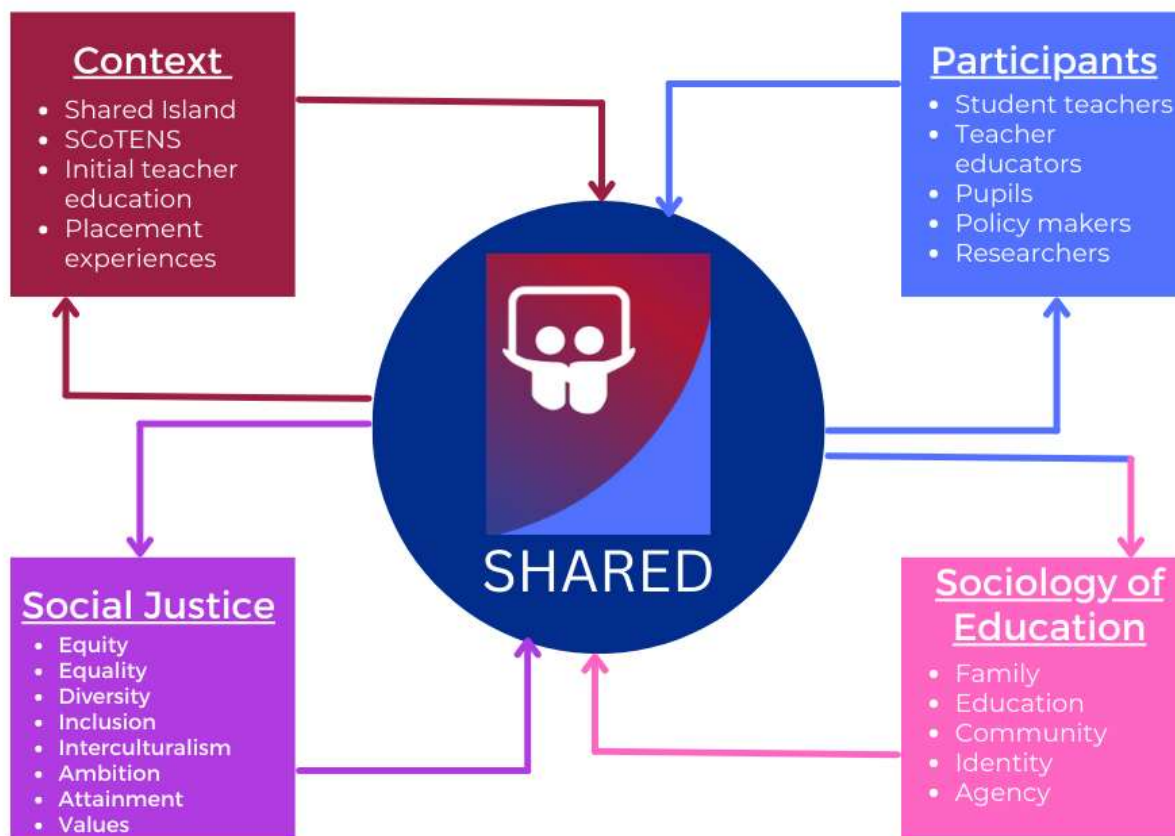


Figure 2 SHARED research project concept map

2.3 SCoTENS: North South teacher education collaboration and cooperation

SCoTENS is unique as a network of teacher educators in that it operates across a contested border, “which is where the network’s value imperative rests” (Clarke et al., 2021, p. 79). In their assessment of the value of SCoTENS as a cross-border professional learning network in Ireland Clarke et al, (2020) focus on the value imperative by utilising a value-creation framework based in social learning theory (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015a; B. Wenger-Trayner et al., 2017), to focus on a series of five inter-related, operational dimensions of value for professional learning. Clarke et al. (2021) argue that strong teacher education is widely acknowledged as a transformative, broadly reflective venture. They also describe how acquiring a teacher’s identity is best understood as a dynamic process not only influenced by individual capacities or abilities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Schepens et al., 2009) but also by externally endorsed aspirations “like mutual respect, pride in shared values and the conditions that support and foster these” (p.11). The concept of *values* is a primary concept in the SHARED research project aligning with the SCoTENS objectives. As a professional network of teacher educators SCoTENS offers teacher educators, teachers and STs at all stages of the continuum of Teacher Education, (Initial, Induction and Teachers’ Learning) opportunities to engage and develop their identity and agency, conduct research and participate in professional learning opportunities in a supportive and inclusive network.

2.4 Initial Teacher Education

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) represents the first phase of the continuum of teacher education and as such is both critical and formative in the preparation of teachers for entry into the profession. In the ROI, Teacher Education provision is regulated by the Teaching Council (www.teachingcouncil.ie) while in Northern Ireland, teacher education is regulated by the General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland (<https://gtcni.org.uk/>). Teaching is a highly valued and ‘highly esteemed profession’ (Clarke & O’Doherty, 2021, p.69) in both jurisdictions and attracts highly motivated and ‘highly qualified candidates who elect to teach’ (Clarke & O’Doherty, 2021, p. 63). Cochran-Smith has written extensively (Cochran-Smith, 2018; Cochran-Smith, Baker et al., 2017; Cochran-Smith, Baker et al., 2018; Cochran-Smith, Carney et al., 2018; Cochran-Smith, Stern et al., 2016) on how within a globalised society wherein teacher quality has been the focus of intense scrutiny for nearly three decades, there have been many teacher education accountability reforms but that ‘accountability should serve democracy, not the market’. The emergence of “predominantly universitized” or university led (Clarke & O’Doherty, 2021, p. 69) systems of initial teacher education are evident in both jurisdictions arising from multiple reviews and consequent reconceptualisations of ITE programmes. Harford (2010) claimed that the positioning of teacher education in Ireland within the academy and the emphasis on core disciplines like history, sociology, philosophy and psychology of education has significantly strengthened the knowledge base of teacher education. Notwithstanding this however, local and international political circumstances, including Brexit, the collapse of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the global implications of the COVID-19 pandemic which led to ITE programmes being ‘put in a lurch’ (Piccollo et al., 2021, p. 229) have impacted in different ways how Initial Teacher Education is provided and continues to be provided across the island of Ireland.

Goodwin (2021) describes how there is general consensus that ‘economic globalisation’ and its ‘pervasive neoliberal ideologies’ have contributed to ‘the rise of performance cultures which are expressed through increased accountability, and the continued imposition of teacher standards’ (Sachs 2016, p. 414) (cf. Evetts 2011; Fullan et al., 2015; Goodwin 2012; Mausethagen & Granlund 2012; Torres & Weiner 2018). Goodwin (2021) refers to Hilton et al. (2013), who states that “standards are seen both as a way to improve the teaching profession and to control teachers’ practice” (p. 432) examines the case of globalisation and teacher professionalism in three separate jurisdictions (Hong Kong, United States and Australia). Each jurisdiction argues the importance of teaching standards as essential in ensuring quality in both teachers and the teaching profession. Goodwin’s (2021) research offers a snapshot of the myriad of requirements and responsibilities of teachers which are manifest in an ever-changing and ever-globalising world. The case of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland offers a similar framework of competency standards for the preparation of teachers for entry into the profession. Table 1 below highlights the common standards North and South to which this research is most directly applicable and impactful and contextualises the research setting for the project.

<u>Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education</u> (Teaching Council)	<u>Digest of the Teacher Competences</u> (General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland)
By the end of the programme of initial teacher education, the student teacher will be able to: apply his/her knowledge of pupils' holistic development to their teaching and promote social responsibility (Professional Skills and Practice)	Teachers: promote social justice and equality of opportunity as fundamental to community development and well being (Commitment to the Community)
By the end of the programme of initial teacher education, the student teacher will be able to understand: not just how to read and carry out research, but also how to think as researchers when working in or with schools, and why it matters (Professional Knowledge and Understanding)	Teachers will have developed: a knowledge and understanding of contemporary debates about the nature and purposes of education and the social and policy contexts in which the aims of education are defined and implemented (Professional Knowledge and Understanding)
By the end of the programme of initial teacher education, the student teacher will be able to understand: the rights of children and young people, including their right to a voice in various matters that relate to their lives (Professional Knowledge and Understanding)	Teachers will have developed: a knowledge and understanding of a range of strategies to promote and maintain positive behaviour, including an acknowledgement of pupil voice, to establish an effective learning environment (Professional Knowledge and Understanding)

Table 1 Teaching standards North and South

2.5 School Placement / School Experience

School Placement is considered to be the fulcrum of initial teacher education (Teaching Council, 2020) and thus holds a centrality in an ever crowded and busy ITE programme architecture. Following the 2012 Sahlberg review, the reconceptualisation and amendment of the teacher education policy landscape in the Republic of Ireland in 2014 resulted in significant changes in the provision of teacher education at both concurrent and consecutive levels. Hall et al. (2018) comment on how the nomenclature was changed from “teaching practice” to “school placement”, “emphasizing the need for the student teacher to gain an understanding and experience of the wider culture and practices in a school” (Hall et al., 2018, p. 21). Young et al. (2022) argue that the 2014 change was indeed more significant than solely nomenclature and one which is further echoed in the most recent Teaching Council accreditation standards (Teaching Council, 2020). The Hall et al. report (2018) acknowledged the significance of School Placement or the Practicum for STs, teacher educators and teachers and policy makers as being vital for the growth of professional competence of the student teacher and as being at the core of the teacher education programme (Tillema, 2007 in Hall et al., 2018) and as “the most powerful site of integration for student learning” (Waldron, 2014 in Hall et al., 2018).

In the North, School Experience is the term most commonly used for the practicum period. In St. Mary's University College, Belfast undergraduate initial teacher education students spend 32 weeks on school experience during their programme of study while in the South, students are required to

typically spend 20 weeks on school placement (Teaching Council, 2018) although this is set to increase to 24-30 weeks under new initial teacher education requirements (Céim) (Teaching Council, 2021). In the South volunteerism rather than formal partnerships continues to characterise the relationship between providers and schools (Clarke & O'Doherty, 2021) while School Experience in Northern Ireland also relies on voluntary professional partnerships (SICI, 1998) with schools which provide school experience placements for STs.

Section 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction to the literature review

This section presents a brief overview and review of the literature most relevant to this research project. In keeping with the focus of the research project and using a social justice lens, this section concentrates on the key elements that may interplay specifically in the classroom of a ST, namely - school/home links, curriculum and pedagogy, teacher development, reflective practice and teacher agency and understanding educational disadvantage and social justice in the context of the primary classroom. Pupil learning, pupil learning outcomes and pedagogy were central to this research project. O'Toole et al. (2019), drawing on the work of Alanen et al. (2015) underscore the importance of education research in 'understanding children's learning as embedded in the social, cultural and family contexts in which it occurs' (p. 3).

3.2 The family, the school, community links and habitus

In Ireland and Northern Ireland, emphases within the literature have focused on educational failure and family disadvantage, parental involvement and school effectiveness and exploration of the gendered, classed and "raced" nature of parental involvement (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002). Conaty (2006) claimed that "education is not something centred in the home or the school, but rather is seen as an ellipse in which there are two foci, the home and the school. The ellipse itself remains centred in the community" (p.5). That said, it should not be underestimated how significant the influence of family is on the educational and career choices of young people (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). McCoy et al. 2014 refer to Hossler et al. (1999) who claim that parental expectations and encouragement have the greatest impact on students' developing aspirations, particularly with respect to planning for further education. Parental support increases students' confidence to explore options, including options that they may previously have thought to be inaccessible, and to engage in career planning (McCoy et al., 2014; Turner & Lapan, 2002). Balli et al. (1998); Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1995); Lareau (1987); Trotman (2001) all note that one of the reasons that parents with lower educational attainment are less likely to be engaged in their children's education is that they believe themselves that they did not have sufficient knowledge to participate in their children's education and felt separated from their children's school (in Stacer & Perucci, 2013).

Lareau (2011) emphasises that schools as institutional contexts can 'build unevenly on family practices' (p. 265) and in doing so one is reminded, if not cautioned, that schools can play a powerful role in the shaping of children's futures both positively and negatively. O'Toole et al. (2019), drawing on the work of Reay (1998) and Robinson and Harris (2014), posit that deficit thinking models can be created in the classroom when teachers and the schools in which they teach assign themselves a middle-class cultural capital that considers families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage to place a lesser value on the importance of education. Aligned to this is the concept of habitus (as

conceptualised by Bourdieu) which alludes to the production of “habitus” whereby a system of dispositions such as aspirations arbitrates between structures and practice. Habitus formation initially takes place in the home as a domestic habitus and it is from their families that pupils form their initial viewpoints or dispositions (Ní Dhuinn, 2017). Barrett (2015) reminds us that habitus primarily develops within the context of childhood and possesses relative durability. Children internalise and carry these views with them to the environment of school. Indeed, habitus is a relatively enigmatic concept with Reay (2004) referring to it as something that is difficult to uncover or investigate, as it represents a set of deeply embedded and unthought-out dispositions. Sweetman (2003, in Sweetman, 2009) defines habitus as referring to “our overall orientation to or way of being in the world; our predisposed ways of thinking, acting and moving in and through the social environment that encompasses posture, demeanour, outlook, expectations and tastes” (p.493). He refers to the latency of habitus as something that is implicit and hidden and an orientation that must be operationalised (Sweetman, 2009). Sweetman’s conceptualisation is useful in terms of habitus being implicit but having to be operationalised, indicating that deliberate thoughts and decision-making precede an action or actions.

In order to assess the impact of policies North and South to address the impact of family on positive educational engagement and achievement within education, these policies and initiatives need to be considered in the full context of the education system in which they sit. Fenwick et al. (2022) suggest a collision course between the commitment to social justice in the education system in the South and the preoccupation with international testing and league tables. In the Northern education system Purdy (2022) speaks of a similar collision between the moves to combat education disadvantage over the years and a combination of political instability and religious unrest. Behind whatever ‘cultural flashpoint’ (O’Sullivan, 2005 in Conway, 2013) or ‘perfect storm’ (Conway & Murphy, 2013) is brewing, family and teachers remain consistent as the ‘socialising agents’ (Arshad et al., 2019, p. 8) for children. Alexander (2010) reinforces this point by noting that although there is an ongoing sense of crisis in both society and education, schools and the teachers therein are a stabilising force in children’s lives.

3.3 Social justice pedagogy and curriculum

Walton-Fisette and Sutherland (2018) remind us that issues such as equality, sociocultural perspectives, critical pedagogy and social justice teaching need to be part of the discourse on the hidden curriculum at initial teacher education but, as Brownell (2017) states, this is often overlooked yet is vital in the context of teaching for social justice. Jorge (2020), drawing on the work of Hoffmann and Gorana (2016, p. 249), asserts that education is a pillar of global transformation and that initial teacher educators have a responsibility to ‘facilitate learning about, through and for the implementation of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2017)’ in particular.

Teachers need to actively engage with social justice in their teaching (Arshad et al., 2019) however, well-intentioned but poorly executed attempts to tackle issues such as equality, justice and tolerance can often be met with a 'blank stare' (Hughes & Sears in Claire & Holden 2007). Knowles (2012 in Arshad et al., 2019) speaks of how social justice related issues can be part of classroom teaching when discursive spaces are routinely opened up where children can be themselves, challenge their assumptions and discuss matters of importance to them as they arise. Three principles are ascribed to social justice education - equity, activism and social literacy (Ayers et al., 2009). Kokka (2020) broadly defines social justice pedagogies as those ways of teaching that are consciousness raising. Dyches and Boyd (2017), drawing on Shulman's (1986) pedagogical content knowledge paradigm (PCK), give a more expanded explanation of teaching with a social justice lens whereby they assert that there are three components, each with its own constituent elements;

- i. Social justice knowledge - discourse, theory, history, and agency
- ii. Social justice pedagogical knowledge - culturally accessing pedagogies, critical pedagogies, agency-inciting pedagogies
- iii. Social justice content knowledge – traditional content knowledge, critical content knowledge

Hackman (2005) asserts that teachers need to introduce five tools to their teaching in order to achieve any level of social justice education in the classroom– content mastery, critical thinking, action for social change, personal reflection and awareness of multicultural group dynamics. Picower (2012) goes one step further and identifies six elements that need to be included in social justice teaching – self love and knowledge, respect for others, issues of social injustice, social movements and social change, awareness raising and social action.

Regardless of whether a simple or multi-layered definition of social justice teaching is put forward, Bogotch and Reyes-Guerra (2014) assert that the varying pedagogical approaches used when teaching with a social justice lens lead to different ways of understanding social justice issues and that when educators engage in such pedagogies they add to the 'professional, moral and legitimate discourses of practice' (p.34).

3.4 Pupils as active citizens and social justice

Phillips (2010) reminds us how many childhood academics (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Fleet, 2006; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; MacNaughton, 2004) acknowledge and promote the need for early childhood pedagogical approaches that focus on approaches that 'address diversity and social justice to move towards advocacy of social equity by generating a proactive stance of addressing social inequity' (Phillips, 2010, p.2). Phillips' action research study used a critical theory and poststructuralism framework and adopted a model of addressing social justice issues through storytelling with young children to explore the children's active citizenship. Nussbaum reported that

understanding the perspective of another ‘has potential to alter awareness and understandings of humanity’ (p. 3) through what they describe as ‘sympathetic imagination’ (p. 3). Kavanagh et al. (2021) in their recent publication provide subject entry points for primary teachers seeking to embed social justice and sustainability principles and pedagogies into their work which are transferable across a broad range of curriculum subjects. The authors promote several pedagogical approaches that encourage children to engage in dialogue and reflection on complex social justice and active citizenship topics in a safe and ethical way. Lister (2007) argues that citizenship is more likely to be a salient component of children’s identity when they have experience of being treated respectfully as citizens and the opportunity to actively participate as citizens. To engage children as citizens through the lens of social justice it is important that teachers and STs understand and take responsibility for their own identities and positionalities and ‘wider discourses around social structure neutrality, meritocracy, objectivity and colour-blindness shape their interactions with and expectations of children’ (Kavanagh et al., 2021, p 5). Teachers occupy a position of privilege and power whereby they can influence change and ‘challenge these unjust structures and improve the life chances of the children in their care’ (Kavanagh et al., 2021, p 5).

3.5 Teacher identity and agency

Teacher agency is recognised as a crucial element in shaping teachers’ professional identities (Eteläpelto et al., 2013) and in developing their decision-making (Sannino, 2010). Teacher motivation and sustainability in the profession are enhanced by reflection on one’s own professional identity (Wang & Zhang, 2021). Drawing on the work of Fitzmaurice (2010), there are four elements that are essential when reflecting on professional identity:

- i. An ongoing process of interpretation of experiences
- ii. The person and context
- iii. Harmonising sub-identities
- iv. Agency

Alexander (2010) cautions that initial teacher education needs to move away from models centred on compliance with bureaucracy and should focus more on critical engagement with teaching and learning that is focused more on the empowerment and autonomy of those involved in education. Goodwin (2020) reminds us that the collective agency and communal power of teachers can have a strong impact on teaching and learning. This collective efficacy is realised through multiple levels of agency from the individual agency of the teacher which is driven by their mind-set and values to the agency of the system they work in (Correll, 2017).

Teaching is a value laden profession (Bassett, 2014). In the South, the core values of the teaching profession are respect, integrity, trust and care (Teaching Council, 2016) and in the North the core values are trust, honesty, commitment, excellence, respect, fairness, equality, dignity, integrity,

tolerance and service (GTCNI, 2018). Menter (2019) describes a transformative teacher as one who is conscious of the values that underpin their work and contends that it is these values that sustain teachers in what he, drawing on the work of Sachs (2003), describes as an activist profession. In addition to values, Quillinan et al. (2018) assert that reflection and most specifically critical reflection is core to transformative teaching and learning. Edwards and Thomas (2010) suggest that the question for teacher educators when addressing reflective practice is not technical or procedural, but rather values based (Liston et al., 2021). Teacher agency is directly linked to one's ability to reflect on practice (Correll, 2017).

3.6 Educational (dis)advantage, equality and inclusion

An important starting point when discussing educational (dis)advantage is the issue of language and terminology. The language of educational disadvantage and the terms 'disadvantage(d)', (a noun/adjective), and 'poverty', (a noun) are terms that conceal rather than reveal the social injustices within and are, as Lynch (2020) reports, part of the discourse of metaphors and euphemisms about social class in education that fail to unpack or discuss the factors that cause educational inequalities in the first place. Lynch refers to how the terms 'disadvantage(d)' and 'poverty' are used to classify schools or describe pupils but fail to identify the agents of social injustices or identify who is actually responsible for the said disadvantage. Lynch identifies an important issue here, which is quite problematic and perpetuates a deficit model. The Educational Disadvantage Committee (EDC) (2002-2005) chaired by Professor Áine Hyland called for a rejection of a deficit model of disadvantage and an embracing of a more enlightened approach to educational inclusion and equality based on the fundamental principle of human rights and social justice (Fleming et al., 2022). Language is important in educational discourse and in the context of a focus on (in)equality in Irish education, North and South, the language of (dis)advantage) and educational (in)equality has remained one of deficit and shortfall. Historically, despite and with the exception of the advances made in 1960s in the ROI by the O'Malley free second level education reforms (1966), some advances in the 1990s and the formulation of multiple policies which were followed by promises and commitments to address and resolve equality issues, many of the windows of opportunity both in NI and the ROI closed without progress or resolution. A somewhat static approach to the prioritisation of equality in Irish education, North and South as reported by Fleming et al. (2022) and Purdy (2022) was adopted despite multiple research reports and publications and requests for action. The 2005 report of the EDC stated that an emphasis should be on 'recognising and accommodating diversity in a positive sense' and not focus on achieving 'equality of opportunity and equality of participation but equality of outcomes and equality conditions' (Fleming et al., 2022, p. 448) Unfortunately, missed and 'squandered opportunities' (Purdy, 2022) characterise the progress or lack thereof of real change or challenge to established norms and mores in relation to educational disadvantage across the shared island.

Section 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction to the research methodology

The research was two-fold (Stage one and Stage two) and conducted through four phases of an action research cycle. Stage one involved initially introducing STs to the overall project through synchronous and asynchronous information sessions and also introducing the sociology of education concepts and theories enabling students to make real-time connections between the sociology of education and their daily planning and practice in the classroom. This was followed by a focus on encouraging STs to become active researchers of their own practice through the provision by the research team of targeted research methods support sessions and research mentoring.

Within the first stage of the research, teacher educators led the action research while STs were active participants, guided by the research team and participating in synchronous and asynchronous sessions, focus groups and reflective practice activities.

Within the second stage of the research, while on school placement in phase three the STs became the researchers researching and exploring the sociology of education concepts (family and family influence on engagement in education, community, culture, identity, diversity, and equity) within their practice through the curriculum and with their pupils as participants in daily lessons and in pupil focus groups. The fourth and final phase included follow up focus groups with student teachers conducted by the research team. This was followed by analysis of lesson plans, pupil learning and reflective sessions with the research team and STs reflecting on the findings and formulating recommendations for further cycles and future practice.

The research draws on two established research paradigms; interpretivism and constructivism. As an action research project, the interpretivist paradigm frames the overall methodology as the major paradigm, using qualitative data to gain insight into societal beliefs and experiences (Denscombe, 2017). A constructivist approach (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1957; Dewey, 1938) can be seen in the pedagogical approach advised by the teacher educators and adapted and used by the STs in the planning, teaching, assessment and evaluation of their lessons with pupils and in the conduct of their focus groups with the pupils. Pupils were asked to construct still visual images in response to various prompts and stimuli in the focus groups in order to elicit responses and prompt short conversations with the pupils. Visuals were also constructed in the curriculum lessons by pupils as they engaged with the curriculum and demonstrated their learning from different lessons.

4.2 Research Team and Research Advisory Team

The project was led by a Research Team consisting of three Teacher Educators and a Research Assistant. The Research Team were advised throughout the project by a Research Advisory Team two of whom had coordinated and worked on SCoTENS projects previously and four others whose

international experience in other jurisdictions was a significant advantage in supporting the research team to realise the aims and objectives of this project.

4.3 Methods and Research instruments

This qualitative research project utilised a number of methods to generate data and evidence of practice. Methods included focus groups conducted by teacher educators with STs (n=5) and focus groups conducted by STs with pupils (n=15) generating visual artefacts and audio data, ST and teacher educator lesson plan observations and reflections. A number of pilot focus groups (n=3), both with STs and pupils (outside of the project) were conducted in advance of the project commencing. Feedback from the pilots was used to inform design and structure of the final focus group schedules and protocols utilised. Similarly, reflection templates were piloted with STs and pupils and feedback was used to finalise the project reflection sessions. Student teachers were asked to pick two curriculum lessons from their school placement/experience teaching and to teach those lessons through a social justice lens. They were also asked to conduct two focus groups with their pupils using the focus group schedule templates provided by the research team.

4.3.1 Focus groups

Student teacher focus groups, (n=5) conducted by the research team took place online on Zoom and were recorded and audio analysed using MaxQDA software scaffolded by a Braun and Clarke (2020) iterative approach. Pupil focus groups (n=15) took place in schools and were conducted by STs using a focus group schedule template (see Appendix 2) provided by the research team to ensure consistency of approach across the pupil focus groups. STs provided pupils with art materials to draw and sketch their responses to the focus group prompts and audio recorded the brief explanatory discussions by the pupils after they had drawn their responses.

4.3.2 Visual and audio data

Prosser and Loxley (2008) argue that there are three main modes of visual data construction which can be either used individually or blended into a single study; 1. Researcher-generated – images (still, moving, graphical) which are constructed by a researcher specifically for a study; 2. Researcher-found – images, as well as artefacts, which have been found or ‘discovered’, which are considered to be relevant to the study. Typically, little is known about the context of creation and, 3. Participant-generated – images or artefacts which are created by research participants specifically for the study they are involved in. The SHARED project utilised participant-generated images enabling pupils to articulate their reflections/thoughts pictorially through drawings. This method is very appropriate with children and is not constrained by age or stage, literacy or numeracy levels. Commonly attached to participant image generation is the use of verbal elicitation (Loxley et al., 2011), which usually utilises semi-structured interviews to dialogically explore the meanings in the data and why any given image was created (Loxley et al., 2011).

4.3.3 Reflections and reflective practices

The use of reflective practice in teacher education has been explicated and discussed as a core element of the learning journey that STs embark on through their initial teacher education programmes, both nationally and internationally. It is frequently positioned amongst the plan, teach, reflect cycle. Brookfield (2017) emphasises the necessity of moving reflection beyond the focus on the “nuts and bolts” of teaching. He argues that without high levels of criticality which unearth assumptions and encourage ideological critique, reflective practice can in fact become a platform to reinforce a set of beliefs and values rather than fully critique (Liston et al., 2021). Reflective practice is not only useful for STs but also for teacher educators and enables them to fully critique and engage critically with different ideologies, unearthing professional and personal assumptions and enables them to embed a system of reflective practice with STs that moves beyond the question of how we ‘teach reflective practice to STs’ (Liston et al., 2021) to how to guide STs to a value based reflective mindset enabling them to fully critique their practice. Reflective practice is a key component of the action research cycle, which is discussed further within the methodology section.

4.4 Trustworthiness, reliability and validity

Hammersley (1987, p.67) states that a research account may be considered valid if “it represents accurately those features of the phenomenon that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise”. The research team aimed to minimise the errors within the SHARED project by developing data collection protocols that were clear, replicable with a similar cohort of participants, and accurate. The finer grained reliability within the research instruments (focus groups, reflections, lesson evaluations) were tested and re-tested on a number of occasions before being satisfied that each instrument was relatively free from error. A number of iterations of the focus group schedules were developed, based on feedback from the pilot phases before the final versions were agreed.

4.5 Researcher positionality and reflexivity-Teacher educators and Student teachers

Both the teacher educators (research team) and the student teachers occupied a position of being “insider researchers” (Sikes & Potts, 2008) in this project. Both sets of participants occupied positions of privilege and power and therefore had to manage “multiple integrities” (Drake & Heath, 2008) and challenge any underlying philosophical and practitioner assumptions they had. Loxley and Seery (2008) discuss at length issues related to “insider research” and refer to the notion that it is not so much the veracity of the “truth claims” which are actually important but instead “who” is making the claims and the claimant’s ability to legitimise this privileged position. The use of an action research approach which included a number of iterations of reflective and reflexive opportunities provided a “means of stimulating reflexivity wherever possible” (Drake and Heath, 2008, p.129).

4.6 Data collection and analysis

4.6.1 Data Tapestry

A rich data tapestry was created through the research project and was used to generate the findings and recommendations of the project. This tapestry is depicted below:

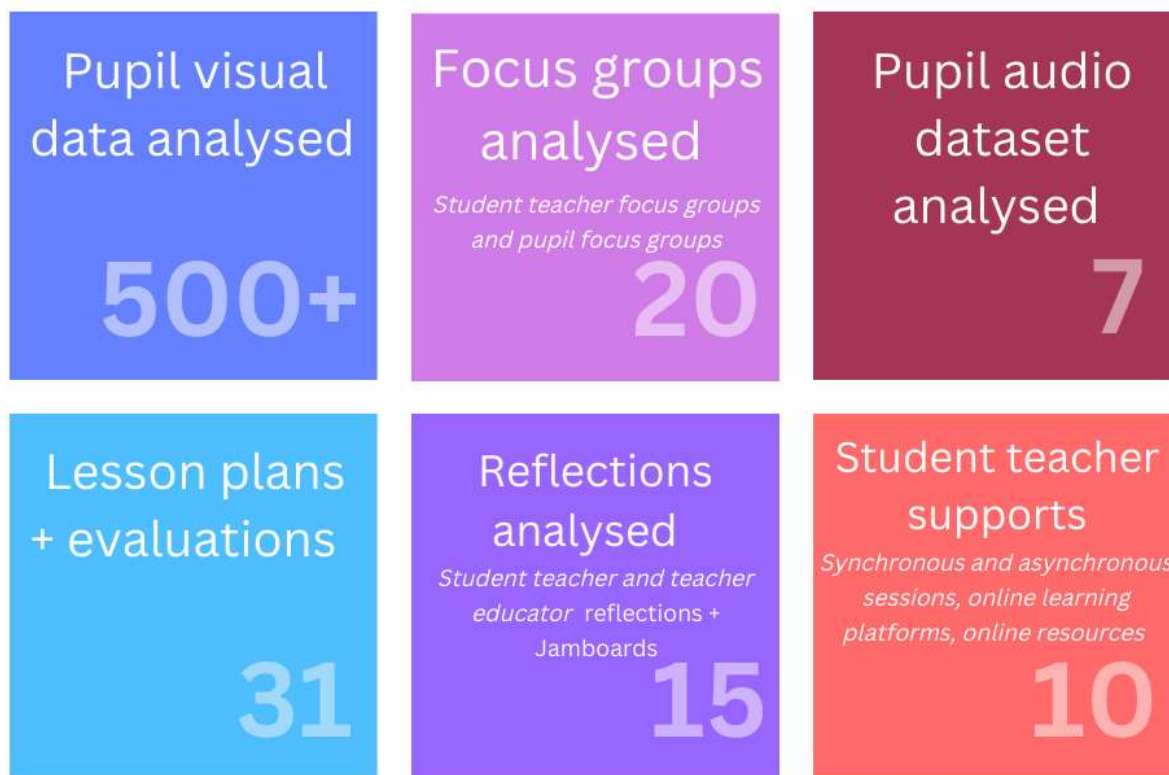


Figure 3 SHARED data tapestry

4.6.2 Data generation

As reflected in Figure 3 above, the volume of data generated in the project was considerable. In advance of any data generation STs in both HEIs were provided with online information sessions (n=2) about the project and invited to enrol on the project. Once enrolled, STs were contacted and sent links to asynchronous sessions (n=4) and synchronous sessions (n=4) to introduce them to sociological concepts and research methods. STs were provided with links to online supports (n=3) and were also provided with Zoom access to the research team for mentoring and support. Focus Group (n=20) data was analysed separately for STs (n=5) and pupils (n=15). Initial cleaning of data revealed that some pupil focus group data was unsuitable for analysis due to poor audio or visual quality or incomplete and was disregarded. Analysis of pupil visual data was supported by pupil audio data recordings where possible. This was not possible in every instance however and may be seen as a limitation of the analysis. STs submitted lesson plans used to teach their curriculum subjects in advance of conducting focus groups with the pupils were also analysed by the research team. Reflections submitted by both STs and teacher educators were analysed by the research assistant on the project.

4.6.3 Analysis

A Braun and Clarke (2020) approach of reflexive reading and review cycles scaffolded the analysis of data in the project. Two researchers, one located in each of the two HEIs were allocated the specific data sets from their HEI and after cleaning the raw data uploaded compatible audio and visual data files to their HEI servers. This was followed by a transfer of all data to a password protected two-factor authenticated online repository in one of the HEIs from which there was a general reading of the data sets to establish a common understanding. Shared coding sessions and development of the identification of themes followed. Themes were finalised after a number of iterations of data reflexive reading.

4.7 Ethical approval and ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted for the project by both Higher Education Institutions ethics committees. STs volunteered to participate in the project and were informed that they could withdraw at any time without giving reasons to do so. There were no incentives offered to STs to participate in the project and STs were informed that participating or not in the project would not impact in any way their grade on school placement. None of the research team acted as school placement tutors or graded any of the ST participants participating in the research. STs were not required to complete any additional planning work for the project but instead used their day-to-day planning for lessons on school placement/experience.

4.7.1 Confidentiality

All data submitted by STs and pupils was anonymised at the point of submission. No personal or sensitive information was collected as part of the data collection phases/cycles and GDPR regulations were observed at all times. Students were also advised that the focus groups would be recorded on Zoom and that all recordings would be stored securely electronically and protected by a password with only the research team having access to the recordings. Access to all data was restricted to the research team (n=4) only.

4.7.2 Informed Consent

The importance of informed consent was central to the participation of the research participants. Separate consent forms were issued to all participants (STs, pupils and parents of pupils). Conscious of the age of the pupils, informed consent was sought from parents initially for their children to participate in the focus groups and pupils' written consent was also sought prior to the focus group.

4.7.3 Non-maleficance

At all stages of the research process the research team was conscious to ensure that the research work should never harm anyone, intentionally or otherwise and the team maintained an open and transparent *modus operandi* throughout. The Research Advisory Team provided useful and supportive advice to the researchers about how best to work with STs and primary age pupils while

teaching through a social justice framework and while conducting focus groups with primary pupils and reflecting on outputs.

4.7.4 Beneficence

The research was conducted on the basis that the welfare of all participants (STs and pupils) was to the fore of the methodology and that the research would make an epistemological contribution to knowledge that would benefit the education profession, specifically teacher education.

Methodologically and ethically, this project presented many opportunities and some challenges given the co-location of the research settings between two HEIs and STs located in different type placement schools in NI and the ROI. Working with children demands a high level of scrutiny and rigour from an ethical perspective and in terms of embedding a methodology and ensuring consistency of approach by all researchers, which in this case included Teacher Educators and Student Teachers. It is important also to remember that children are not adults and don't therefore fit the expected norms of adults in a research project setting and may need reinforcement of instruction and reaffirmation of actions as the project progresses. Huge credit is due to the STs who worked tirelessly with the children to ensure that all pupil participants engaged in the project on the basis of informed consent and within a spirit of openness and transparency. While the Teacher Educators worked iteratively and regularly mentored and provided mentoring advice to the STs, the time and care take by the STs to ensure that the children enjoyed their participation and benefited from it in the short term and hopefully in the longer term, should not be underestimated. As, can be the case in a research project, a selection of the raw data was deemed to be unsuitable by the research team for further analysis due to audio quality or image quality and was therefore not included in the final analysis of data. The generalisability of this project therefore needs to be carefully considered in terms of future research. In order to replicate this research in future projects appropriate supports and adequate planning and preparation would be required before and during a similar project.

4.8 Research design

Zuber-Skeritt et al. (2015, pp. 105-106) describe action research as 'traditional or practical action research that involves solving social problems individually or collaboratively, using a spiral of action research cycles (plan–act–observe–reflect) and making the results public'. It integrates research and action, theory and practice, research and development, creating knowledge and improving practice (Lewin, 1948; McNiff, 2013; Reason & Bradbury, 2008, 2013). Forster and Eperjesi (2021) state that action research is particularly relevant and used "within the teaching profession with particular applicability" (3) for STs and early career teachers. They reference McNiff's definition (2016, p.9) that; 'Action refers to what you do', and 'Research refers to how you find out about what you do'. Action research is characterised by both reflective and developmental cycles whereby a practitioner identifies an area or aspects of their practice for development and considers how they could

establish how well they are currently doing, gathers evidence about their practice and through reflection identifies specific actions that they might take to improve and/or have a positive impact on outcomes. Further reflection and evaluation allows for further identification steps which can be taken, and the cycle(s) of action research continues (Forster & Eperjesi, 2021). Figure 4 below illustrates the activities of each of the four phases in the full cycle of this action research project.

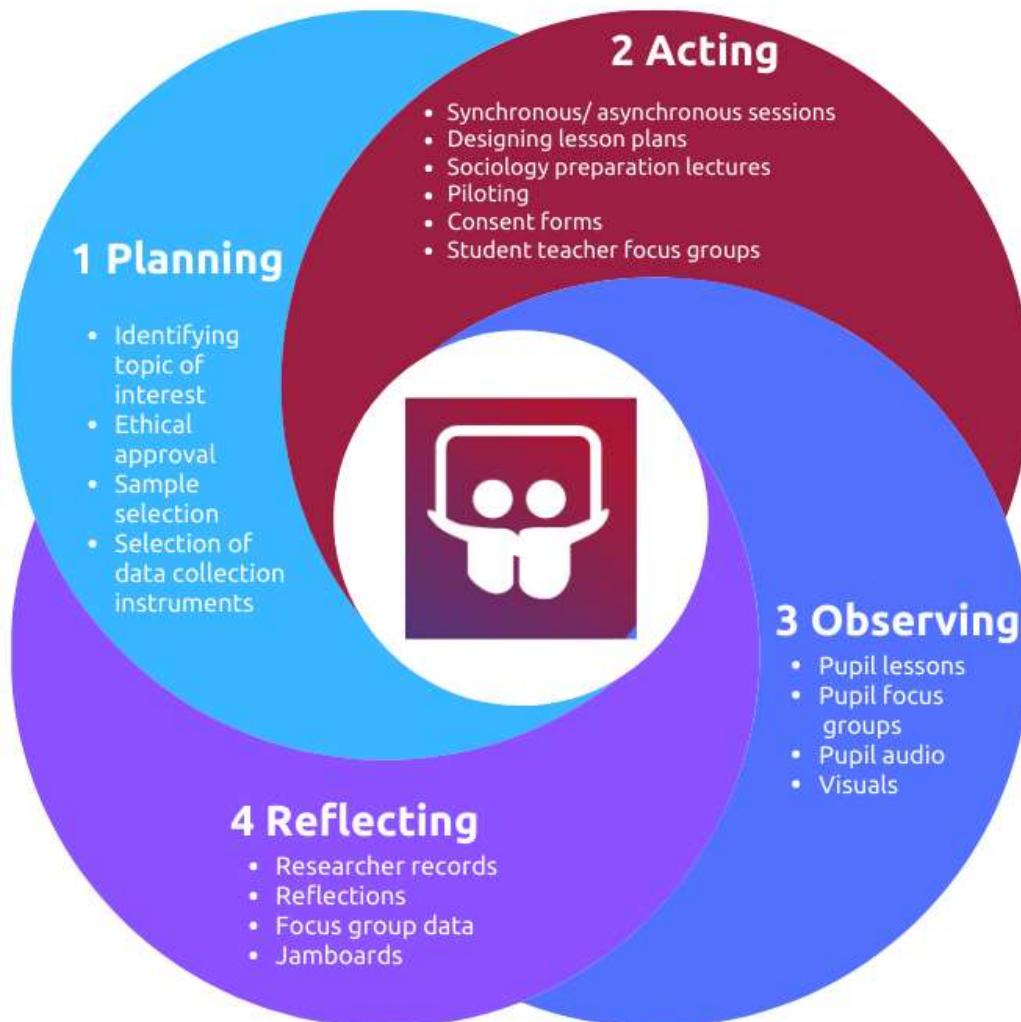


Figure 4 SHARED action research

A multi-layered project design supports the implementation of this research project. The design, while focused on enabling an exploration of the research questions, encapsulates the research call that this project has answered by virtue of the emphasis on creating opportunities for sharing experiences and learning.

Figure 5 below outlines the five main foci in the research design:

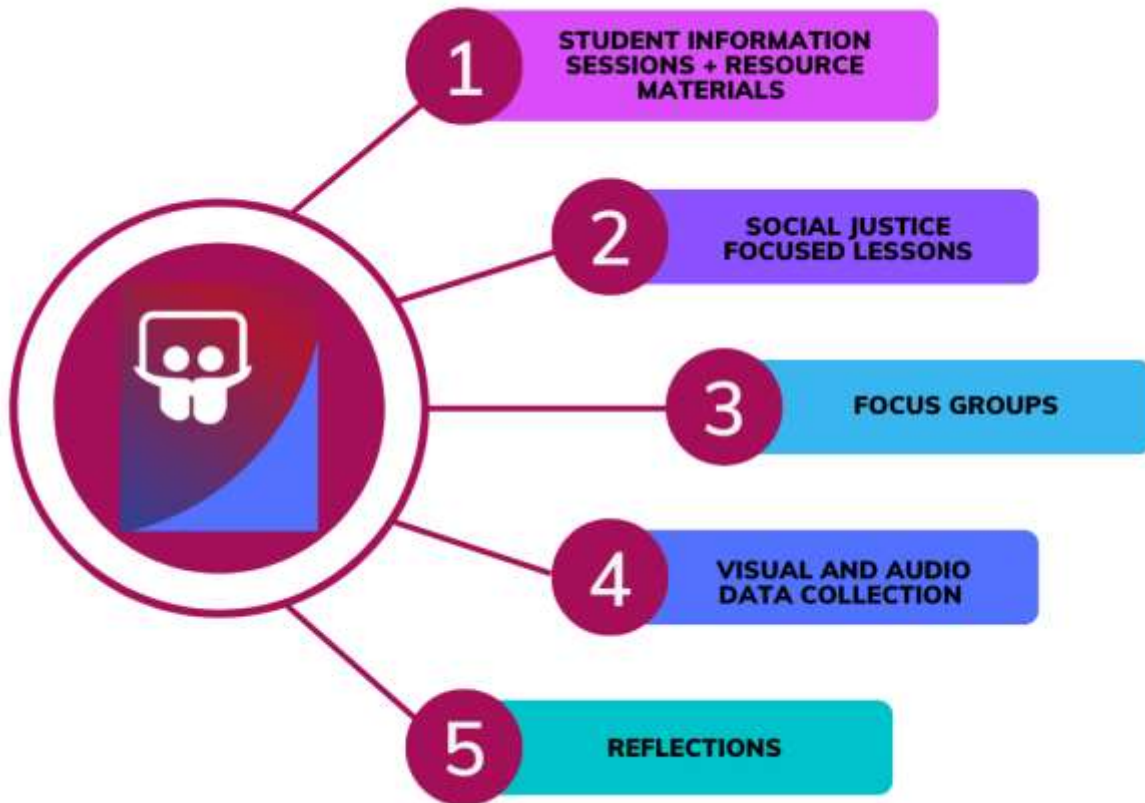


Figure 5 SHARED research design foci

The provision of ongoing supports and resources to the ST participants in the project was a priority of the research team as outlined in Figure 6 below.

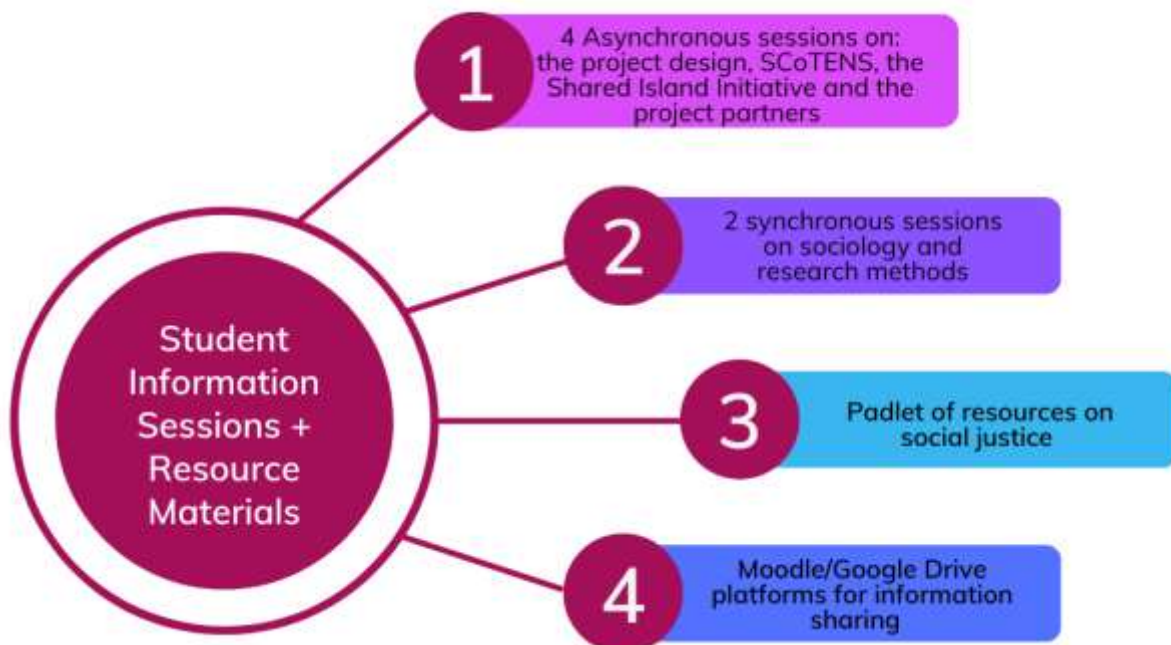


Figure 6 Student teachers' information sessions and resource materials

The Padlet of resources (Figure 7) that was created for the STs is a resource that will remain available to them after the project ends.

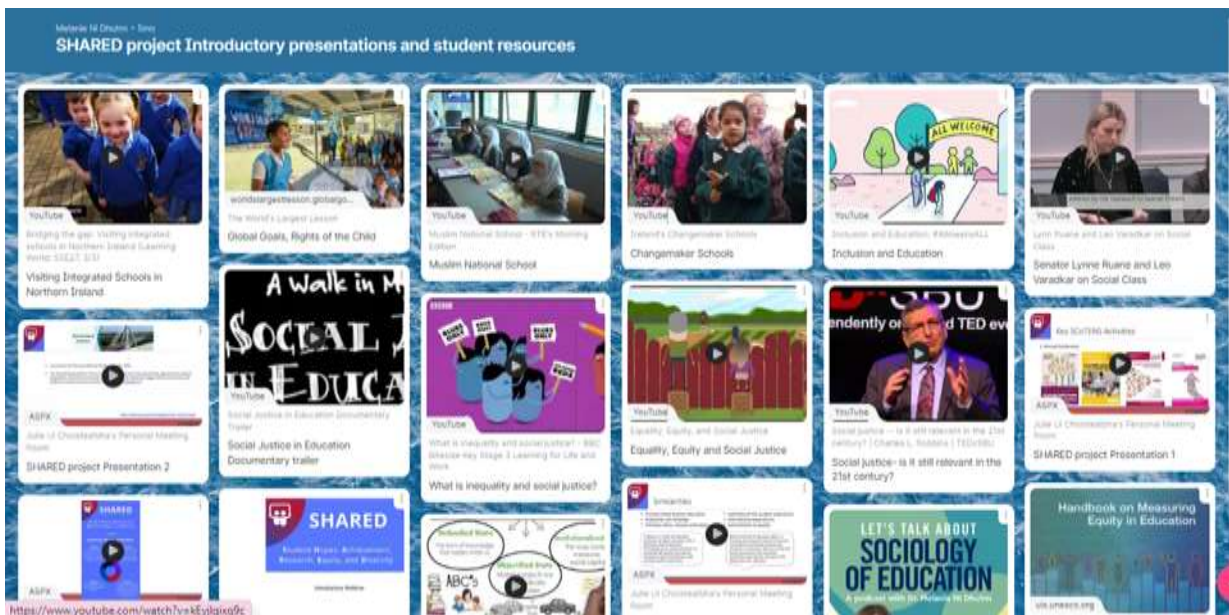


Figure 7 Padlet of resources

The in-school elements of the research project focused on STs teaching social justice based lessons, as described in Figure 8 below.

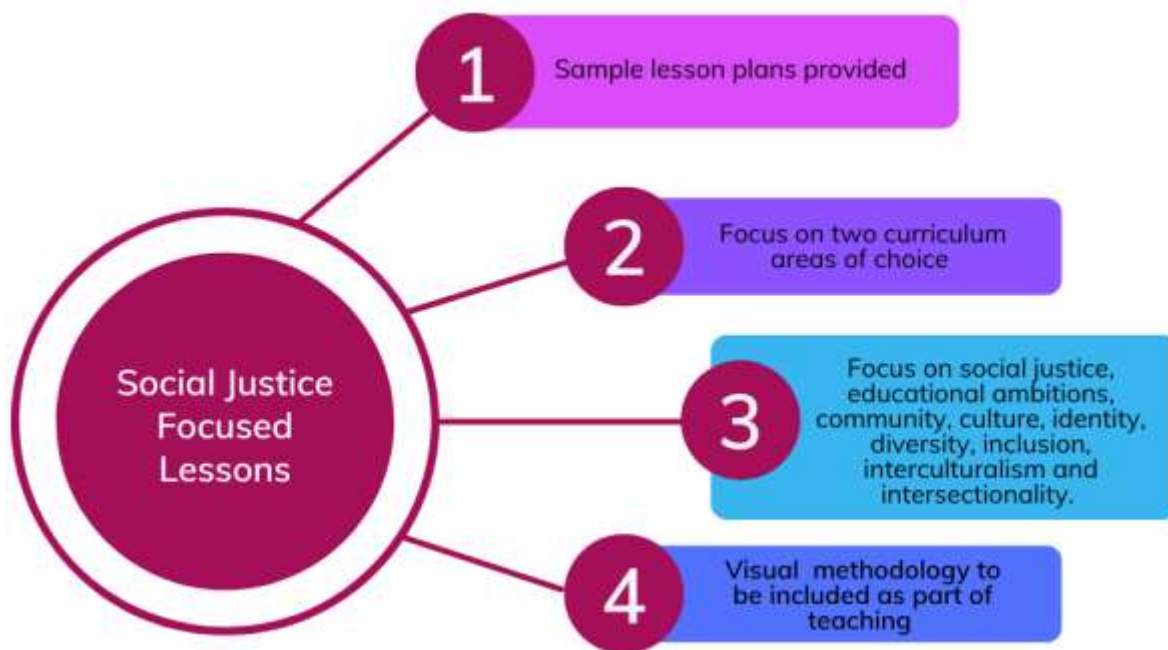


Figure 8 Social justice focused lessons

In keeping with the collaborative thrust of the research project, focus groups were interspersed across the project timeline as a means for participants to share their thoughts and opinions, as detailed in Figure 9 below.

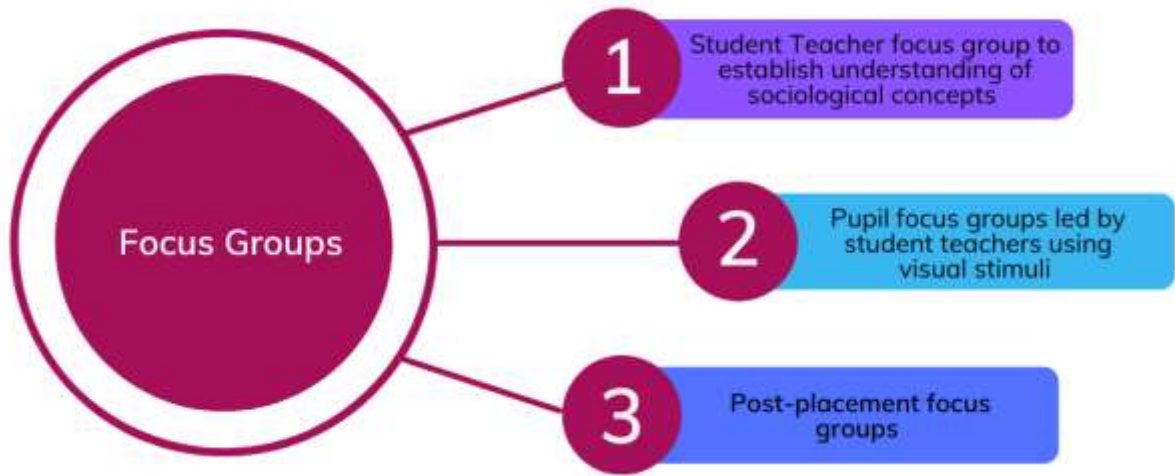


Figure 9 SHARED focus groups

As mentioned in the methodology section, visual and audio data were chosen by the research team as an appropriate means to gather pupils' perspectives on the sociological concepts underpinning this research project as described in Figure 10 below.

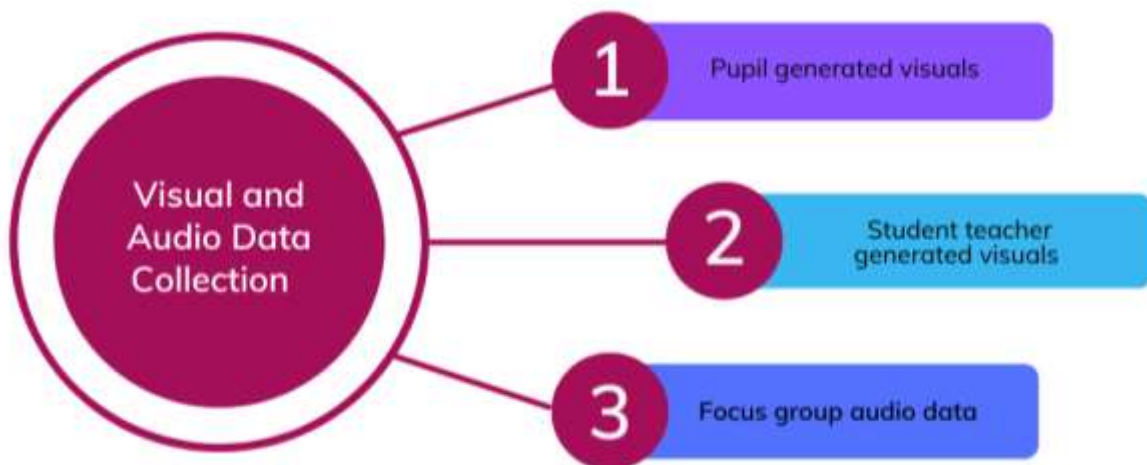


Figure 10 Visual and audio data collection

Reflective practice goes hand in hand with action research (Corradini, 2022) and as shown in Figure 11 below, participants were encouraged to engage in reflective practice across the project timeline.

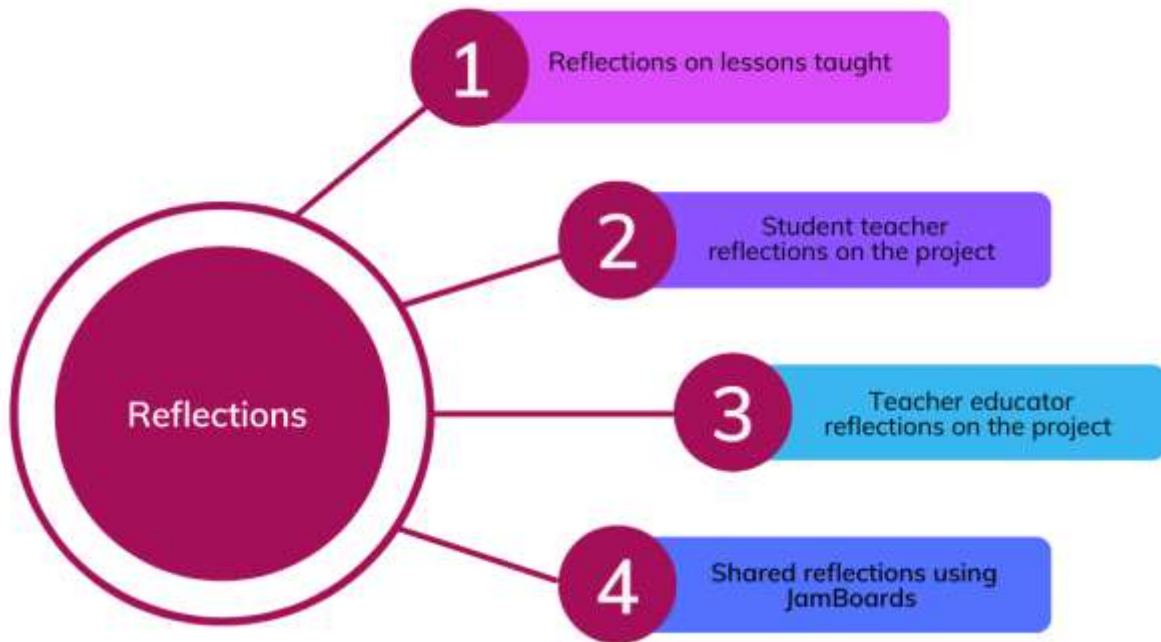


Figure 11 SHARED Reflections

Section 5: Presentation of findings

5.1 Introduction to the presentation of findings

This section presents the findings from the research study. Given the extensive scope of the research and the data generated, the research team have prioritised the findings below as most relevant to the research questions.

The project was carried out with a group of STs from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, in years 1 – 3 of concurrent (undergraduate) teacher education courses. All STs participated in a period of school placement during the project. There was considerable diversity in the schools who hosted these placements: Catholic, Gaelscoil, single sex, co-educational, rural and urban schools were each represented.

In order to illuminate STs' sense of teacher identity and explore how they saw their own motivation for and agency in affecting outcomes, attainment and aspiration of their pupils, participants were asked about their motivation for pursuing a career in primary teaching, and for committing to be a part of the SHARED project. A number had in fact considered other careers, but the recurring themes and motivations hinged around an interest in and passion for working with children, often coupled with personal positive experiences of education.

STs explained that they saw the project as an opportunity to further their professional learning, and to increase their awareness of social justice pedagogies, either because this was an area they felt strongly about, or alternatively, because it was a new angle to take in classroom teaching. They were also attracted by the cross-border nature of the project, and the opportunity to share experiences and learning on a shared island.

5.2 Student teachers' reflections on their perceptions and understanding of sociological concepts and their role as agents of social justice

5.2.1 Perceptions and understanding of sociological aspects

A key strand of the project was to engage STs with concepts of social justice, and sociological concepts. The initial focus groups demonstrated that STs had secure understanding of some concepts covered (such as diversity and inclusion), but others were new to them as lenses through which to consider their teaching.

Their understanding of family and school and crucially the interdependence between them, came though strongly. Across the project, STs expressed the importance of family as a place where values are formed, and unconditional support should be offered. Some extended this idea to school,

framing it as a second home, and there was strong consensus that the role of school as a community and an agent of socialisation was as central as its function as a place of learning.

STs articulated strongly that family and school had complementary roles to play in supporting children's development, but many also acknowledged that this was not always straightforward and referred to the sometimes-conflicting views of parents and teachers. Family background, family involvement with school and family support for school were suggested as factors which affected the ease of the home-school partnership, and the influence of family on engagement with education.

STs also demonstrated a good understanding of the ways that ambition and aspiration and attainment can be supported in primary age children. Their contributions broadly coalesced around the roles of school, and of other relationships. (Primary) school was recognised as crucial in building a strong foundation for pupils' future learning and shaping subsequent life chances, with considerations such as attendance and school transition playing an important part.

Several participants raised the question of confidence and the separate but related Pygmalion effect. This was felt to be a key consideration in supporting ambition and attainment, and STs' suggestions as to how this could be achieved sat neatly within the categories above – the support of school and of relationships.

In contrast to their well-developed and considered understanding of the sociological concepts of school and family, STs' understanding of the concepts of equality, equity and justice were neither so clear nor so coherent. For many, this was the game changing 'headline' that they took from the project. The new understanding of the difference between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome was repeated again and again in post –intervention data collected, always with a sense of strong purpose underpinned by values, and a commitment to incorporate this into STs' future careers and practice. In this sense then, exploring teaching through a social justice lens can be seen to have been transformative to both the mind-set and practice of the STs involved.

We always thought to teach everyone on an equal playing thing. It's all about equality in the classroom, all about equality and that's the way you're supposed to do it. But I think this time I took more of an equity approach, ... not giving them everything, but giving them what they need to understand

I suppose that was that was the biggest thing for me 'cause I never taken that approach before. I never really. I never really thought about it properly until this project came along, and I'm so glad I did it....it's really changed and flipped my mindset towards teaching... for years to come

5.2.2 Perceptions of teacher agency

Aspects of teacher agency were explored through teachers' perceptions of their professional role, their reflections on their understanding of aspects of social justice, challenges in realising their role as agents of social justice and factors that may influence young children's understanding of the sociological aspects. Various aspects of teacher agency were evident in STs' reflections. They demonstrated a strong sense of purpose and commitment to their role as teachers in promoting social justice. In expressing their role as agents of change, they talked about the importance of embracing diversity and inclusion, student agency and the important role of family in children's sociological development.

STs recognised that relationships, trust, and 'knowing' pupils are paramount in being able to promote social justice in the classroom, and to positively influence ambitions, aspirations and outcomes. Within this, they articulated the importance of welcoming diversity, and creating a positive environment that is conducive to open conversations. STs demonstrated that teachers must build a conducive classroom environment where pupils can participate in rich discussions around societal issues and, share their lived experiences. Open classroom conversations promote pupils' understanding of social justice and encourage them to understand their role in addressing those issues.

There was also an appreciation of the role of confidence and a child's sense of self in raising aspiration, and the teacher's role in promoting this – both by giving praise, and highlighting strengths, and also in the way they encouraged children to view the things they found difficult. STs articulated their understanding of their role as more of a facilitator than a teacher and shared that they have started appreciating the diversity in their class, and realise that children come from different backgrounds and cultures and how even the word 'family' may not have the same meaning for everyone.

I also learned that teachers hold a great responsibility in their lessons.

Listed below are the pedagogical perspectives identified by STs to promote social justice in classroom

- *Develop relationship and trust with children*
- *Recognise pupils' weaknesses*
- *Praise pupils to build their confidence*
- *Get to know your students*
- *Promote inclusivity and equality*
- *Appreciate differences/diversity*
- *Being kind and welcoming*

- *Conducive environment/open conversations*
- *Highlighting strengths but also recognising weaknesses*
- *Equitable teaching strategies*
- *Include what interests children*
- *Build cultural competence*
- *Foster emotional intelligence*

5.3 Student teachers' reflections on their overall experience of the project



Overall, the project was very well received by participant STs. All STs articulated that the project had a very positive impact on their own learning as well as on their pupils' learning. They demonstrated that they really enjoyed themselves teaching through a social justice lens.

5.3.1 Shift in student teachers' mind-sets

Adopting teaching pedagogies underpinned by the social justice-based approaches had a positive impact on participant teachers' mind-sets and dispositions (*habitus*) about teaching. The project offered opportunities for an increased awareness of the sociological concepts and teaching through the lens of social justice for greater good.

In particular, participation in the project supported students to bridge the theory-practice divide that can so often exist around concepts of social justice. There was a strong sense that involvement in the project had brought the ideas of social justice alive ("it opened my eyes"), making them a priority for future careers. This stands in contrast to their views and understanding at the beginning of the project, where STs struggled to visualise how to connect the theory with the everyday practice.

Through participating in the SHARED Project, as a student teacher I was able to understand the importance of being aware of how sociology and society can affect education. Initially, I thought that social justice in regard to education meant that all pupils are treated equally and included regardless of their backgrounds.

Through the project, STs were able to acquire new knowledge to introduce the importance of social justice to their pupils. They reflected on how this project helped them understand the difference between equity and equality and change their teaching practices to focus more on equity than equality. STs came to understand that the need for equity-based teaching may not be due to an obvious disadvantage, but because pupils, even within one class, can have such a wide range of different experiences and backgrounds.

When planning differentiation, I would have to look into what a child might need as opposed to others...I was using that a lot in every lesson really.

5.3.2 Impact on teaching practices

The project challenged participants to uncover their preconceived notions about sociological concepts and facilitated their personal and professional learning. This helped them to critically evaluate their teaching practices and they learnt to adopt differentiated approaches to support their pupils' learning. STs described the project as a variety project which motivated them to investigate pupils' perceptions of sociological issues and led them to take their own approach towards adopting social justice-based pedagogies.

There was also a growing understanding evident of the importance of pupil voice and agency for a meaningful impact on children's lives. This was precipitated both by the wide range of contributions that pupils made, and by the explicit use of focus groups with primary school aged children which several STs reported they would be keen to repeat.



STs shared that pupils seemed very excited to talk about what they believed in and to share their opinions. Although some of the concepts were apparently quite new to pupils, they were nevertheless enthusiastic to share their views about those concepts. STs highlighted that authentic learning happened when pupils' lived experiences were connected to the

concepts taught in the classroom. By articulating their feelings, pupils felt valued and perceived themselves as a valuable part of the society they live in. They exhibited a sense of responsibility to tackle the most pressing sociological issues. STs acknowledged that by teaching through the lens of

social justice, they learnt a lot about pupils and realised how pupils' day-to-day experiences influence their understanding of social justice.

Teacher autonomy was another aspect that was unanimously appreciated by the STs. They valued that the lessons delivered as part of the project were flexible and manageable, and also reflected on the research skills gained through the project and the importance of consent and honesty. The project provided opportunities to STs to link theory and practice and to become aware of their own identity as a teacher.

Some excerpts from teachers are shown in Figure 12.

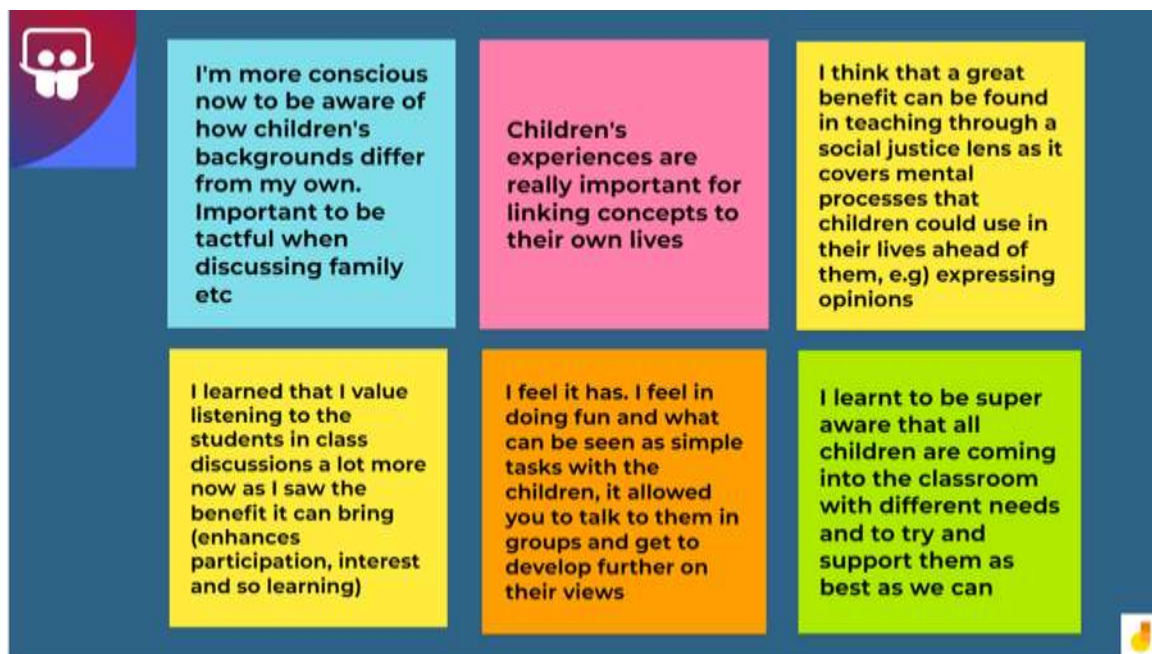


Figure 12 SHARED Jamboard responses

5.3.3 Pupils' responses to the concepts of social justice

Teachers shared that although these concepts were new, pupils had positive perceptions about the sociological concepts that were discussed in class. Most were very interested in learning more about these concepts and participated actively in classroom discussions. Pupils were keen to share their own experiences and were very confident in their responses.

STs shared that they were surprised by how well pupils talked about the whole aspect of social justice and the project. Pupils demonstrated an awareness of cultural diversity and were very open to accepting the differences between individuals. They displayed a sense of embracing diversity and seeing everyone as equal. It is the innocence of being younger that was reflected in pupils' responses during classroom discussions.

They don't see all that until they become older. But yeah, I think that was the nicest part that how open they were and they didn't see the difference in the negative light.

Pupils' views on various concepts related to social justice were explored through focus groups discussions and the drawings. In terms of their understanding of the notion of a family, the majority of them narrated family as comprising the immediate family members they stay with. In most drawings, family comprised a mother, father, brothers and/or sisters and a pet. Few drawings depicted the male member as a working member of the family, suggesting the influence of home environment on their perceptions about the gender-based roles taken in the family. In terms of pupils' awareness of occupations and roles in jobs, their perceptions seem to be heavily influenced by the people they see and engage with in their routine life.

The most interesting responses came from discussions and drawings for the concept of fair and unfair. Pupils drew on their experiences of social interactions to describe their understanding of fair and unfair.

Fair	Unfair
<p>"...it was fair then because people were very nice to me"</p>	<p>"...My friend got a ball, and I didn't, from the bag"</p>
<p>"...so in the fair picture, me and my sister wanted to buy something and between us we halved the price and we bought it."</p>	<p>"...Unfair: Ukraine and Russia"</p>
<p>"...it's just sweets and there's 6 of them and everyone gets two."</p>	<p>"...This is unfair when there was a game and people didn't let him play with them and they were like mean to him"</p>
<p>"...somebody get the same amount of chocolate as another person."</p>	<p>"...When people only pick boys to lift things"</p>
<p>"...Someone getting the same present as someone else."</p>	<p>"...someone is giving sweets to one of their friends but not giving them to other friends"</p>
<p>"...my brother and I got T-shirts."</p>	<p>"...it was a week after Christmas so it was Women's Christmas and the teacher gave sweets to all of the girls and she didn't give any to the boys"</p>
	<p>"...my mum took three sweets from my sister and two from me and that wasn't fair."</p>

Figure 13 Pupils' expressions of fair and unfair

They frequently addressed the example of equal share to demonstrate a fair treatment. In describing fairness, the most common utterances related to:

- *Getting equal share of chocolate/chips/cookies etc.*
- *Feeling of inclusion in a team*
- *Getting equal opportunities to play*

To display their understanding of unfairness, they shared experiences of:

- *feeling of exclusion [being left out while playing/feeling isolated in a group of friends]*



STs reported initial challenges in terms of language comprehension and vocabulary but once pupils understood the terminology, they engaged very productively during the lessons. Focused classroom discussions also helped in strengthening pupils' understanding of the concepts related to social justice, and in particular served to broaden their view beyond their own

lived experience. While they already had some knowledge of the concepts applicable to their own contexts, it was clear that after the taught lessons, pupils were much more able to empathise with other people's lives and with situations outside the classroom.

One of the STs shared an example from a lesson around inclusion, where pupils realise that a playground might not always be accessible for everyone, and this led them to discuss various possibilities on designing a playground that is accessible for people with varied needs. Another ST shared that they were deeply impressed by the variety of examples pupils used to contribute to a discussion on the topic of responsible consumption. Similarly, classroom discussions around the notion of a family fostered their understanding of different perspectives of a family across cultures.

While most of the pupils were willing and comfortable to share their opinion through drawings and classroom discussions, some pupils engaged more through drawings and visuals than discussions. Few of them were reluctant to share their opinions in the beginning but became comfortable gradually

Some children needed a lot more clarification than others, they found it easiest to draw/ talk about their family, a bit trickier to think about what they would like to be when they're older but most needed me to give several examples of fair/not fair

Some excerpts from STs' reflections on pupils' engagement are shown in Figure 15.

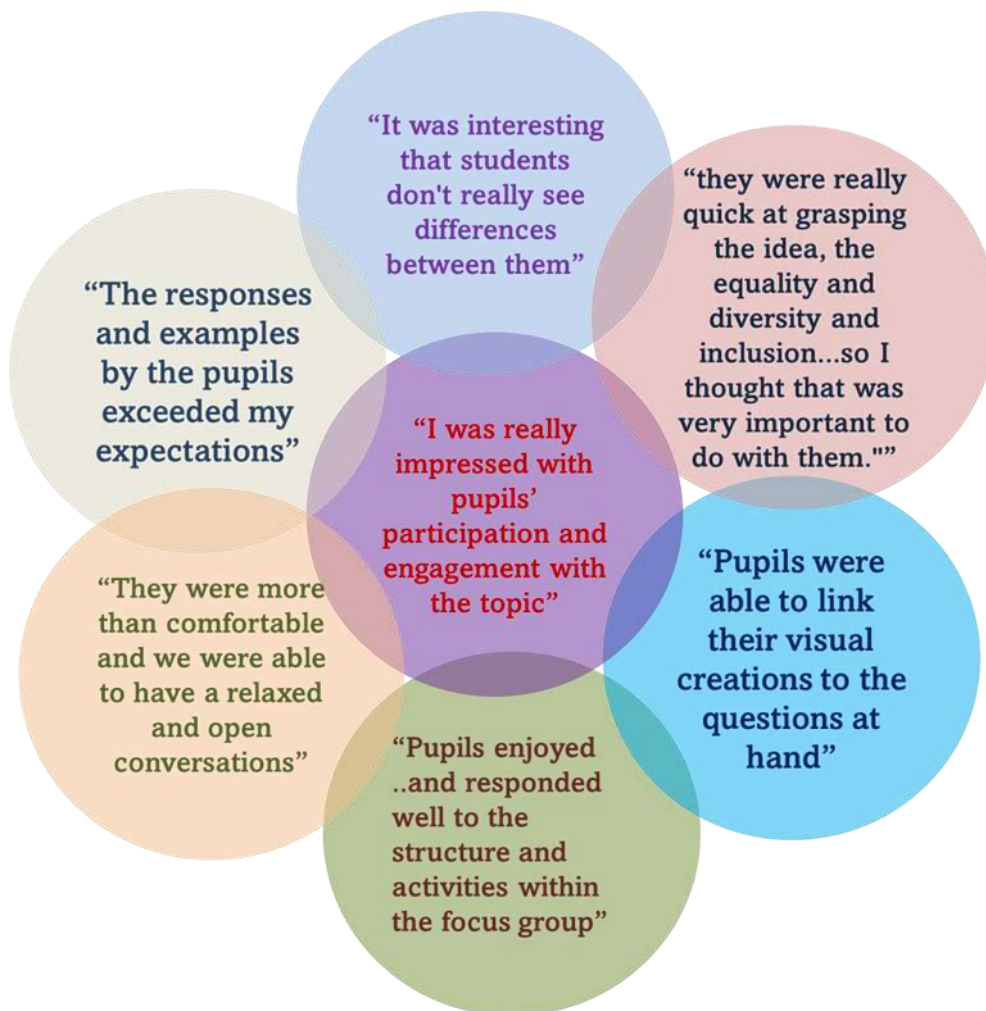


Figure 15 Student teachers' reflections on pupils' engagement

5.3.5 Role of home and family

The role of home and family was acknowledged as an important factor in developing a child's sense of understanding of the social aspects. STs shared examples of how the principles of social justice are closely embedded with family values. Teachers reflected on how the ideas shared by pupils were representative of what they experienced at home. Most of the pupils drew on what they heard being talked about at home, through their parents and other family members. For instance, some of them referred to their mum or dad when talking about responsible use of electricity or the impacts of the war in Ukraine. Furthermore, the socio-economic background of family can also strongly influence young children's perceptions of social justice and their role in it.

STs articulated that home and school are deeply connected and any change that is pivoted in school must be reinforced through discussions at home with family members.

We as educators can only monitor and ensure that the principles of social justice are developed in the classroom and hopefully practised at home however if these principles and ideas are not also developed at home then pupils will face social inequality

5.4 Challenges addressed by STs

Alongside their very positive engagement with the project, STs were also candid about the challenges they faced in teaching through a social justice lens. Alongside the issues such as curricular time pressure and lack of suitable resources, other deeper challenges emerged. STs reflected on their unpredictability of working with young children, and how, when dealing with complex and/or personal issues, a discussion could quickly take a much more serious turn than they would have anticipated.

5.4.1 Teachers' emotional regulation

A key challenge identified by STs was regulating their own emotions while reacting to pupils' response during discussions around sensitive topics. STs shared instances when pupils passionately shared their personal experiences of social injustice. Some pupils also asked questions about Russia-Ukraine war and were anxious about the possibility of another war in future.

Reflecting on their experiences, STs shared that they felt emotionally invested in such situations and found it difficult to respond to the pupil. Setting a balance between professional and personal boundaries in such situations was highlighted as a significant challenge by the ST; one participant referred to being 'blindsided' by a child's observation, while another recalled that finding the right response was difficult, in the whole class contest.

In one focus group a student passionately described a personal experience with injustice and as it wasn't a lesson but a focus group collecting information I neutrally responded to each student, saying how I understand and that I can see that in their drawing

One child told me about her dad giving out to her mam and how her mam was really sad after, and I found it difficult not to talk about it with her, to keep that professional boundary.

Some topics were heavier that children brought up, and I found a challenge in balancing my reply.

5.4.2 Lack of time and resources

Another challenge discussed by teachers is the lack of time to develop teacher autonomy and pupil agency. STs felt that there was a tension between professional boundaries and the duty of care, and in particular that the rigidity of curriculum does not allow sufficient time for teachers to engage with pupils in deeper conversations to explore social justice topics in detail. STs shared the pressure they felt in terms of teachers' workload, which restricts the time for involvement in topics outside of the curriculum.

I feel like there are times where the students blindside you with topics and you want to delve into them deeper but with the limited time you have with them for that lesson and on placement it's hard

At times it's hard to get the students to completely trust/open up to you as you don't know them as well as their class teacher and are only there for a short period of time

Limitation in terms of obsolete material in existing textbooks and availability of resources for teaching social justice topics was also articulated by teachers, along with a scarcity of resources that provide concrete, age-appropriate examples of issues to which pupils can relate. In this context, the website <https://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org> was suggested by STs as a helpful resource for embedding social justice ideas in planning their lessons. It was recommended by the STs that the concepts of social justice need to be incorporated not just through Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) (in ROI) and World Around Us (WAU) (in NI) but in the overall curriculum.

5.4.3 Age-appropriate language

Another challenge that emerged from STs' discussions was about pupils' (especially young children's) language use and comprehension, especially when dealing with complex and unfamiliar terms. Initially some had difficulty finding appropriate language and vocabulary to discuss the topics related to social justice. Additionally, choosing the right way to describe terms like accessibility and inclusivity and then putting an age-appropriate context for defining these terms proved challenging for teachers.

More generally, some participants highlighted the difficulties in finding the language to help pupils articulate their views, especially when working with very young children, although there was also broad consensus that this was often ameliorated by the use of visual methods.

5.4.4 Student-teacher identity

There were other challenges raised which stemmed primarily from being student (as opposed to qualified) teachers. For example, the short timescale of the placement, and associated difficulty of developing trust were both mentioned. However, this was not universally problematic; one ST felt that being an 'outsider' made pupils more willing to confide in and open up to her.

Other reflections demonstrated that STs were still developing their sense of teacher identity, which could lead them to feel hesitant about discussing difficult topics or responding to unexpected pupil contributions. It was clear that the STs were still learning to navigate professional boundaries and behaviours, especially when faced with more complex issues and situations.

5.5 A glimpse of pedagogies used by student teachers

A social justice approach was embedded throughout the areas of curriculum. STs used a range of teaching strategies in delivering the lessons based on social justice pedagogies. Table 2 lists the topics chosen by the STs for teaching through the lens of social justice. The lessons focused on developing the links between various sociological concepts to pupils' lived experiences. The lessons were scaffolded through appropriate questioning and discussions. Open conversations fostered pupils' engagement and helped in making the lessons personally relevant to pupils.

Table 2 Lesson topics chosen by student teachers

Serial Number	Strand/Topic	Curriculum area
1	<i>SHARED project: Support balloons</i>	PDMU
2	<i>SHARED project: Expressive ambitions self portrait</i>	WAU, Art & PDMU
3	<i>World War 2 - Introduction</i>	WAU
4	<i>World War 2 - what is the past?</i>	WAU/ HISTORY
5	<i>How did World War 2 start?</i>	WAU
6	<i>My identity and goals</i>	PDMU
7	<i>Environmental Awareness and Care</i>	Geography
8	<i>Myself, Myself and Others, Myself and the Wider World</i>	SPHE
9	<i>'When I Grow Up'</i>	SPHE
10	<i>Inclusive Playgrounds'</i>	SPHE

(SPHE = Social Personal and Health Education; PDMU = Personal Development and Mutual Understanding; WAU= World Around Us)

Elements that were effective in the pedagogical practices used by STs are outlined below.

5.5.1 Strong focus on equity than equality



Teaching through a social justice lens was underpinned by the principles of Equity and Inclusion. For instance, providing an option to paint through fingers for children who might not have advanced motor skills yet. Similarly, STs ensured that non-verbal children responded through gestures and painting. So even though they couldn't give formal feedback, they understood the concepts and

objectives of the lesson in their own way. Inclusivity in group work was a key feature of all lessons ensuring that

- they are not grouped according to ability or skills.
- each member of the group has a responsibility, and everyone participates equally, and is able to interpret what they learnt from the activity.
- the role of teacher was that of a facilitator, and to provide opportunities for pupils to explore and be owners of their own learning.

5.5.2 Use of visual strategies

Creating sensory experiences through visual strategies enhanced pupils' participation and engagement. A variety of visual strategies were used by STs in their teaching lessons. These included story books, interactive videos, pictures from real life, use of drawings, and visual timetables. STs reported that pupils were excited about drawing pictures and focused on tiny details in their drawings to portray their views and experiences. Many pupils preferred drawings over discussion as a means to express themselves.

5.5.3 Appropriate questioning

Through effective questioning, pupils were able to link their visual creations with the questions asked. Scaffolding pupils' learning through questioning highlighted how different backgrounds and experiences of pupils may influence their understandings of social justice and the need to take an equity approach.

I think my use of questioning supported pupils to understand the topics and respond to questioning that will be relevant and useful for this research project.

5.5.4 Focus groups



Focus groups emerged as an extremely helpful aid to promote discussions around the topics that otherwise pupils could be reluctant to discuss. In focus group discussions, pupils were asked to create drawings and respond to verbal questioning about their work and the work of their peers. STs shared that they felt that the focus groups allowed pupils to think-pair-share their opinions and

ideas on what social justice is. STs described that focus groups allowed a safe and open environment for all pupils to share their experiences and opinions. By listening to each other's experiences in the discussions, pupils gained an increased understanding of the similarities and differences between people around them. For example, they recognised the different types of families and appreciated the value of embracing diversity.

Presented below is a ST's reflection on a lesson on inclusion.

INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUNDS

This lesson focused upon an environment (playground) that the children are very familiar with, but to reflect upon this environment and ways of making it accessible for all. The lesson began with a class brainstorm as I asked the children to write words such as 'Inclusivity' and 'Accessibility' on the whiteboard, highlighting that these words mean that everyone is included and involved, regardless of obstacles they may be presented with.

The YouTube video that showcased the 'Magical Bridge Playground' in California was a highly engaging tool in the classroom. This video presented children with real life footage of people their age using the playground equipment, along with the reasons why certain apparatus was designed in certain ways.

After the video, I encouraged the children to compare and contrast the 'Magical Bridge' Playground to other playgrounds that they had visited before. The children quickly remarked that some major differences included the widths of the pathways and slides being greater in the 'Magical Bridge Playground' compared to those in their local area. On further prompting, the children realised that some of their local playgrounds may not be open or 'inclusive' to all, and this is something they hadn't pondered upon as it had never directly affected them.

With this in mind, I asked the children to design their own playgrounds with one or two features that were accessible to all. The children took some time first to think about playground equipment they use, and then how someone with an intellectual or physical disability for example could use the same piece of equipment as it is, or with adaptations made to it.

This lesson was highly thought provoking for the children and sparked many conversations around the environments they use on a daily basis not being accessible to all, and how simple adaptations such as wider slides could make a huge difference to someone else's experience in a playground as they can participate fully in the activities of their friends.

Figure 18 Student teacher reflection on a lesson on inclusion

5.6 Teacher educators' reflections

Teacher educators (TEs) engaged in an ongoing reflection of their experiences of mentoring STs to adopt pedagogies based through a social justice lens. Brookfield's (1995, 2017) four lenses [see Figure 19] were used by TEs in this process of critical reflection. Engagement with these four lenses strengthened the project at various stages and enabled teacher educators to facilitate the STs' own actions and reflections.

Brookfield's (2017) lenses of reflection

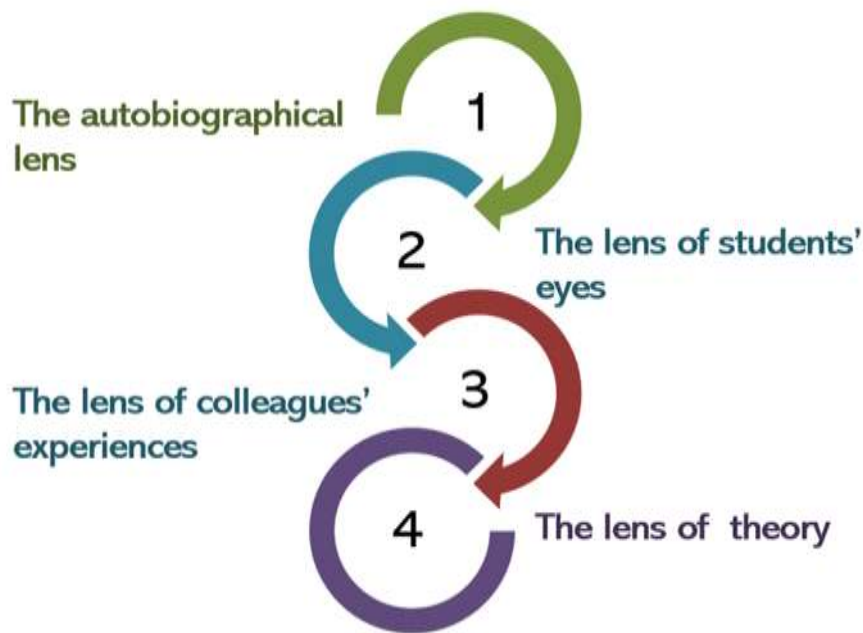


Figure 19 Lenses of reflection, adapted from Brookfield (2017)

Self-reflection: TEs reflected on their previous experiences as teachers/mentors/guides to uncover the paradigmatic assumptions and instinctive reasonings that frame how we work" (Brookfield, 1995, p.30). TEs reflected on their own experiences of education, and how they interconnect and intersect with the lived experiences of those they teach. The SHARED project underlined the importance of being critically aware of the necessity to understand one's own perspective, and to appreciate the fact that 'my perspective is never exactly the same as anyone else'.

Student lens: Reflecting through student lens was important to 'investigate assumptions that either confirm or challenge existing power relationships in the classroom" (Brookfield, 1995, p.30). The SHARED Project required STs to engage with wide ranging, complex and multi-faceted concepts relating to social justice. Although some STs were new to the approach, it was wonderful to see how the concepts of equity, social justice and identity, in particular, fired students' imagination, and the creativity with which they explored these concepts with their classes. Throughout the project, TEs witnessed the care, respect and compassion shown by student teachers as they worked with pupils on school placement. It was, however, even more exciting to see how STs began to consider and embed the principles of social justice in their wider teaching – particularly thinking about how to support those who were disadvantaged and make their lessons more accessible. Data from pupils manifested their hopes, dreams and aspirations for life. As well as having well-developed ideas around fairness and difference, pupils went beyond examples from their own daily experience and cited key current events in the wider world to illustrate their perspectives. Such depth of pupils' engagement gave STs the confidence to continue and develop the conversations. They realised that pupils had much to say and contribute on the topic, and that 'age appropriate' did not need to mean 'sugar coated'.

Colleagues' experiences: Informal reflection through conversations with colleagues and members of the research committee helped retain the momentum of the project in each phase and motivated TEs to critically challenge their practices on an ongoing basis.

Theoretical lens: The lens of theory guided the project from its inception. In-depth understanding of sociological aspects and teacher agency through existing literature guided in the development of resources for STs.

The SHARED project is a (re) call to action to be mindful of the importance of understanding both theoretically and practically key sociological concepts such as family, schooling, achievement and diversity. Overall, the SHARED project shows that the education system north and south has huge capacity – between all of the stakeholders- to be a positive force in children's lives – but pupils' voice needs to be heard and responded to –'that is the challenge for us all in education'.

Section 6: Discussion of Findings

The key findings in the SHARED research study are:

- Student teachers have strong perceptions and understanding of school and family but less developed understanding of equality, equity and justice.
- Student teachers reported being facilitators of learning and experiencing enhanced pupil agency when using social justice based pedagogical approaches, for example focus groups and visual data as stimuli for discourse in the classroom. Significant support was required from teacher educators at the initial stages to enable student teachers to teach through a social justice lens.
- Pupils demonstrated an awareness of cultural diversity that many student teachers did not expect and were very open to accepting the differences between individuals. In interactions with peers during the lessons and focus groups the pupils demonstrated evidence of embracing diversity and seeing everyone as equal.
- In terms of student teacher agency and professional learning, the project challenged participants to unearth their assumptions about various social justice concepts and to engage in critical reflection on their teaching practices including their underlying beliefs and values. They reported a positive mind-set shift about social justice teaching.
- Challenges reported by student teachers included their own emotional regulation when responding to pupils, lack of time and resources and selecting age-appropriate language and not reinforcing existing beliefs and values when reflecting on planning and practice.
- Key learning for teacher educators included coming to an acceptance that significant time is required to adequately prepare student teachers to plan and teach through a social justice lens. Additional time was required for foundational exploration by student teachers of their experiences and practices.
- Teacher educators need to work collaboratively to ensure consistency in allowing student teachers time to reflect and take appropriate action in relation to teaching for social justice. This was found to be critically important in the context of a predominantly monocultural student teacher profile both North and South.

The SHARED research project sought to prepare and enable STs to positively influence ambitions, aspirations, agency and educational outcomes for primary pupils through a broad curriculum focus underpinned by a social justice lens that extends beyond teaching for economic efficiencies and 'teaching to the test' but instead prioritises equity, equality and "human welfare and well-being" (Reay, 2022, p. 429).

This research was motivated by a desire to support STs on our shared island on their school placement (and later as NQT/ECTs) to be able to negotiate and engage with the challenges of an often unjust and inequitable society. The evidence generated in this research gives us hope that student teachers North and South are active agents of social change (Kavanagh et al., 2021). The combination of a deepening curiosity about social justice education, collaborative interactions, engagement with pupils and reflections on lessons taught have allowed us to glimpse at our shared future where the transformative value of education (Clarke et al., 2021) is reflected and enacted in our school classrooms and initial teacher education lecture settings. Aligned to this is the hope that it is in fact possible to address what Reay (2022) describes as ‘growing mistrust and ignorance of those who are different from ourselves’ (p. 429), through innovative curriculum or ‘pedagogic approaches that are underpinned by a social justice lens that accentuates care, wellbeing, sense of belonging and life satisfaction’ (p. 426).

Guided by the research questions this discussion will explore four main areas -

- i. Student teacher identity (values, motivations and agency)
- ii. Student teacher engagement with social justice teaching
- iii. Pupils as active citizens and social justice
- iv. Hope as a driving force of change

Each area will now be discussed drawing on the contextual factors of this study, the literature reviewed and the evidence of findings from the data tapestry.

6.1 Student teacher identity (values, motivations and agency)

The STs in this study were highly motivated not only in their choice of profession but were motivated to enhance their development of their professional identity through participation in a social justice-focused research project. This demonstrates a commitment to the sustainability of their role as teachers (Wang & Zhang, 2021). Although the STs are at the beginning of their teacher education continuum, the values they espoused mirrored those expected of the teaching profession across both jurisdictions (Teaching Council, 2016; GTCNI, 2018). They evidenced care and compassion when working with pupils on social justice topics, they spoke of the importance of building relationships based on trust, they demonstrated a commitment to the service nature of teaching and to their own professional development and they acted with integrity and respect during the focus group elements of the research. This reflection on and articulation of values is something that Hall et al. (2018) posit as being crucial in ST learning.

Research on school placement across both jurisdictions points to the transformational impact of placement experiences on student teachers’ personal and professional identity (Clarke et al., 2021, Hall et al., 2018). The STs in this study evidenced four key elements of professional identity development (Fitzmaurice, 2010). They engaged in an ongoing process of interpretation of their

experiences of teaching through a social justice lens; informed by the inputs they received on sociological concepts they focused on themselves in the school context, they had to harmonise their sub-identities as student teacher, researcher, reflective practitioner and learner; and they pondered their developing agency in their reflections.

The STs remarked on the perceived innocence of the pupils in their classrooms when it came to the open and honest way, in which they discussed matters related to social justice. This innocence, honesty and vulnerability was also manifested by the STs themselves. Although not blind to challenges such as curriculum overload, personal resilience and resourcing issues, they brought with them an enthusiasm for the teaching profession and in particular strong principles of equity, activism and social literacy (Ayers et al., 2009) that had not been diluted by any collision courses (Fenwick et al., 2022; Purdy, 2022), cultural flashpoints (O'Sullivan, 2005 in Conway, 2013) or 'perfect storms' (Conway & Murphy, 2013) which so often dampen the passion of those working in the education system. It was heartening that the STs exhibited commitment and purpose even against the backdrop of the busyness and intensity of initial teacher education programmes.

6.2 Student teacher engagement with teaching for social justice

The STs in this study identified and implemented social justice-based pedagogies while teaching the national curriculum on their school placement and in doing so evidenced professional learning and growth. The plan/act/observe/reflect cycles of this action research project afforded the STs' opportunities to use and reflect on social justice pedagogies in the classes that were consciousness raising (Kokka, 2020) for both themselves and their pupils. The preparatory programmes on research methods, sociological concepts and social justice-based lesson planning enabled the STs to engage with the three knowledge domains of social justice teaching - Social Justice Knowledge, Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge, and Social Justice Content Knowledge (Dyches & Boyd, 2017). Mayne (2019) reflects that this focus on social justice knowledge domains allows STs to illuminate their voices inside and outside of the classroom. The research showed that the SHARED project had a transformative impact on STs' confidence, on their mind-sets about teaching and about their understanding of home school connections. This also evidences an explication of their habitus, their dispositions, values and beliefs that informed their positionality and their approaches when planning, teaching and evaluating their lessons. This aligns to Sweetman's view (2009) regarding an orientation that must be operationalised and their way of being in the world and in their privileged position as teachers and role models how they use their positionality positively as they seek to influence their pupils in their thoughts and actions also.

In their reflections, the STs referred to many of the elements of social justice teaching that are documented in the literature. References were made to their developing mastery of social justice concepts with specific growth in their understanding of equity; they engaged in critical thinking and personal reflection on their practice; they saw the need for action at school and home level if social

change is to occur; and they became more aware of the multicultural group dynamics in their classrooms (Hackman, 2005). By turning the mirror on themselves in their lesson evaluations and reflections and in the focus groups, the STs interrogated their own self-knowledge (Picower, 2012) and in particular their preconceived notions about sociological concepts. The cross-border element of the study and the shared conversations that resulted were in themselves an opportunity for the STs to demonstrate respect for others on a professional level, as well as being safe spaces for the STs to discuss issues of social justice and social change with their peers.

At a more practical level, the study evidenced the lived reality of social justice teaching on school placement. The intensity of initial teacher education, and the interrupted and altered placement experiences North and South as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Young et al., 2022) were a backdrop to the study and indeed limitations of it. The STs clearly articulated the many benefits of participation in the study but they were honest in their appraisal of the challenges of using a social justice lens in lessons on placement. These challenges were most notably their own resilience when dealing with pupil responses to difficult subject matters, the lack of curriculum time to spend on discussions with pupils on topics that are important to them, an overcrowded curriculum, challenges in finding age-appropriate language when discussing social justice issues and the availability of suitable teaching resources.

6.3 Pupils as active citizens and social justice

STs reported that, despite the complexity and unfamiliarity of the sociological concepts and social justice concepts overall, pupils readily engaged and shared their experiences. Their understanding of complex concepts including diversity was somewhat simpler and more straightforward for them perhaps than what the STs expected, indicating that children don't in fact see difference in the same way as adolescents or adults do and their willingness and readiness to celebrate and embrace diversity is encouraging and reassuring. The pupil responses in the project highlight how important it is to encourage pupils to engage with social justice and become active citizens as they learn to negotiate various global and local issues through appropriate pedagogies and experiences. The objective of promoting pupil advocacy of social justice by generating a 'proactive stance of addressing social inequity' (Phillips, 2010, p.2) is a powerful mechanism to promote the development of 'sympathetic imagination' (Nussbaum, 2007, p.3) and enable pupils to think and act with empathy and with care and compassion for others, respecting difference and embracing diversity. The findings generated demonstrate not only the pupils' ability to embrace and integrate a social justice mind-set into their being, but it also illustrates how the STs really understood and undertook to be positive role models for the children in their approaches and wider discourses with them. The use of appropriate pedagogy clearly was beneficial for the children in this small-scale project and the lesson plans and focus group schedules used and created by the STs offer exemplars or practice for future STs on school placement/experience.

6.4 Hope as a driving force of change

All educational experiences should involve a building of hope as this hope can be the driving force for change (Williams, 2018). The Shared Island initiative springs from hopes for a future grounded in connections, trust and shared dialogues.

S-CoTENS objectives include peace building and focusing on cross-border cooperation for teacher education enhancement (Clarke et al., 2021) and focuses on a shared hope for the promotion of quality teaching and learning for all on the island of Ireland. It is apt therefore that this discussion concludes with a statement on how this SHARED project, through the sharing of experiences and learning about teaching for social justice, has contributed to the building of hope for positive change in the education systems in both jurisdictions.

- STs are intrinsically motivated to teach by a deep commitment to social justice
- Pupils in classrooms across both jurisdictions evidenced a desire to engage in conversations about social justice issues
- Teacher educators can support student teachers to teach through a social justice lens within current initial teacher education structures
- STs embrace and enjoy the confluence of their roles as teachers, as learners, as researchers, as reflective and collaborative professionals and as agents of social change
- STs embodying the values and standards of the teaching profession
- Discourse is central to the work of STs
- STs are open to new approaches and methods that will enhance their role in the classroom.

Section 7: Recommendations and Final Comments

The learning and findings from this project, with its focus on sharing experiences and learning on a shared island have wide implications for those involved, in the broadest possible sense, in teacher education North and South. At heart, these recommendations are a call to re-prioritise and re-balance – to strengthen the focus on values that lies at the heart of both teacher education programmes.

7.1 Recommendations

The recommendations arising from the SHARED research study are presented across seven different levels.

Level	Recommendations
Teacher educator	<p><i>The research has found that there is a need for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher educators to make concepts and lenses of social justice explicit in their teaching across modules on ITE courses. • teacher educators to place a priority on explicating the focus on care and wellbeing that permeates the ITE programme, helping student teachers to understand what this looks like in the classroom setting. • teacher educators to support student teachers to achieve more congruent alignment between their conceptual understanding of social justice and the lived reality of teaching for social justice. • teacher educators to help student teachers to see teaching for social justice as inherent in their practice and professional standards – for example, the need for differentiation as fundamentally an issue of social justice. • greater exploration of teacher educator understanding of social justice, to ensure that it permeates programmes, and is not left to one department or school. • teacher educators to value and build on student teacher values in teaching for social justice. • teacher educators to support student teachers to use research and evidence in their own classrooms, both during Initial Teacher Education, and post-qualification.
Student teacher	<p><i>The research has found that there is a need for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploration into how to raise expectations among student teachers about the nature and centrality of social justice, and how they can work and teach to be more socially just. • student teachers to see teaching for social justice as an issue to be addressed collectively, not primarily at individual level. • student teachers to reflect on their developing identity in relation to their responsibility and agency to teach for social justice, and to set the tone in their own classroom, even while at ITE level. • student teachers to take responsibility for ‘valuing their values’ in relation to issues of social justice and build these into their reflections while on school placement. • the SCoTENS Virtual teacher exchange to take social justice as a topic for a future exchange.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional support to be provided for language for teaching for social justice, particularly in the Irish Medium sector.
Induction	<p><i>The research has found that there is a need for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • induction both North and South to develop the principles of social justice from ITE. • induction both North and South to provide NQTs/ECTs with the agility and flexibility needed to deal with the rapid changes in social justice issues and in the corresponding lived reality for pupils.
Teacher CPD	<p><i>The research has found that there is a need for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross-border CPD to develop in order to facilitate shared learning, mirroring the SCoTENS student teacher virtual exchange programme. • professional learning CPD communities to be created (perhaps virtually) in order to network among professionals and share experiences.
Policy	<p><i>The research has found that there is a need for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a greater balance to be encouraged in teacher education policies North and North between social justice aspects and global teacher education accountability agendas.
Curriculum	<p><i>The research has found that there is a need for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ITE providers to ensure that social justice learning outcomes are present across modules, and that students demonstrate evidence of their development and understanding of issues of social justice.
Shared Island	<p><i>The research has found that there is a need for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further cross border research to be conducted specifically focused on practising teachers' perspectives and understanding of social justice education.

7.2 Limitations

In the first instance, the SHARED project is a small-scale study, and must be recognised as such. However, it is worth noting that the richness of the tapestry of data collected gives a kaleidoscopic view of the research questions investigated.

For a number of students in each institution, the busyness of school placement proved a barrier to full participation in the project. This was most clearly seen in the number who initially expressed great enthusiasm at the outset, but subsequently took the decision to not take part as the busyness of school placement increased. A smaller group were engaged throughout but did not manage to teach all of the social justice lens lessons while in school. While school placement always places significant demands on STs, this was especially the case this year (2021-22): due to COVID-19, students in the North had not done a 'normal' school experience placement since 2019, and those in the South found their placement block moved as schools and universities worked to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on education.

The project also encompassed two jurisdictions, each with their own primary curriculum, and framework for Initial Teacher Education. While there are significant parallels across both curricula North and South, it is nonetheless inescapable that STs and their pupils came to the project having had different prior 'educational' experience of the social justice issues under consideration.

Finally, the research team are also acutely aware of the limitations that arise from their being insider researchers in the study: the potential for personal bias in design of questions and instruments, ensuring rigor and transparency in data collection, and the ethical issues that can arise when working with students in one's own institution (Fleming, 2018). The cross-border, partnership model of the project, and the input from the external Research Advisory Team was central in addressing this, by providing 'critical friends' at every stage.

7.3 Project Outputs

There are four main outputs from the SHARED research project which can be used by teacher educators, STs, teachers and policy makers:

- Pre-placement programme - research methods, sociology, using visual data methods, social justice
- Padlet - resources to support teaching for social justice
- eBook - collection of visual artefacts
- Video

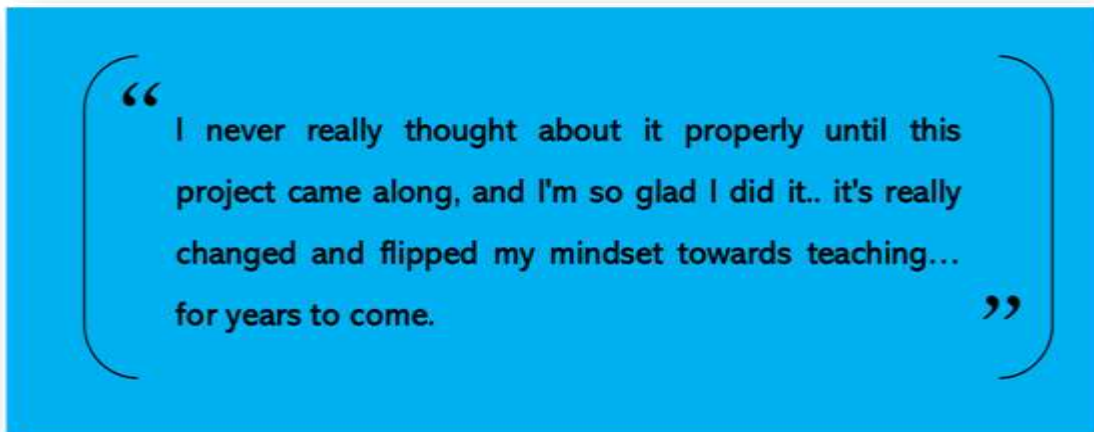
7.4 Final comments

Using an action research design this project set out to explore how teacher educators could support student teachers to engage with social justice, intersectionality and interconnectedness on their school placement experiences to enhance and benefit primary school pupils' shared hopes, ambitions and aspirations. The project was framed within the context of and against a backdrop of educational (in)equality, (dis)advantage, attainment, achievement, inclusion and diversity on a shared island. Since partition, successive governments North and South have addressed issues of educational equality in various different ways, however, neither ever managing to fully address or understand the complexities identified by Reay (2022) as "not one thing", but "an intricate and complicated amalgam of many different factors" (p. 425).

More recently, the publication of A Fair Start (2021), from the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement in Northern Ireland, established under the terms of the New Decade, New Approach political settlement of January 2020 and published in June 2021 has given cause for hope in NI, while the reaccreditation of Teacher education programmes under the Céim framework of standards in the ROI, including core elements of social justice and citizenship is also encouraging and

offers opportunities to embed inclusive, socially just approaches at the formative stages of the continuum of teacher education.

This innovative project afforded STs the opportunity and the space to think differently, to 'flip' their thinking and to broaden their approach to teaching for social justice. The final word is theirs....



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Appendices

Appendix 1 Student Teachers Focus Group 1 – Schedule

Explain ground rules- one person speaks at a time, please do not identify your school or include any other identifiable information in the discussion. The conversations in the focus group are confidential to the group and should not be discussed with anyone after the focus group has concluded.

Please consent to me recording the focus group

Focus Group Phase	Time	Prompt/Questions
Introduction	10 minutes	<p>Introduce yourself, (first name only), course/year of study, brief (non-identifiable/anonymous) description of placement school- contextual details (size, gender, rural, urban, class group, number of children)</p> <p>Why do you want to be a teacher?/What motivated you to become a teacher? Did you always want to be a teacher? If not what other career did you consider and why?</p>
Development	30 minutes	<p>When you think of the family as a concept what do you think about?</p> <p>Also, thinking about the school as a concept, how do you conceptualise the school? (Role, function, purpose, connections, schooling v education)</p> <p>Thinking about your school placement experience can you identify any connections/areas of common interest between the family and the school? Are these connections always complimentary in your experience or are there challenges? Can you give examples?</p> <p>What is your understanding of;</p> <p>educational ambition, educational attainment</p> <p>teacher agency,</p> <p>culture,</p> <p>identity,</p> <p>diversity,</p> <p>inclusion,</p> <p>interculturalism</p> <p>intersectionality.</p> <p>Thinking about your role as a teacher how could you enable positive educational experiences for primary pupils that enhances educational attainment?</p>

		Thinking about the concepts above, how could you include any of the above concepts into your teaching?
Conclusion	5/6 minutes	<p>Why did you sign up to participate in the project?</p> <p>What do you hope to learn from your participation in the project?</p> <p>What do you foresee as your greatest challenges as a teacher in teaching through a social justice lens?</p>
		Thank you for participating in the focus group.

Appendix 2 Pupil Focus Group 1 schedule



Focus groups with children

- **30 minutes** duration in total
- 2 minutes- Introduction, distribution of art paper and colours, read intro statement about the focus group, how long it run for etc and explain how it will work.
- 5 minutes-using the art paper and colours and using verbal prompts, ask the children to draw their **first** picture of themselves and their family.
- 5 minutes- Ask them to show their pictures to the class. Using verbal prompts have a brief discussion about their pictures.
- 5 minutes-using the art paper and colours ask the children to draw their second picture of themselves in the future in their 'dream role/job/occupation'
- 5 minutes- Ask them to show their pictures to the class. Using verbal prompts have a brief discussion about their pictures.
- 5 minutes- using the art paper and colours and using verbal prompts, ask the children to draw their third picture of an example of an experience they have where it was 'fair' and an example of of where it was 'unfair'

Appendix 3 Pupil Focus Group 2 schedule

- Distribute or ask table leaders to distribute art paper and colours.
- **Focus group Action 1: (15 minutes) Differences and Similarities between us**
- Pupils in pairs. Using their sheet, ask them to look at each other and draw a full body picture of each other and colour it. Stop them after 8 minutes and ask them to show their pictures.
- Pick a number of children around the class and ask them to describe similarities and differences between them from their pictures of each other (Audio record their descriptions) (7 mins). Emphasise to the pupils how it's important to respect and celebrate human differences.
- **Focus group Action 2: (15 minutes) Gender/Ability/Disability/Race Stereotyping in the workplace and society**
- Pupils working individually. Ask pupils to draw a picture of **five** members of their community who work in different roles (eg. Teacher, plumber, electrician, doctor, retail salesperson, barperson etc). Ask them to give each of the members a name (not their real name) and write the name beneath the community member.
- Stop them after 8 minutes and ask them to show their pictures and as before pick different children and ask them to describe the roles and the work that the members of their community do. (Audio record their descriptions) (7 mins) Prompt pupils to explain how gender roles, disabled/able bodied people, different race representatives and societal expectations impact employment/career opportunities.
- **Focus group Action 3: (15 minutes) Education as a right for all**
- Post the following questions/prompts on your IWB/White Board:
- **How is education a right for us?**
- **Why is education important for us?**
- **How does education help us in our lives?**
- Pupils working individually. Ask pupils to sketch or draw their response to the prompt question(s). Prompts: Think about how education helps us to develop skills (literacy/numeracy/digital skills), how education helps us all to progress, how education helps us all to gain knowledge/understanding, how education enables us all to express views and communicate etc, how education can make a difference in all our lives. Stop them after 8 minutes and ask them to show their pictures and as before pick different children and ask them to describe their pictures and what they mean to them. (Audio record their descriptions) (7 mins)

Appendix 4 Sample lesson plans

Lesson Plan 1

Dáta: 27/05/22	Rang: 6	Am: 9:30
Fad an Cheachta: 30 nóim	Snáithe: Mise agus an Domhain Móir	Snáitheanna: Ag forbairt saoránachta - Cúram imshaoil

Cuspóir(i) an Churaclaim:

Ba chóir go gcuirfí ar chumas an pháiste:

- an t-imshaol a léirthuisint agus meas a bheith aige/aici air agus foghlaim go bhfuil freagracht ar bhonn aonair agus pobail ar gach duine as caomhnú an imshaoil agus as é a chosaint ar mhaithe leis na glúine atá le teacht.

Cuspóirí Foghlama:

Ba chóir go gcuirfí ar chumas an pháiste:

1. An dochair atá déanta ar an imshaoil.
2. Cluiche Réitím/Ní Réitím/Nílim Cinnte a imirt
3. Plé in am ciorcail a dhéanamh
4. Foghlaim conas tacú leis an imshaoil
5. Bileog a líonadh ar a gcuid buanna mar dhuine a thacaíonn leis an imshaoil.

Áiseanna:

- Bileog faoi buanna mar dhuine a thacaíonn leis an imshaoil
- Ceol suaimhneach
- Cártaí don Réitím/Ní Réitím/Nílim Cinnte

Réamhrá:

- Cluiche (OA/OG) – Réitím/Ní Réitím/Nílim Cinnte

Léifidh mé cúig chás amach do na daltaí ag tabhairt réiteach féideartha amháin dóibh tar éis gach ceann. Beidh orthu cinneadh a dhéanamh agus taobh a phiocadh ar na ráitis a leanas,

“ag baint úsáide as páipéar athchúrsáilte ar feadh lá amháin bhead muid in ann 75,000 crainn a shábháil”

“Faighteann 1 billiún éan agus mamaigh bás gach bliain trí ionghabháil plaisteach”

“Déantar na billiúin málaí plaisteacha gach bliain. As na málaí seo, caitear céad billiún amach le níos lú ná 5 faoin gcéad ag aimsiú a mbealach isteach i mbosca athchúrsála.” (seo bréagach tá sé 1 faoin gcéad)

“d'fhéadfadh sé go mbeadh díothú faoin mbliain 2050 mar gheall ar théamh domhanda ag leath de na speicis plandaí agus ainmhithe go léir ar thalamh tirim”

“Faighteann 150 speiceas bás gach lá mar gheall ar dhífhoraoisíú trópaiceach.” (seo bréagach mar tá sé 100 speiceas”

– Réitím leat (ar chlé) Ní réitím leat (ar dheis) Nílim cinnte (bun an tseomra).

- Am Ciorcail (OG) – Eagróidh mé na páistí i gciorcail agus déarfadh mé leo go mbeimid ag déanamh plé ar chairdeas agus ar an imshaoil le piaraí. Cuirfidh mé ceisteanna orthu plé a dhéanamh ar cad atá ar eolas acu cheana féin faoi conas tacú a thabairt don imshaoil.

Forbairt:

Plé: Déanfaidh na páistí plé ar na cceisteanna seo a leanas chomh maith;

- Cén fáth go bhfuil sé tabhachtach aire a thabhairt don imshaoil?

- Cad a dhéanann tú sa bhaile I gcóir cúram imshaoil?
- Cad a dhéanann tú sa scoil I gcóir.....?
- An bhfuil aon rud/áiseanna I do cheantar a thugann tacaíocht don imshaoil?
- An bhfuil aon rud eile gur féidir leat a dhéanamh go mbeadh go maith I gcóir an imshaoil?

Foghlaimimid conas tacú leis an imshaoil le;

- Gearr siar ar shiopadóireacht thapa
- Sábháil uisce
- Iompar poiblí nó siúl ar scoil
- Bain úsáid as cupáin agus buidéal in-athúsáidte
- Múch rud ar bith agus gach rud nach bhfuil tú á n-úsáid
- Rudaí a bhronnadh ar shiopaí carthanais
- Laghdaigh an méid plaisteach a úsáideann tú
- Athchúrsáil

Dul siar agus Clabhsúr:

Ar dtús, cuirfidh mé ceol suaimhneach ar siúl. Ansin, iarrfaidh mé ar na páistí machnamh a dhéanamh orthu féin mar dhuine a thacaíonn leis an imshaoil. Tabharfaidh mé bileog oibre dóibh agus beidh orthu cúpla bua a scríobh síos chun an abairt seo a chur i gcrích

‘Na buanna is fear atá agam mar dhuine a thacaíonn leis an imshaoil ná’

Measúnú ar thorthaí an cheachta:

- Breathnóireacht an mhúinteora
- Tascanna agus trialacha a dhéanann an múinteoir
- Bailiúcháin oibre

LESSON PLAN

DATE: 21/03/2022	CLASS: P5	LESSON NO. 10
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CURRICULUM/SYLLABUS AREA: WAU, Art & PDMU	LESSON TITLE/TOPIC: SHARED project: Expressive ambitions self portrait	DURATION: 40 mins
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<p>LEARNING INTENTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils should be able to develop their own personal understanding in identifying their ambitions. • Pupils should be able to create an expressive self-portrait using line drawing, lettering and colour in the style of Nate Williams.

<p>How will you know if pupils have achieved the learning intentions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will identify and discuss their own and others ambitions. • Pupils will create an expressive self-portrait using line drawing, lettering and colour in the style of Nate Williams.

<p>Language development and discussion points: Ambition, aspiration, goal, line, colour, letting, express, abstract, true - to - life, unique, achievement,</p>
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<p>Risk assessment (if needed): Ensure adherence to classroom rules</p>
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TIME	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
INTRODUCTION:		
5 mins	HOOK video	Whiteboards Data collecting table displayed on IWB
2 mins	What is an ambition? Identify that everyone has ambitions or goals that they would like to achieve. Ambitions are often achievable with a lot of hard work and commitment.	

TIME	ACTIVITY	RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT:		
5 mins	Identifying ambitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow pupils to discuss their talents, goals, ambitions/aspirations etc using questions as stimulus. - Emphasise that as we are all individuals and we all have different things we bring to this world that makes us us! - Pupils will list their unique ambitions in words on whiteboards. 	Picture stimulus on IWB Art paper Nate Williams style line drawing ideas template Colours Pencils
5 mins	Introduce today's art task <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nate Williams picture as stimulus for discussion - Focus on the text used - is his artwork true to life? What types of colours are used? How does his artwork make you feel? Do you like this type of artwork? Why or Why not? 	
25 mins	Identifying ambitions and aspirations by creating an expressive self-portrait: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using the words noted on their whiteboards and a Nate Williams style template as a stimulus, pupils will draw their portrait. - Pupils will add their lettering. - Pupils will continue to add expression through colour. 	

CONCLUSION:

Appendix 5 – sample visual data









