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Practice as Prize: Citizenship Education in two Primary Classrooms in Ireland

While citizenship education forms part of the formal curriculum at primary level in Ireland, its inclusion as a strand unit of Social, Personal and Health Education, rather than as a discrete subject, tends to make it less visible. In practice, citizenship education is strongly influenced by external agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in the field as the dominant producers of teaching resources and programmes in the area. In many cases, these programmes are award-driven, requiring schools to compete with others for recognition or to exemplify a particular standard of practice. Using thick description (Geertz 1973) and teachers' narratives, this article presents two cases based on the practice of two experienced primary teachers who negotiate the complex space between professional practice and the particular agendas of external agencies and NGOs. Focusing on two exemplars of their teaching, the article locates their work within the broader context of citizenship education in Ireland, highlighting the extent to which the exemplars chosen typify or challenge existing practice. The article includes the outline plans used by the participating teachers and draws on an extended dialogue between the participants and the researchers in which issues relating to citizenship education, classroom and whole school practice and the broader educational context were discussed and probed.

Keywords:
Ireland, primary education, citizenship, human rights education, participation, school award schemes, teachers' understandings and practices

Citizenship education lesson on the theme of water: An exerpt

The lesson began by introducing the theme of water. The children were asked to discuss: why water was important; where you could find water on Earth; how much of the water on Earth was useful for humans; where water was more available and less available and if access to water was a human right. The children were then asked to work in pairs and brainstorm how they used water in everyday life. In their pairs, the children suggested uses like washing, drinking and cooking. These were fed back and Zoe wrote the suggestions on the board.

The children were shown a two-litre bottle of water and asked to imagine that the bottle represented all the water their class had for a day. The children were then divided into groups of five or six with each group being given a glass to represent their share of the bottle. The children: estimated how much water, on average, each person in Ireland used per day and how many litres were used by different daily activities, like showering and using the toilet. They recorded their estimates on small white boards and checked them against a record of the *actual* average amount. The children were asked to decide on ways they could use less water and they made suggestions like taking shorter showers and half-filling the kettle. They then estimated how much water they would save by making each of these changes. A "class bowl" was introduced.

For each litre they felt they could save, the children took a spoonful of water from their group's glass and added it to a "class bowl" representing a common resource. Each group needed to conserve water to ensure that the class did not run out. The children were then led in discussing the activity and their learning, including who had responsibility for providing clean water and which ways of saving water were realistic for them.

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1 Introduction

This exerpt describes a citizenship education lesson on the theme of water that took place in an Irish primary classroom. Occurring in the context of the school's involvement in a national environmental award scheme, it typifies a prominent approach to citizenship education in Ireland and will be interrogated in greater depth later in this paper as one of the two cases presented. Based on the idea that learning experiences cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader levels of context that surround them (Dewey 1938; Cole 1996), this paper begins by sketching out dimensions of context before presenting the exemplars of practice that lie at its core. Some of these aspects will be shared by other national systems while others will be specific to the Republic of Ireland. While strongly influenced by the international human rights framework and by how Education for Democratic Citizenship/Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) is conceptualised and implemented by the Council of Europe (CoE 2010), for example, citizenship

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education in the primary sector in Ireland is also influenced by the philosophies underpinning its curriculum and by a range of traditions, beliefs and practices relating to teaching and learning. It is influenced further by the affordances (Gibson 1979) offered by structural and systemic dimensions and by the socio-economic, cultural and political constraints of life in Ireland in the second decade of the twenty-first century. It is also worth recognising that practice may differ as much within systems as across systems, and that "classroom level boundaries can transcend geographical boundaries in terms of learning" (Monaghan 2013, 30). The paper will focus mainly on those aspects of context necessary to support translation and interpretation across systems, while acknowledging that this inevitably underestimates the complex and dynamic interactions between teachers' practices, children's learning and different levels of context.

Conceptualising citizenship education

While it is generally accepted that schools represent key sites of education for democratic citizenship, there is less agreement on what citizenship education should look like, or on what constitutes the 'good' citizen in the first place. Tensions are evident between the notion of citizenship education as character formation and more radical visions of citizenship education as education for social justice (Westheimer, Kahne 2004a, 2004b); between a focus on citizenship as a shared national identity and the potential of cosmopolitan citizenship as a model for diverse and globalised societies (Osler; Starkey 2005) and between the idea of citizenship as an adult status and recognition of children and young people as citizens-in-the-present (Howe; Covell 2005). In the context of this paper, which focuses on citizenship education in the primary sector, the latter tension presents a critical point of differentiation between approaches to citizenship that seek to empower children and those that are more likely to reinforce traditional patterns of control and subordination within a school community.

The holistic vision of EDC/HRE, characterised as teaching about, for and through education for democratic citizenship/human rights education (EDC/HRE) implies a focus on a range of interrelated dimensions: cognitive (development of knowledge, concepts and understanding), participative (action-based skills development) and cultural (immersion in democratic culture through whole-school approaches) (Gollob, Krapf, Weidinger 2010). Consistent with Dewey's conceptualisation of democracy as "a mode of associated living" (1966, 87) is this idea that citizenship education should permeate all aspects of school life, providing opportunities for democratic engagement, shared deliberation and active participation for children as citizens in their school communities. In contrast, more traditional approaches to citizenship, that prioritise learning about (rather than for and through democracy), present a "deficit model of the young" (Osler, Starkey 2005, 38) as citizens-in-the-making (Marshall, 1950, 25) rather than present citizens. The concept of child citizenship has been strongly influenced by the participation rights afforded to children by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Such shifts in understanding have also been supported by paradigmatic changes in how children and childhoods are conceptualised, which recognise childhoods as multiple and socially and historically constructed, and see children as agents in that construction (Qvortrup, Bardy, Sgritta, Wintersberger 1994; Prout, James 1997).

If opportunities for children to participate as present citizens could be seen as one measure of citizenship education, the authenticity of that participation is a critical determinant of programme outcomes. Authentic participation requires meaningful opportunities to make decisions and to have those decisions implemented (Lundy 2007), which in turn implies a re-balancing of the adult-child relationship characterised by a devolution of power and control to children. Some would question the extent to which authentic participation is possible in the context of formal education. Biesta, Lawy and Kelly (2009), for example, suggested that, despite some democratization of practice, children's lack of control in school settings limit their effectiveness as sites of citizenship education (21). Moreover, even if children are given authentic opportunities to participate, the direction of that participation will be determined by the vision of citizenship on which the citizenship education programme is premised. Arguing the need for schools to examine what notions of citizenship underpin their programmes, Westheimer and Kahne (2004a, 2004b), for example, found that many citizenship education programmes privilege personal responsibility through "individual acts of compassion and kindness over social action and the pursuit of social justice" (2004b, 243).

In summary, citizenship education presents a complex array of ideas and practices, all of which are informed by particular visions of desired outcomes in terms of what constitutes the 'good' citizen and, by extension, the 'good' society. Key determinants of outcomes include the extent to which children are conceptualised as present citizens with rights of participation; whether participation is expressed through meaningful opportunities for children to exercise control over their environment and consequent democratisation of relations in the context of whole-school practice. The following section examines the Irish context in light of the above discussion.

2 Citizenship education in Irish primary schools: context, policy and practice

2.1 Wider policy and legislative context:

In June 2004, a constitutional amendment was passed by referendum in the Republic of Ireland, which removed the right to citizenship by birth in Ireland

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derived from the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Drawing on an historic mono-cultural rhetoric of nationhood, and a growing tendency evident in Ireland from the early 2000s to conflate the rights associated with social citizenship (e.g. welfare rights) with political citizenship, the referendum endorsed a racialised and exclusionary concept of citizenship articulated by the government as ”commonsense citizenship” (Fanning, Mutwarasibo 2007, 452). By contrast, in 2006, the government set up the Task Force on Active Citizenship, which put forward a concept of citizenship that was participative, civically engaged and intercultural (Report of the Task Force on active Citizenship 2007a). Rooted in the philosophy of civic republicanism, it was inclusionary in its definition of adult citizenship (Task Force on Active Citizenship 2007b). However, the Report gave limited support to the idea of child citizenry, confining its discussion and recommendations to children over the age of twelve in the context of post-primary education.

This failure to conceptualise younger children as citizens was not unique. The ratification of the UNCRC by the Republic of Ireland in 1992 was followed by a range of initiatives focused on children, including legislation such as the Education Act (1998). The act provided a statutory basis for student councils at post-primary level only, excluding children in the primary sector from its provisions in this regard. The National Children’s Strategy (NCS) 2000-2010 provided the policy context for the realisation of children’s participation rights more generally. Incorporating discourses around diversity, anti-racism and child citizenship (Deegan 2004, 237), the NCS gave rise to a number of initiatives, such as the appointment of the first Ombudsman for Children in 2004, and the establishment of participatory structures at local and national levels for children and young people between the ages of 12 and 18 years. Consultation with younger children, however, has tended to be at best sporadic. Children under the age of 12 years have been found to be among the groups least consulted by statutory and non-statutory agencies (Roe, McEvoy 2011, 6) and least represented in existing participatory structures (Murphy 2005, 58).

2.2 Curriculum context:

The Irish Primary Curriculum (1999) is premised on a child-centred and social constructivist approach to learning and underpinned by values such as respect for diversity, solidarity and the promotion of equality in local and global contexts. Seen by commentators as open to intercultural and rights-respecting practice (Ross, Faas, 2012; Ruane et al. 1999), its ”ideological elasticity” has also been seen as supporting a range of contradictory practices, from traditional, teacher-oriented practice to that which could be seen as child-directed and participatory (Waldron 2004, 229). Although many of the underpinning values and concepts associated with citizenship education are integrated across a range of subjects in the curriculum, it is located formally within Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), where it forms part of a wider strand entitled ‘Myself and the Wider World’.

While it pre-dates the Task Force on Active Citizenship by several years, the conceptualisation of citizenship embraced by the Primary School Curriculum draws on a similar philosophy of civic republicanism. The view of citizenship articulated in the curriculum documentation is that of ”active and responsible” citizenship in the context of a ”just and caring society” (NCCA 1999b, 2). The subject itself seeks to prioritise the individual development of the child and promotes positive self-image, self-confidence, self-awareness, relationship building, health-promoting practices and personal responsibility (NCCA 1999a, 3). Premised on a participative and active approach to children’s learning, the SPHE curriculum articulates a vision of schools as democratic spaces where children can experience “the democratic process in action”(NCCA 1999b, 3). Rights and responsibilities are seen in the context of an interdependent world and a diverse society. Care for the environment, inclusion and equality are presented as core values (NCCA 1999b, 4). While attributes and skills relating to citizenship, such as conflict resolution and decision-making, are distributed across the SPHE curriculum, the ‘Myself and the wider world’ strand provides a specific focus. It includes two units: Developing Citizenship and Media Education. Described as enabling children “to explore the various communities in which they live”, the language used to elaborate on the strand is infused with ideas of social responsibility, shared purpose, interdependence and respect for diversity (NCCA 1999a, 5-6).

The SPHE curriculum has been described elsewhere as “fairly close” to providing a model citizenship education curriculum (Waldron 2004, 224). Characterised by participative methodologies, it foregrounds the importance of engaging children in democratic processes in their school communities, supports the development of dispositions and skills that are integral to democratic citizenship, enables multiple identifications with interlinked local, national and global communities, promotes equality, justice and fairness as underpinning values and prepares children to recognise and engage with manifestations of prejudice, inequality and discrimination. Furthermore, it engages learners with formal democratic structures and processes at national and European levels.

However, while the idea of children’s participation is integral to the curriculum, in its conceptualisation it is limited and constrained, confined to safe and innocuous spaces where active citizenship can be realised without threatening the status quo or challenging adult-child power relationships (Waldron 2004, 225-226). Although there is a real emphasis on self-realisation and actualisation within the curriculum, this is rarely tied to the idea of children’s rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, for example, makes but one

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appearance in the curricular texts (NCCA 1999b, 4), while the weight of language in both the curriculum itself and the accompanying teachers' guidelines prioritises responsibilities over rights, and collective rights or the rights of others over the rights of the child. This tendency to emphasise responsibilities at the expense of rights, characteristic also of other systems, has been labeled elsewhere as 'miseducation' (Howe, Covell 2010, 92), suggesting that rights are dependent on the fulfilment of responsibilities (99)? Moreover, prioritising responsibilities over rights shifts the focus to behaviour management and control rather than empowerment (Trivers, Starkey 2012; Waldron et al. 2011; Howe, Covell 2010; Osler, Starkey 2005).

2.3 The context of practice:

Despite the affordances associated with an open curriculum, the practice of citizenship education is constrained by a range of structural and systemic factors relating to time, class size and the availability of adequate resources (NCCA, 2008). Other constraints include the influence of textbooks and the survival of more traditional teacher-centred practice (NCCA, 2008), low levels of teacher knowledge of key international and European human rights documents, and an historic deficit in terms of teacher education, which is only now being tackled at initial teacher education level (Waldron et al. 2011; Dillon, O'Shea 2009). While there is little direct evidence of the implementation of citizenship education in a primary context, a recent survey of Irish primary teachers' understanding of human rights and human rights education suggests the dominance of a responsibility-led conceptualisation of rights education and a charity orientation relating to issues of inequality. In addition, few teachers reported displays of the UNCRC, children's charters or other rights-related posters in their schools, while the dominant mode of children's participation related to their involvement in school committees related to Green Schools (Waldron et al. 2011).

Although the presence of student councils does not guarantee opportunities for authentic participation (Keogh, Whyte 2005; McLoughlin 2004), their relative absence at primary level (Waldron et al 2011), is significant, while not surprising in light of the failure to provide a statutory basis for such participation for younger children. As noted earlier, implementing the practice of democracy in a formal school context can be challenging (Biesta, Lawy; Kelly, 2009). Devine (2002), for example, illuminated the extent to which children's use of time and space were externally controlled and regulated in Irish primary schools and the absence of consultation (2002, 310). More recently, a study of fourteen-year old students in a post-primary context, conducted as part of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, found that, while Irish students valued participation, they saw themselves as having considerably less influence on decision-making in a school context than their international counterparts (Cosgrove, Gilleece 2012; Cosgrove, Gilleece, Shiel 2011).

The dependence of the Irish education system on external non-governmental (NGOs), governmental and quasi-governmental agencies in terms of human rights education initiatives has been noted (Hammarberg 2008). The role of NGOs as 'expert' providers of resources and professional development for teachers is not exclusive to Ireland (see, for example, Mejias, Starkey 2012), and NGOs are conceived of as stakeholders in CDE/HRE in the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (CoE 2010). Nonetheless, given the need for the practice of citizenship education to embed itself within the whole school context, going beyond curriculum to include school governance, structures and relations, the dependence on external agencies, characteristic of the Irish system may be problematic. As noted earlier, for example, Green-Schools represents the dominant model of participation currently in Irish primary schools, with a reported involvement of over 92% of all schools (primary and second-level) in the environmental education programme (GreenSchools 2013). Organised by the Irish NGO, An Taisce, in partnership with local authorities, and part of the international ECO School movement, it puts forward a model of environmental citizenship premised on personal responsibility and action rather than system critique.

2.4 The structural context

While Irish primary schools are state funded and implement a national curriculum, they are controlled by Patron Bodies. The majority of schools are denominational. Recent years have seen an increase in the number of multi-denominational schools under the patronage of Educate Together. While most of the 3,152 primary schools are co-educational, almost 17 % of children attend single-sex schools (DESa 2013). In 2011, the government responded to the growing diversity of Irish society by establishing a Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector to address issues of school patronage, which prompted an ongoing process of diversification in the sector (DESb 2013). Irish children generally attend primary education for eight years, between the ages of four and twelve years. Classes are organised according to age and grouped, for curriculum purposes, in bands of two: Junior and Senior Infants; First and Second Class; Third and Fourth Class and, finally, Fifth and Sixth Class.

In summary, the context of citizenship education in the Irish primary school sector is complex and sometimes contradictory, embracing a range of affordances and constraints: policy at state level which is ambivalent on the issue of child citizenship; an open and generally facilitative curriculum which supports a range of practices; the persistence of traditional and

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teacher-directed classroom practice and limited approaches to human rights education; few opportunities for children to exercise control over their environment and a high dependence on external agencies such as NGOs to drive citizenship education initiatives.

3 Methodology

While there is growing evidence relating to the teaching of areas such as mathematics and literacy through lesson study (see, for example, Corcoran 2012) and school-based professional development (see, for example, Kennedy 2010) respectively, there is no existing archive or documentation of practice relating to citizenship education or related areas in an Irish context. This paper documents the practice of experienced primary school teachers who work in mainstream settings in urban schools. The cases focus on exemplars chosen by the teachers as illustrative of their practice. The participating teachers were known to the researchers as committed citizenship educators who focused regularly on citizenship themes in their classrooms. For both participants, the exemplar chosen can be seen as part of a broader and informed practice, as opposed to an isolated and singular instance of practice. The exemplars are also indicative of existing trends in the practice of citizenship education at primary level in Ireland in that both are award-driven and instigated by agencies external to the school or education context. Each case draws on three main sources of data: observation of the school context, a series of interviews and an outline plan of the exemplar. The cases are set in the broader context of how citizenship education is conceptualised and actualised within the primary sector in Ireland.

Qualitative interviewing has been described variously as ”collecting talk” (Powney, Watts 1987), a ”series of friendly conversations” (Spradley 1979, 58) and a conversation with a structure and a purpose (Kvale 2007, 7). The approach to interviewing used in this study is conceptualised by the researchers as an extended dialogue to signify both its open-ended and iterative character and the mutuality of the engagement between interviewer and interviewee. In each case, a series of three interviews was conducted. The first two interviews gathered biographical and contextual data, explored the participating teachers' philosophies of teaching and their conceptualisation of citizenship education and engaged the participants in discussion around the exemplar. In addition to the interviews, further contextual data were gathered through a site visit to the schools, which allowed for observation of the school environment with a view to identifying whether citizenship education had a visible physical presence in the school. The plans developed by each participant were also analysed to clarify the process undertaken by the teachers and to examine the extent to which the exemplars were embedded in a broader curricular and whole school context (see Appendices 1 and 2).

Interview data from the first two interviews were analysed thematically and integrated with the contextual data and the analyses of the lesson plans to construct a case narrative incorporating thick description (Geertz 1973). The narratives were then shared with participants in the final interview to check their accuracy and to provide teachers with the opportunity to provide additional or alternative interpretations.

The two cases presented are followed by a commentary, which considers the ways in which these examples of practice illuminate the key issues around citizenship education in an Irish context signalled in the previous section and identifies a range of questions through which the examples could be interrogated further in a teacher education context.

In developing this paper we were concerned to present, as far as possible, the authentic voices of the participating teachers and to enact a democratic research practice. To this end, we left the choice of example to the teachers and used extensive quotes when constructing the narrative. In addition, constructing the third interview around the emerging narrative and commentary ensured that the participants could exert some control over this public articulation of their practice. Even so, it must be acknowledged that documenting the practice of others inevitably results in a power imbalance. Yet, there is value in attempting a ”critical conversation” between writers of teacher narratives and teachers as ”a form of shared inquiry” (Atkinson, Rosiek 2009, 191).

Case 1: Bróna's global justice programme

Bróna qualified as a primary school teacher in 1994 and has spent most of her teaching career in schools serving socially and economically disadvantaged areas in large urban centres in Ireland and in the USA. She spent two years as principal of a school for children with special educational needs and has undertaken summer volunteer placements in schools and colleges in Belize, Romania, Zambia and Uganda. She is now in her third year as a resource teacher in Redtown Educate Together National School. Resource teachers do not have responsibility for a class and instead support teaching and learning in a range of areas such as providing learning support for children with special educational needs.

The school is situated in a large commuter town, which has recently experienced a significant rise in population due to immigration and the availability of affordable housing close to Dublin. The school has DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) status which is a government scheme for schools with socially or economically disadvantaged populations. Schools on the scheme have lower pupil-teacher ratios and a range of additional resources and supports compared to the

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majority of schools in the State. As well as being multi-denominational, Educate Together schools operate according to three other key principles in that all its schools are obliged to be co-educational, child centred and democratically run (Educate Together 2006). Their *Learn Together Curriculum* (Educate Together 2004), which is a programme in ethical education, includes a strong human rights and social justice focus.

The five-year plan of Redtown Educate Together National School identifies citizenship and human rights education as one of four key priorities and commits itself to "provide opportunities that promote active and participative citizenship in a multicultural society". This commitment is evident in the school environment where artefacts, such as posters and quotations related to citizenship, are displayed and in structures such as student councils and human rights month.

The school plan identifies the Irish Aid Our World Awards as an opportunity to promote active citizenship. Irish Aid is the Irish Government's programme for overseas development and it has an active development education programme in schools. Hundreds of Irish primary schools participate in the programme each year. The stated aim of the Our World Awards is:

> "…to increase primary pupils' awareness and understanding of global development issues, in particular the MDGs and the work of Irish Aid, and to help them to explore the links between their lives and the lives of children in developing countries (Irish Aid 2013)."

While citizenship education is a priority area for the school, Bróna explained that "the principal knows I have a very strong interest in and kind of a history in citizenship education and asked me when I joined the staff to take it on". Throughout her interview, Bróna used terminology associated with development education, citizenship education and human rights education interchangeably and conceptualised human rights and citizenship education as permeating everything in the school. Thus she saw her practice as having "different layers" from "unplanned and incidental in every engagement we have with the children" to "planned or formal integration into comprehension pieces" used in literacy stations. Her philosophy of citizenship education was consistent with her conceptualisation of children as "citizens now" and central to her understanding of her role as a teacher. For her, her position in learning support offered opportunities to prepare children for citizenship:

> "My personal philosophy is to educate about citizenship, for citizenship and through citizenship So it's not just about teaching the children what citizenship is or how to be good citizens, it's actually living it- all the different interactions with the children and with each other...I do a lot of work in station teaching (children working in small groups at a range of rotating activities set up in different locations in the classroom) and in withdrawal groups around empowering the children with their language, their oral language skills, of how to make speeches, how to assert themselves... all the different things preparing them for citizenship…The key thing for me in my philosophy is that I see the children as citizens now and I am preparing them for citizenship right now as citizens of their country rather than just the future."

It was in this context that Bróna undertook to lead the Our World Awards programme with her senior classes. She described the programme as typical of the focused approach to citizenship education in the school. Both she and her teaching colleagues thought carefully about how the programme might be integrated into their work and how it would meet the broader needs of the children in their classes. They decided that they would select a specific group of children to lead the project with her as "they had a very strong interest in project work and needed something extra to really engage". Bróna decided not to plan for specific activities, to enable co-planning with the leader group of children before carrying them out with all the classes. The teachers were very deliberate in their selection of children for this group:

> "I worked with the three sixth class teachers and we discussed which groups to do, which groups to work with and we thought that it would be interesting to work with children who had different heritages, children with dual heritage, African heritage, Eastern European heritage, so we would have a good balance."

The theme of the programme - The Right to Education - appealed to Bróna and the teachers as they had explored aspects of the topic during the school's human rights month. In order to justify the time they would dedicate to the project, the teachers identified specific objectives from the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and included these in their monthly schemes of work, which form part of the planning requirements for Irish teachers.

At the first meeting with the leader group, the criteria for success outlined by Irish Aid were discussed and throughout the project, the children "kept checking the criteria to see if they were meeting the criteria". During the project, distinct activities were carried out by this group on their own and working with their peers, and by the teachers working with all the children. Activities carried out by the leader group included interviews with other children about their experiences of schools in other countries, the design of interactive quizzes on the themes of education and aid and the maintenance of a blog on the topic. According to Bróna, "when they (the children) had finished the blog, a lot of the classes did

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full lessons based on what the children had put together." Bróna also facilitated the classes in writing and performing a song. Bróna emphasised the degree to which the children enjoyed all of the activities in the programme, recounting that:

> "They loved working on the computer programme, they loved going on the internet, researching the information. They absolutely adored the interviews."

A striking feature of the programme of activities was the degree to which it was informed by the context of the school and its diversity. The programme not only drew on the experiences of children who had been educated in other countries but was open to their world-views. According to Bróna, the desire to show a positive and balanced picture of the Global South emanated from the children's own personal experiences of prejudice and from previous classroom work.

> "The children are very aware. One of the boys in the group, his parents are of African heritage. He had one specific issue that Africa is always presented as a country and is always presented in a negative way. He was absolutely adamant that we would find some way through the project of showing the positive aspects of Africa."

Although the children enjoyed the range of activities in the programme, "one of the most surprising things" for Bróna "was that they wanted to win and they were absolutely convinced they would win". Having managed the children's disappointment at not receiving recognition from the competition's organisers, Bróna reflected on the issues relating to the implementation of citizenship education in a competitive context.

> "The competition element takes from what they should be really trying to achieve. I just feel for the self-esteem of the children and for Irish Aid and their whole idea of changing systems, it starts from changing attitudes … a system where you don't win and you are not recognised is not a good starting point for positive changes. In the end, I just told the children that the whole process was their prize."

Despite this, Bróna also identified the positive dimensions of a national competition such as the Our World Media Awards as "the whole country is engaging in the right to education which is a citizenship issue".

Overall, Bróna described the programme as typical of her approach to citizenship education in that it was focused but claimed that the programme differed from her previous work in the extent to which she enabled the children to make decisions and take responsibility for much of the programme.

> "What I would say was different, which I am delighted about, I definitely let go of a lot of the control and it taught me that, given the foundations, the children can come up with much better ideas (…) I wanted to write the song lyrics but when you let go and trust children (…) once we had that general philosophy and we let them off … wow! it was powerful."

Case 2: Zoe's lesson on water

Zoe is a resource teacher in Greenview, a boys' national school located in a suburban area in Ireland. The school includes pupils from different ethnic and socio economic backgrounds with the majority of the boys at the school being white and from English speaking families. Like the majority of schools in Ireland, Greenview operates under Catholic patronage but includes pupils from other religions and from secular backgrounds.

Zoe has been teaching at Greenview since she graduated from initial teacher education ten years ago. Shortly after qualifying, she completed a Masters of Education in foundation studies and has recently begun a Doctorate in Education. Zoe recognises herself as being particularly motivated about human rights and human rights education (HRE). As a child, Zoe was interested in social justice issues and this interest grew when a friend of hers, who worked for Amnesty International, Ireland, asked her to pilot HRE resources in her initial years of teaching.

Zoe has worked to promote human rights in Greenview and has instigated the majority of citizenship related activities in the school. She encouraged the school to adopt more inclusive approaches to all members of the school community and set up a school council, which she now runs. The school council includes "councillors", elected by the children, from all classes except junior infants. It is intended that the councillors discuss issues with their respective classes and bring these to council meetings although, Zoe indicates, that in practice this depends on the class teacher and may not always occur. Zoe also led Greenview's involvement with the Irish Aid Our World Awards. It's most recent entry involved surveying local businesses about their use of fair trade products. A notice board in the school is dedicated to the work of the school council, HRE and the Irish Aid Our World Awards. Zoe has also participated in citizenship education and HRE programmes run by NGOs outside her school and is a member of Amnesty International.

While Zoe has advocated for the participation rights of children and staff members in terms of whole school practice, her conceptualisation of citizenship focuses on children's responsibility to contribute positively to society. While Zoe projects an understanding of children as current, rather than future citizens, this citizenship is framed in terms of children's duty and competency to influence their environments.

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> "Adults have responsibilities to children until they are 18. And children are aware that mothers and fathers and guardians and others in their lives make so many decisions for them on a daily basis. But I suppose children need to take responsibility also and I think that's the good thing about citizenship education and human rights education it makes them aware that, you know, they have to make decisions for themselves too. And yes, they have less responsibility but they do have to take some responsibility for what they do, also they influence the adults in their lives as well."

Zoe understands citizenship education as going "hand in hand with human rights education and development education". Zoe's focus on human rights and child responsibility is reflected in her selected citizenship lesson, which brings together HRE and environmental education materials and encourages the children to consider their water consumption.

Zoe's citizenship lesson was part of the school's involvement with the Green School's Award programme. The programme asks schools to review their environmental impact and to devise, implement and evaluate an environmental action plan. The Green Schools programme proposes different themes: litter and waste, energy, water, travel, bio-diversity and global citizenship Schools are asked to work through the themes and are awarded a flag once they have completed the programme for each theme. Curriculum work exploring environmental themes is also encouraged by the scheme, as is wider communication with the school community. Involving staff and student committees, the scheme promotes itself as supporting the democratisation of schools as well as promoting awareness of environmental issues amongst children and the wider community. Greenview has been involved with the Green Schools programme for several years and has a number of flags.

Zoe's lesson focused on water in preparation for the third flag (water)of the programme. Involving children in fourth class, the lesson aimed to "make children aware of the different changes they could make to reduce the amount of water they use". Zoe was not their class teacher but worked on a daily basis with the class co teaching and providing additional support where necessary. The lesson drew on suggestions included on the Green Schools website and in the *Compasito* human rights education manual from which Zoe said she "took elements" and "tweaked". The lesson was one of several on the theme of water conservation in which the class participated; the class teacher delivered the other lessons independently.

The lesson began by introducing the theme of water. The children were asked to discuss: why water was important; where you could find water on Earth; how much of the water on Earth was useful for humans; where water was more available and less available and if access to water was a human right. The children were then asked to work in pairs and brainstorm how they used water in everyday life. In their pairs, the children suggested uses like washing, drinking and cooking. These were fed back and Zoe wrote the suggestions on the board.

The children were shown a two-litre bottle of water and asked to imagine that the bottle represented all the water their class had for a day. The children were then divided into groups of five or six with each group being given a glass to represent their share of the bottle. The children: estimated how much water, on average, each person in Ireland used per day and how many litres were used by different daily activities, like showering and using the toilet; they recorded their estimates on small white boards and checked them against a record of the *actual* average amount. The children were asked to decide on ways they could use less water and they made suggestions like taking shorter showers and half-filling the kettle. They then estimated how much water they would save by making each of these changes. A "class bowl" was introduced. For each litre they felt they could save, the children took a spoonful of water from their group's glass and added it to a "class bowl" representing a common resource. Each group needed to conserve water to ensure that the class did not run out. The children were then led in discussing the activity and their learning, including who had responsibility for providing clean water and which ways of saving water were realistic for them.

The lesson's pedagogy reflects Zoe's approach to citizenship education, involving open discussion and brainstorming and encouraging the children to relate the lesson's theme back to their own lives. For Zoe, this consideration of the children's home lives in the context of their learning was what differentiated citizenship education from other curriculum areas. Zoe described how the children enjoyed the activity and recognised it as different to other schoolwork. In Zoe's view, the children learned from the lesson and recounted how their learning influenced their home environments.

> "I think they had a lot of fun because I think when you go to teach anything like this, it can be a break from the norm. The children don't see it as work or you know they don't have to write or do sums, they don't have to write in their copies and they enjoy conversation. They enjoy being asked about their own lives, you know being asked how do you use water. I suppose like everyone they like talking about themselves. (….) They did go away with some new knowledge and since then you hear parents saying oh he was telling me to turn of the tap or only fill the kettle this amount or that amount so you know some of it is trickling back to the family home."

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Zoe recognises herself as more interested in human rights than some of her colleagues and says that she would be conscious of integrating human rights and citizenship education into her teaching. She perceives other teachers as sometimes being a bit hesitant in regards to citizenship education and perceiving it as something new and challenging within an "overloaded" curriculum. For Zoe however, citizenship education is not an additional burden but fits in nicely with all curriculum areas and particularly with geography, science, SPHE and literacy.

Zoe described how she uses resources produced by NGOs and plans for citizenship education in her teaching.

> "I would actually more think of looking at you know human rights education or citizenship through, like, some of the material that Amnesty International provided, and Trócaire [a leading development NGO in Ireland], like the Lift Off programme [a project of Amnesty International and teacher trade unions]. And I would see how does this fit into geography or how does this fit into this particular strand so I just make sure that whatever I am teaching, whichever subject it actually fits in nicely with the curriculum objectives

Zoe sees the award scheme as an important support for the inclusion of citizenship education. She says this lesson may not have occurred were it not for the award scheme and sees it as particularly influential in encouraging teachers in the school who may not otherwise be inclined to include citizenship education. However she reports on the need to be "judicious" in engaging in an award scheme to ensure that the engagement is benefiting the children's learning rather than simply about recognition through award.

3 Commentary

These cases document examples of the practice of two teachers who champion citizenship education in their schools and professional communities. They also provide an insight into the educational practice emanating from two award schemes which occupy a significant space in citizenship education as it is experienced by children in Irish primary schools. While the teachers' dedication to and prioritisation of citizenship issues may be atypical, their experiences are indicative of the contexts, the agendas and the discourses that determine, to a large extent, the kind of citizenship education that happens in schools. This commentary offers an initial analysis of the exemplars which speaks to themes identified within the literature surveyed earlier in the paper. Fundamental to the discussion of each of these themes is how they influence and are influenced by implicit and explicit conceptualisations of citizenship and children which underpin teachers' practice.

Both Bróna and Zoe understood citizenship education as presenting opportunities to address issues of power through placing an emphasis on the importance of children's own perspectives and experiences. Both teachers highlight the potential of citizenship education to motivate and engage children because it values the children's experience and agency. Issues relating to control and domination identified in Irish primary schools (Devine 2002) still prevail however. Consistent with recent survey findings (Cosgrove and Gilleece 2012) children appear to lack influence in decision-making in regard to the choice and timing of curriculum content and the type of roles they are enabled to play or not to play. Bróna attempts to address these issues of power in her programme, particularly in relation to the work of the leader group; but this re-distribution of power and control is experienced differentially by a small group of children who are selected on the basis of criteria set by teachers. In the case of Zoe, while active learning and participation is encouraged and facilitated, the lesson is conceived and implemented by the teacher.

Both teachers draw on their own experiences and convictions, to promote the citizenship values of solidarity (Bróna) and stewardship (Zoe) that are important to them. In their experiences, content choices and approaches, the teachers themselves reflect cosmopolitan values. The diverse backgrounds and identities of the children in Bróna's school enrich and inform her teaching and children's learning experiences, while affirming and fostering the children's identities as cosmopolitan citizens (Osler, Starkey 2005). While citizenship educators cannot be neutral, the degree to which teachers influence children's opinions is one which could be further explored, given how in both cases, the teachers' convictions were consistent with their reports of children's dispositions and learning outcomes.

Westheimer and Kahne's (2004a, 2004b) concern that personal responsibility is often privileged in citizenship education programmes over structural critique finds expression in the award schemes considered here. While Zoe approached citizenship education, both generally and in the exemplar lesson from a human rights perspective, she identified children's recognition of their responsibilities as central to her practice as an educator in the context of citizenship. The aim and focus of the lesson was to encourage children to reduce their water consumption rather than to consider the systemic and justice issues related to water. Bróna, in her engagement with the Irish Aid Our World Awards, by contrast, looked towards more systemic (Greig, Selby, Pike 1989) and justice-orientated outcomes. In her interview, Bróna suggested that the award scheme was concerned with changing systems through changing attitudes. Ultimately however, she questioned the compatibility of a scheme where some participants "don't win" with the empowerment she saw as integral in delivering these structural changes.

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Andreotti's differentiation between open as against specific educational objectives in citizenship education is also reflected in the cases considered here (Andreotti 2006). While Zoe's lesson had both particular educational and action-related outcomes concerning the children's water use, Bróna's concern was with facilitating the children to explore and respond to the development themes that emerged rather than achieving predetermined learning. This contrast raises issues concerning the value of providing an open platform for learner exploration, expression and empowerment as opposed to specific learning outcomes.

Both teachers address curriculum objectives while prioritizing a focus on citizenship education. Furthermore, they include citizenship incidentally, as the opportunity arises and act to develop a culture of human rights and inclusion in the schools. However their experiences, reflected in these cases, suggest that their embedded and holistic practice is atypical and that, with the exception of the environmental citizenship embodied in the Green Schools' programme, citizenship education occupies a relatively peripheral space in primary education in Ireland. In Bróna's school, where citizenship was recognised as part of the school's fabric, Bróna's interest was, nonetheless, identified as exceptional. Zoe's perception that the children found her lesson a "break from the norm" echoes Devine's observations (2002) relating to children's internalisation of what was valued in school, what constitutes real work and their own preference for subjects that were active and fun. The "fun" and relevance to children's own lives that both Zoe and Bróna attributed to citizenship education may relate to its more marginalised status as a subject, as may its inconsistent practice. It is arguable that the leading role played by NGOs in school-based citizenship education (Hammarberg, 2008) both contributes to and reflects its location outside the everyday practice of teaching and learning in a primary context. While bringing capacity to an under-resourced area, external agencies, with their own agendas to progress, can militate against the implementation of a coherent and embedded citizenship curriculum at school level, locating citizenship education as something external to children's core learning experiences and, in the case of award schemes, suggesting that the practice of citizenship is not its own reward.

The idea of awards for the practice of citizenship is not confined to education and it would be churlish to suggest that citizens who exhibit leadership should not be recognised. Yet, in an educational context, while award schemes may serve to motivate teachers and schools to engage with citizenship education, their potential to unconsciously promote values such as competitiveness and individualism rather than the more altruistic and collaborative values generally associated with citizenship education needs to be acknowledged. Through becoming conscious of the underlying contradictions and addressing them, Bróna's response to her students' disappointment at not emerging as winners, asserted the value of the process itself. 'In the end', she noted, 'I just told them that the whole process was their prize'.

These exemplars suggest the following questions for further exploration with student teachers:

- How do these exemplars support education about, for and through citizenship?
- Which dimensions of EDC/HRE are strongly developed in these exemplars? Which are weakly developed or absent?
- How well does citizenship education integrate with different subject areas in the exemplars chosen?
- How do award schemes impact on children's experience of citizenship education?
- To what extent is power and control divested to children in these exemplars? Are there any opportunities for increasing this transfer of power? How would you balance child leadership with the achievement of specific learning outcomes in citizenship education programmes?

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