

‘Teachers Perspectives on the Effective Implementation of Social, Personal and Health Education in the Irish Primary Classroom’.

Elaine Baldrick

July 2018

Dissertation in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Learning and Teaching

Presented to:

Dr. Nigel Mc Kelvey

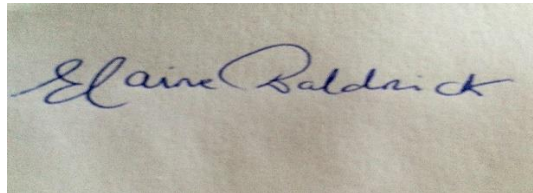
School of Business

Letterkenny Institute of Technology

DISCLAIMER

“I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit in Partial Fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree Masters in Learning and Teaching is entirely my own work and has not been obtained from the work of any other, except any work that has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.”

Signed: Elaine Baldrick

A photograph of a handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored, textured surface. The signature reads "Elaine Baldrick" in a cursive script.

ABSTRACT

The principal objective of this research is to identify primary schools teacher's attitudes and feelings towards the effective implementation of the Social, Personal and Health Education in Irish Primary Schools. Prior to the 1999 curriculum introduced by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, SPHE was not recognised as a stand-alone subject. While training is provided to some staff throughout the year, not all teachers are offered training which has been identified as a shortcoming within primary education. The aims of the investigation were to therefore, identify any barriers to effective implementation of the subject and determine if teachers feel that training along with time allocation for curricular delivery is sufficient. Data was collected using a mixed methodology of both qualitative and quantitative methods, namely a focus group and an anonymous online survey. The findings suggested that not all teachers are adequately trained for delivering specialist programmes contained within the curriculum. It was also found that teachers believed that time allocation was not sufficient and should be increased to at least 45 minutes for junior classes and one hour for the senior classes. Teachers concurred that there needs to be improved training for *all* teachers in every primary school and that a single manual for SPHE would greatly enhance the teaching of this subject. Other findings with regard to school policy and planning were identified to ensure there is accountability for implementing the SPHE curriculum at a set time each week as a whole school approach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Nigel Mc Kelvey. Your support, time and knowledge was very much appreciated throughout this research project; thank you.

To each of the participants of the focus group session and all the online survey participants, thank you all for your time.

Many thanks to my family and friends for their continued support and encouragement.

Thank you to my husband, [REDACTED] for his patience and support from the beginning and throughout the entire MALT course.

DEDICATION

To Charlie James Baldrick

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.0	Introduction	10
1.1	Background to the Topic and Rationale for the Study	10
1.2	Problem Statement	12
1.3	Aims and Objectives	12
1.4	Summary and Dissertation Outline	13

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.0	Introduction	14
2.1	Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	16
2.2	National and International Variations of the Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum.	19
2.3	Link to Educational Theory	23
2.4	Conclusion	24

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.0	Introduction to Methodology	26
3.1	Methodologies Applicable to Research Question	26
3.2	Mixed Methods Approach	27
3.2.1	Purposeful Sampling	27
3.2.2	Quantitative Data	29
3.2.3	Qualitative Data	29
3.3	Reliability and Validity	30
3.4	Data Collection and Analysis	32

3.5	Ethical Considerations	33
-----	------------------------	----

Chapter 4 Data Analysis

4.0	Introduction to Data Analysis	35
-----	-------------------------------	----

4.1	Limitations of the Study	36
-----	--------------------------	----

4.2	Data Analysis	36
-----	---------------	----

Chapter 5 Findings and Recommendations

5.0	Introduction	44
-----	--------------	----

5.1	Findings	44
-----	----------	----

5.1.1	Time as a factor in the effective implementation of the SPHE curriculum	44
-------	---	----

5.1.2	Training is insufficient in the specialist areas of the SPHE curriculum	45
-------	---	----

5.1.3	Content Overload in SPHE	45
-------	--------------------------	----

5.2	Recommendations	46
-----	-----------------	----

5.3	Conclusion	47
-----	------------	----

Bibliography

Appendices

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Strands and Strand Units within the Primary SPHE Curriculum	14
Figure 2.2	Model of the Theory of Planned Behaviour	17
Figure 3.1	Use of Triangulation in a Pragmatic Approach to Data Collection	32
Figure 4.1	Percentage of Teachers Trained in a Variety of SPHE Specialist Subjects	37
Figure 4.2	Questionnaire Response in Relation to Time	42

ACRONYMS

DES	Department of Education and Skills
PCSP	Primary Curriculum Support Programme
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
SEN	Special Education Needs
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
WHO	World Health Organisation
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
HSE	Health Service Executive
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Services
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
EI	Emotional Intelligence
ZPD	Zone of Development
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
PDST	Professional Development Services for Teachers
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
LYIT	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
SET	Special Educational Teacher

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Topic and Rationale for the Study

In 1999, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) unveiled the new and revised curriculum for Irish primary schools. This ‘new’ curriculum was the first curriculum document in 28 years, since 1971. It was a greatly anticipated educational landmark which was welcomed by teachers and educators across the country. The Irish Times reported the atmosphere at the launch of the new curriculum as ‘euphoric’ (Irish Times, 1999). It comprised of large hard copies, two for each of the eleven curricular subjects, one included the curriculum and the other a set of teacher guidelines, which every schools in the country received. Training was provided over the years by various government agencies such as the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) and the Regional Curriculum Support Services, to assist teachers in their implementation of the curriculum (Department of Education 2005, p.8). Teaching methodologies were one of the key new features of this curriculum, as was the introduction of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) as a stand-alone subject (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2005, p.4). SPHE had previously been incorporated into the Physical Education curricular area however the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) after consultation with the Government Review Body decided that SPHE encompassed many of the underlying principles of this new curriculum and it was now allocated discrete time as a single subject in schools. The curriculum places emphasis on the child at the centre of all teaching and learning (NCCA, 1999 p.4). The importance of a positive school ethos both inside and outside of the classroom was also placed at the core of the curriculum and SPHE was to reinforce this positive school climate in which children would flourish. 30 minutes was allocated for teachers to implement the SPHE curriculum each week.

Linsky and Lawrence (2011) suggests that education is not only concerned solely with education but the ‘challenges facing society’. The NCCA have recognised that schools and curriculum combined are seen as the source of many societal resolutions. SPHE is therefore becoming one of the crucial subjects of the overall curriculum which can help to foster wellbeing and positive mental health in children from a very early age. In 2005, the Irish

National Teachers Organisation (INTO) published a discussion document which followed the Consultative Conference on Education. It noted that the greatest obstacle to teaching SPHE was “time, followed in order by, lack of resources, overcrowded curriculum, multi-grade classes, class size, lack of parental support, lack of training, broadness of subject, children not being serious, lack of focus among teachers, suitable content and lack of knowledge” (INTO 2005). In the past 12 years since that statement, class sizes have increased, there are more children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream classes and multi-grade classrooms are more commonplace than ever before across the country therefore it is believed by the author that these problems have only increased.

The minister for Education, Richard Bruton, recently announced his plans to provide all teachers working in disadvantaged or DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) banded schools to have the opportunity to avail of training for two programmes used in the teaching of SPHE; namely these are “Incredible Years” and “Friends”(Department of Education, 2017). Both of these are evidence based training programmes. The Incredible Years programme aims to “reduce behavioural difficulties and strengthens social and emotional competence in primary school-age children” (Department of Education 2017), while the Friends programme aims to eliminate anxiety in children and encourages stimulating coping and resilience skills in children and young adolescents. These programmes can be delivered by teachers, universally or to targeted smaller groups of pupils. Minister Bruton said “Ensuring the wellbeing and mental health of all students is a key priority of mine as Minister. Friends and Incredible Years are internationally renowned programmes which can help our children develop the emotional resilience and coping skills which are key for flourishing in modern society. Commencing the rollout of these programme’s is an important action in this year’s 2017 Action Plan for Education, which sets out my ambition to make Ireland the best education and training service in Europe within a decade” (Department of Education, 2017). This strongly suggests that the government are recognising that SPHE training for teachers has not been adequate and there is need for further professional development for teachers in order to implement programmes such as The Incredible Years effectively and to see the positive results such programmes can have on children.

1.2 Problem Statement

This study will aim to identify some of the problems that face teachers in the effective implementation of the SPHE curriculum in the Irish Primary Classroom. This study will provide findings and recommendations that will be predominantly useful for the stakeholders in education such as policy makers within the NCCA and the Department of Education and Skills.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

This research will examine some of the primary theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin the curricular area of SPHE in order to effectively implement the curriculum in order to address the effectiveness of the SPHE curriculum in primary schools in Ireland today. The author believes that the promotion of a child-centered curriculum, such as that of the 1999 curriculum, echoes the beliefs of French educationalist Friedrich Froebel along with the work of John Dewey who believed that children should be encouraged to learn and experience things in their own natural environment (Dewey 2004, p.27). In addition, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy can also be linked to this research. Bandura wrote about developing a strong sense of 'well-being' and ways in which we can 'enhance accomplishments' (Bandura 1994, p.1). It is important to consider teacher's attitudes towards the SPHE curriculum and the manner in which they deliver the curriculum each week will have consequences on the outcome for the children.

The aim of this research is to examine primary school teachers attitudes and feelings towards effectively teaching and implementing the SPHE curriculum in their classrooms.

The objectives of the study are;

- To identify barriers to effectively implementing the SPHE curriculum in the classroom,
- To determine if teachers feel that training is sufficient in order to deliver the specific programmes included in the SPHE curriculum, including the 'Stay Safe' and 'Walk Tall' programmes.
- To identify if teachers feel that the time allocated to the teaching of SPHE is sufficient (30 minutes per week).

The research question, taking the aims and objectives of the study into account, is therefore:

Do teachers feel that the SPHE curriculum is both adequately recognised and implemented in classrooms?

1.4 Summary and Dissertation Outline

This dissertation will be divided into six chapters. Chapter one set out the aims and objectives for this study and also the rationale for choosing this particular area of the primary school curriculum to examine. Chapter two will be a review of the literature which will be used for the purpose of this research. Chapter three will be a discussion and a justification of the research methodologies used in this dissertation. Salient features of the discourse will be reported and analysed in Chapter four. Chapter five will be a review of findings which will be divided into themes and linked where possible to literature reviewed in Chapter two. The author will outline in this chapter whether or not the research question has been answered and if aims and objectives were met. Chapter six will be a final conclusion summarising what was found throughout the duration of this research project. There will be a bibliography section at the end of this paper followed by an appendix.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will review and evaluate the literature surrounding the SPHE curriculum and the issues that are placed at the core of the curriculum which should be encompassed throughout the teaching of SPHE. It will examine some of the factors which are important to ensuring the correct implementation of the subject in Ireland, such as time allocation, training and reasons why this subject is increasingly becoming more important to children. The justification for the factors selected above is due to the reoccurring nature of these themes throughout an extensive review of literature. This study will also explore and examine subjects similar to SPHE in other countries in primary schools and compare and contrast the implementation of such subjects to Ireland. SPHE is a key component of the 1999 curriculum. Below is an outline of the strands and strand units that are taught on a yearly basis.

Figure 2.1 Strands and Strand Units within the Primary SPHE Curriculum

Strand	Infants-2 nd Class Strand Units	3 rd Class-6 th Class Strand Units
Myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Self-identity ➤ Taking care of my body ➤ Growing and Changing ➤ Safety and Protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Self-Identity ➤ Taking care of my body ➤ Growing and changing ➤ Safety and protection ➤ Making decisions
Myself and Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Myself and others ➤ My friends and other people ➤ Relating to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Myself and Others ➤ My friends and other people ➤ Relating to others
Myself and the Wider World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Developing citizenship ➤ Media education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Developing citizenship ➤ Media education

Based on figure 2.1, it is noticeable that strand units are repeated on a yearly basis and developed as children get older and move through the school. This style of educational planning is rooted in Vygotsky's scaffolding theory which will be further discussed in this chapter.

Well-being is a relatively new term that is growing in terms of mental health. People are becoming increasingly interested in the idea of well-being and its effects on mental health both nationally and indeed globally. According to Patton et al (2003) schools can accommodate opportunities for children to fulfil their cognitive, emotional and social maturity. Government bodies are now taking notice of this and planning ahead for the future of children by introducing the idea of well-being into schools. Reasons for this shift in educational planning, taking into consideration the well-being of children and the introduction of well-being into primary schools are offered by Weist and Rowling (2002). They suggest that there is now information widely available that suggests young people are not receiving the mental health care that they require as early as they require it. They also suggest that there is an increasing realization that embedding such programmes into schools will have long term positive effects on children and young people and also that children's educational success is influenced significantly by their mental health (Clarke, 2011).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defined mental health as 'a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community' (World Health Organisation 2001, p.10). According to the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, it is estimated that one in three young people will, by the age of thirteen, experience some form of mental health disorder (Malla *et al* 2016). The Irish College of Psychiatrists in 2005 estimated that 8 per cent of young people would suffer from moderate to severe mental health difficulties while 2 per cent would require specialist intervention. Ireland is an ever changing society with the family unit changing and evolving. There are many factors that affect a young person's mental health and well-being including social and economic factors, identity issues and poverty which has swept across Ireland in recent years putting pressure on young people and families alike (Kirby, 2016)

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) recognise parents as the most important people in a child's life however, in the past twenty five years schools are now playing more than the role of educators (NCCA, 2018 p.9). In primary schools, teachers are working with children up until the age of approximately twelve or thirteen, making them prime

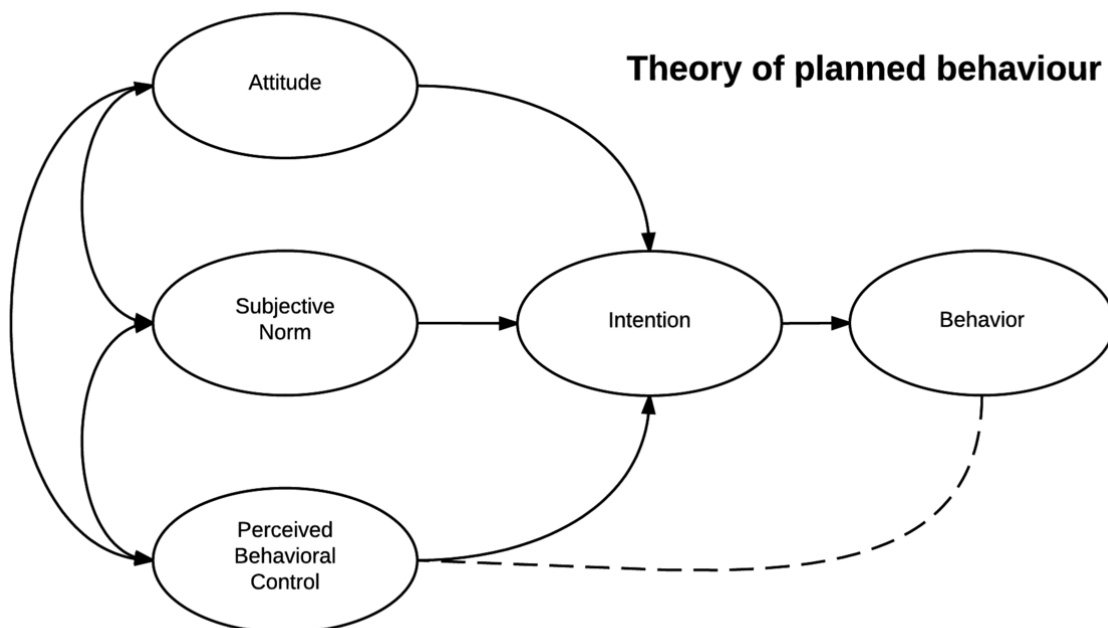
educators in mental health and well-being for the children in their care. The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN), 2004, identified the importance of education for all persons inclusive and schools now have a responsibility to ensure that any persons with specific learning needs are treated in an equal and fair manner and that the necessary provisions are put in place so that the school and education is accessible for all. (P.19) Research has shown that health promotion best serves people when it is implemented early in life (Oireachtas Library & Research Service, 2012). As teachers, within primary schools in Ireland, are a consistent factor in a child's life each day for eight years, they can play a vital role in this implementation stage with progression being made throughout the eight years in primary education (Department of Education and Skills, 2009 p.5). Schools can evaluate their own SPHE plan to ensure that mental health topics and well-being issues are being covered and that any children that may present with specific issues are cared for and looked after in an appropriate manner with the assistance of other relevant bodies such as the National Education Psychological Services (NEPS) and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The 1999 curriculum placed the child at the centre of all teaching and learning; This child centred philosophy endeavoured to change the way teachers taught and students learned (Department of Education and Skills, 2005 p.6). The traditional method of direct teaching with the teacher at the front of the room was challenged and new methodologies such as active learning and guided discovery were introduced (NCCA, 1999). For certain subjects such as SPHE the introduction of these new methods were important. Jean Jacques Rousseau, a philosopher in the 18th Century, aspired to allow children to develop exempt from restrictions (Wills, 2009). As noted in chapter one, this philosophy of child centeredness was echoed and implemented by French educationalist, Fredrich Froebel, who advocated creativity and active learning (Flood *et al*, 2013). Koops (2012) noted that a prominent style of Rousseauian educationalist could be found in a German 'model-school' which was established by Johann Bernard Basedow in the 1700s. Educationalists such as Basedow were devoted to promoting an environment that allowed children to be free in their learning and development and their objective was to craft a 'cheerful...attitude to life' (Koops 2012, p.51). This positive climate is what teachers endeavour to create in their classrooms through various ways including the implementation of an effective SPHE curriculum. John Dewey's pragmatic approach to education was that of absorption in 'experiential learning' (Dewey 2004, p.27). Dewey believed that in order for learning to transpire the environment needed to be considered as the

place where knowledge, beliefs and emotions were developed. Bandura (1994) explores the various ways in which self-efficacy can be created, he mentions experiences, the modelling behaviour of others and also social persuasion. Bandura observes that having a strong sense of self-efficacy ‘enhances human accomplishments and personal wellbeing in many ways’(Bandura 1994, p.1). Children who can inherent these valuable traits will attempt tasks and trials and value such challenges as a learning experience rather than others who may view expericences as something to be avoided. Self-efficacy can also be viewed through the teachers lens as to how they can find motivation to teach as effectively as possible and also how they can instil motivation on the children in their care. These characteristics are importat for all areas of curricular delivery however they are particulary important in the context of the SPHE curriculum. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) can also be extended to this context. This theory which originated from the Polish psychology professor, Icek Ajzen, links one’s beliefs to behaviour which can be seen in Figure 2.2 (Ajzen, 2002).

Figure 2.2 Model of the Theory of Planned Behaviour



(Cammock, Carragher & Prentice, 2009, 'Undergraduate intentions to apply to the Northern Ireland Civil Service: the application of a theory of planned behaviour model', *European Journal Of Social Psychology*)

The three strands of the SPHE curriculum are concerned with educating children about their actions and dealing with the actions of others as shown in figure 2.3 ‘myself and others’ and

‘myself and the wider world’. Teachers endeavour to educate children as comprehensively as possible in a restricted time frame with many other barriers that exist in classrooms at present. The aim is to encourage children to believe in themselves and their capabilities so that they can exercise self-efficacy and make the right decisions in their own lives. Ajzen’s theory along with Bandura’s self-efficacy theory are therefore arguably rooted in the SPHE curriculum. The theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI) can be described as a person’s ability to manage their emotions. Goleman described emotional intelligence as a skill that ‘must be learned’ (Goleman, 2012 p.27). SPHE encourages and endeavours to engage children in this type of thought processing and emotional management. Vygotsky’s theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) can be linked to SPHE in Ireland and other curricula internationally. Vygotsky believed that a child’s development was dependant not only on what they could do alone but what they could do under the instruction of an adult. ZPD is concerned with social skills and interaction. These skills can be attained with the guidance of an adult or ‘peer collaboration’ (Fani and Ghaemi, 2011). Schools are aiming to deliver instruction that will lead the children to eventually act independently. Vygotsky specified that ‘instruction is only useful when...it leads the child to carry out activities that force him to rise above himself’ (Smit, van Eerde and Bakker, 2013). The theory of scaffolding within education and Vygotsky’s ZPD can also be linked to the teaching methodologies of these programmes.

Assessment is a vital part of the Irish primary curriculum. The curriculum places emphasis on the importance of effective assessment and the curriculum offers teachers a wide variety of methods and tools for effectively assessing the learning. This includes assessment *for* and *of* learning, what a child already knows and what they still have to learn. Towler and Broadfoot (1992) argue that self-assessment is a means in which we can extend the practice of a child-centered classroom, which is a key principle in the delivery of an effective SPHE programme. Dunphy (2010) noted that the child’s agency is an integral part of learning and assessing. The children should know what they are able to do on their own but also know when to seek help or assistance. This is an important theory in the context of SPHE which links back to the idea of self-regulation. The ultimate goal is to enable children to assess situations that they encounter themselves. Therefore it can be argued that teachers are assessing children’s ability to assess themselves.

2.2 National and International Variations of the Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum.

Ireland has been and remains renowned for placing emphasis on its 'core' subjects; English, Irish and Mathematics (Mc Coy *et al*, 2012). A study carried out in 2012 by The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) shows that this is still an issue in Ireland. Time allocation figures for classrooms in which typical 9 year olds were taught showed that the majority of time was spent teaching English followed closely by maths and subsequently Irish (Mc Coy *et al*, 2012). SPHE was at the bottom of the eleven subject areas in time allocation. Time allocation of SPHE is very limited, thirty minutes per week. Within this time frame teachers have many different programmes to cover throughout the year including Stay Safe, a mandatory child sexual abuse prevention programme for all children (Lawlor and MacIntyre 2003) and Walk Tall, a substance abuse educational programme for children, to name only two. Substance Abuse programmes such as the Walk Tall programme used nationwide in primary schools aims to educate children about the risks and effects of abusing substances such as tobacco and other narcotics. According to Van Der Kreeft *et al*, (2009 p.2), at the start of the 1970's 'new approaches to substance-use prevention were developed, mostly based on psychological inoculation techniques and behavioural rehearsal to strengthen attitudes and skills that aid in resisting pressures towards drug use'. The aim of such programmes was also to educate young people about the dangers of substance abuse but to also provide them with the confidence to resist social influences of others. This is not in contrast of what educationalists are striving to do nowadays worldwide. The importance of substance abuse programmes are needed from an early age. Children are now being educated about the risks and harm of substances from as early as 5 years of age. According to the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), children are now facing new challenges in relation to drug misuse as they are more widely available than ever before with the internet playing a vital role in making drugs available to anyone with access to the internet (PDST, 2016). Statistics arguably indicate that children need to be educated about substance misuse and schools are well positioned to engage children in this type of learning. The idea of early intervention from a young age could be linked to Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour and also Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. If children are able to learn how to 'exercise control' and manage their own self-efficacy, it can be argued that this would reduce the level of substance abuse as the children enter into adolescence (Bandura, 2004 p.2).

The Safe Programme was introduced in the 1980's due to an increasing statistic of children presenting having been sexually abused in 'residential psychiatric treatment centres' in Ireland (Jeffers and Fitzgerald, 1991 p.145). Schools were proposed as the most suitable place to

engage children in a comprehensive sexual abuse prevention programme. Teachers were deemed the most suitable people whom children were believed to approach if they were to disclose information regarding such abuse if they needed to. Schools were recognised as a constant element in the child's life and teachers were regarded as trustworthy individuals whom children felt safe and familiar with. Training was an important part of the planning process before the Stay Safe programme was delivered to any children in any schools. Connections were strengthened between social services and schools in order to make any required reporting of disclosures or concerns as straightforward as possible. A later evaluation of the Stay Safe programme indicated that it had 'clearly influenced children who were taught the programme to approach their teachers about their problems' (Jeffers and Fitzgerald, 1991 p.146). Furthermore, the evaluation also revealed that bullying, which was already regarded as a problem, was more severe, especially among boys, than previously thought. Bullying, as outlined by Jeffers and Fitzgerald is known to have long-term negative effects on mental health and self-esteem (Kaltiala-Heino, 2000; Salmon, 1996; Rigby, 1998 in Jeffers and Fitzgerald, 1991). Stay Safe, can therefore be viewed as an invaluable resource which provides children with the opportunity to engage in improving their self-esteem and to empower them to learn and use the skills they need if they are ever faced with a bullying or abuse issue. The negative aspect of the Stay Safe programme is still however, that all teachers are not trained in the programme which will be expanded on in chapter four.

A further additional programme that is available to primary schools to educate children about road, water and fire safety is the 'Be Safe' programme. This is a resource pack for schools provided by the National Safety Council. It aims to aid the implementation of these three safety elements of the curriculum. It comprises of a range of activities that teachers can choose from to cover these topics. Material is introduced to classes at an age appropriate level and is developed as children get older and move up through the classes. The advantages of the Be Safe programme is that is very clear in structure and in content. It is set out for each class individually and encourages for as much activity based learning as possible. Teachers can engage children in individual, pair or group work. Children are enabled to make decisions about what the 'right' thing to do is throughout the lessons.

'Making the Links' is a handbook for teachers to support the use of the Stay Safe, Walk Tall and Relationships and Sexuality Education in the classroom (PDST, 2017). It aspired to identify shared themes within the three named programme and be a comprehensive planning tool for teachers. The primary curriculum for SPHE identifies strands and strand units which

must be covered each year however it does not specifically identify these programmes as being mandatory. Making the Links endeavours to assist teachers in their planning for SPHE. The manual outlines the specific aims for the three specialist's areas and connects the common themes within each. The positive aspects of the guide is that it also gives an exemplar as to how teachers can plan their lessons in order to link these areas with the curriculum. It also has standardised classroom planning records that teachers can use to plan their lessons. While there are many positive aspects of the manual and the motive for the production of such a collaboration must be commended, it is not entirely useful for *all* teachers. While Stay Safe, as mentioned is a 'mandatory' subject, as set out in circular 65/2011 (see appendix), every teacher does not leave teacher training college with this training completed. This manual therefore is not entirely useful for teachers who are not familiar with the aims and objectives of one or more of these programmes identified. Making the Links is however a good start for teachers to familiarise themselves with as it provides an opportunity for teachers to ascertain what parts of the curriculum are obligatory such as the RSE which, as outline in Making the Links is a 'mandatory component of the SPHE curriculum and consequently the sensitive lessons must be taught. The RSE manuals act as a guide for teaching these areas. Circular22/10 outlines best practice when teaching the sensitive lessons and areas of SPHE' (Making the Links, 2017) Training, again is an issue for many teachers in relation to RSE which will be further discussed in chapter four.

Research conducted examining other countries' comparable subjects unveiled many similarities and many government bodies attempting to put into practice a comprehensive curriculum that provides children with the knowledge and social skills to make informed decisions and provide a curriculum simliar to that of the SPHE curriculum in Ireland (MindUp, 2013, SEL, 2015, and Kidsmatter, 2008). However, it was noted that some of the programmes that are being employed in other countries such as America, Australia and Finland seem to be more comprehensive and many are focusing on the mental health and well-being of the child not in one subject such as SPHE but rather are trying to implement and embed it throughout their curriculum. One example of this is noted in the American initiative created by actress Goldie Hawn called 'MindUP'. MindUP is a programme that empowers children to self-regulate their minds and encourages them to think and navigate their thoughts in order to make decisions in a clearer way. One of the aspects of the MindUP programme is that it involves allowing children to have 'brain breaks' three times a day for three minutes. It also involves social and emotional thinking around areas such as kindness, expressing gratitude and being optimistic,

among others. Teachers are encouraged to use strategies and language associated with the programme throughout the school day and parents can also be a part of this learning by continuing the programme at home. There is therefore a home school link in place as a fundamental part of this programme and its success. It has four ‘strategic pillars’ which are notably that it is based on neuroscience, stimulated and motivated by mindfulness and an awareness of being mindful and enthused by optimism (MindUP 2013). Many American schools are adopting this social and emotional learning programme and some schools in the EU are also rolling out the programme. During this research, it was discovered that a school in very close proximity to that of the researcher, has been training teachers to deliver the MindUP programme which will be further discussed in chapter three. The training for this programme is lengthy and comprehensive in comparison to the training provided for the Stay Safe programme, for example. Logically, training is a key factor to successful implementation of any SPHE programme.

Another model similar to SPHE that is being used in schools worldwide is the Social Emotional Literacy Programmes (SEL). Countries that have adopted the SEL policies include Finland, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Canada among many more. In 2005, Australia created a SEL syllabus that incorporates all areas of social and emotional learning (SEL) which they named “Kismatter”. It is centrally focused however on the mental health and well-being of children (Goleman, 2002). It is similar to the SPHE curriculum because it aims to create a “positive school climate” (Kismatter, 2008) and educates children in the areas of social and emotional development. There is however, a distinct focus on mental health issues and recognising mental health issues in children from the earliest possible age. Kismatter also encourages parental involvement where possible which is similar to Ireland where the curriculum recognises that parents are an indispensable component in the delivery and review of the SPHE programme (NCCA, 1999 p.10)

In New Zealand, around the same time as Ireland recognised the need for a sexual abuse prevention programme, it also undertook the task of planning and implementing such a programme to address the increasing issues of sexual abuse among children. A programme was established entitled ‘Keeping Ourselves Safe’ which was a nationally designed, school based programme which was supported by the New Zealand police in partnership with the minister for education (Briggs, 1991 p 635). As recognised still by the police in New Zealand, abuse can occur at any time and in all societies. Keeping Ourselves Safe recognises that a child who has experienced any form of abuse will encounter low self-esteem which can in turn have a

negative effect on their overall mental health and also their education. School was outlined as the best place for this programme to be delivered for similar reason to that of the Stay Safe programme as outlined above. Similar to the Stay Safe programme, this also engages children in learning skills that they can use in interactions with others. These skills are taught progressively from pre-school aged children and into secondary school education. Skills are taught and developed so that children can acquire them and feel confident and comfortable enough to use them not only in childhood but also in adolescence and adulthood. The programme differs from Irish programmes because when a school is implementing the programme, they take a whole school approach in which all staff members, members from the board of management and parents are all involved. Professional development workshops are provided to all staff, 'both teaching and non-teaching' (New Zealand Police, 2017).

2.3 Link to Educational Theory

The aforementioned programmes, both nationally and internationally, were found to share common features in their syllabi. Government bodies and privately owned organisations aiming to implement such programmes are noted to have parallel aspirations; to put the child's needs at the centre of all learning and instil an independence in children to grow and flourish into teenagers and adults who are resilient and confident. When linking educational theorists to programmes and curricula implemented worldwide, it is noted that Vygotsky's scaffolding is evidently underpinned in many revised curriculums including Ireland's 1999 curriculum. Smit, van Eerde and Bakker (2013) outline that the 'ultimate aim of the scaffolding process' is for children to be independent. They continue that this is done in three stages namely activities modelled by the teacher, jointly practised and in due course performed independently by the pupils themselves. In Ireland, programmes such as the Stay Safe programme also can be linked to a systematic scaffolding approach to teaching and learning where the teacher delivers the lessons and the lessons are to be reinforced by parents at home. The Stay Safe programme continues from junior infants up to sixth class for all children and lessons are built on as the children get older (MacIntyre, Carr, Lawlor and Flattery, 2000). The MindUP curriculum is another prime example of scaffolding in education. Its curriculum is embedded in the school and is not solely concerned with a selected time slot each week like that of the SPHE curriculum in Ireland. MindUP is a teaching practice rather than a methodology in which children engage in from morning to evening and throughout the day with their peers and teachers, who are also encouraged to participate in the 'brain breaks' throughout the day. This style of teaching encourages resilience, enforces a deeper understanding and fosters superior learning for all

involved. Kismatter can also be linked to this scaffold theory. Educators are taught to look out for early signs of mental health concerns among the children in their care and the programme encourages parental support in order for parents and guardians to support in turn their children's mental health and well-being (Kismatter, 2008).

Research found that the MindUp programme valued beginning and ending the school day positively. Basedow's belief that school children should be happy and 'cheerful' echoes the underpinning principles of the MindUp programme. Dewey's 'hands on' approach is evident in almost all programmes mentioned. Educators realise that there is a need for children to be active in their own learning. Dewey took a pragmatic approach to education, his beliefs and philosophies about education being of value when it is experienced in such an active manner is clearer now in the Irish Primary Classroom than ever before. In a recent inspectorates report on a school in a rural location in North West Ireland, it was noted that learning during an SPHE lesson was more enjoyable and engaging for children when it was collaborative and active. Special comment from the inspectorate was also given to children with SEN in the school who were included as actively as possible in SPHE lessons to ensure inclusion and learning for all was delivered (Anon, 2018). Vygotsky's theory about learning and experiencing education within one's ZPD must be also explicitly noted for its link to SPHE both national and internationally. A child's social interactions with adults and children, both in a school setting and in the wider community provide valuable learning opportunities. Vygotsky believed that social factors can have an impact on a child's intellectual ability and growth. Schools are a primary social setting for children where they engage with their peers and other children of all ages. That said, the environment in which a child grows up in can influence them and their decisions. A thorough SPHE curriculum therefore that includes and engages all children, yet provides for differentiation is vital.

2.4 Conclusion

According to Hart (2005), pragmatists see 'practical links between theory and a problem, especially in the workplace'. It can be argued that philosophers such as Froebel and Vygotsky were ahead of their time in their forward thinking about education. They forecasted the problem of children sitting at a desk and rote learning and understood the need for a more active classroom where children experienced their environment and were enabled to use the skills they learn at they mature. These skills can be seen in such programmes that are within the

SPHE curriculum such as the Stay Safe programme and Walk Tall. Without considering adapting a teaching style or methodology in which children have the time and space to be free to express and practice the skills that they are expected to acquire, it could be argued that such programmes are ineffective. In addition to this distinct link between historical theory of such scholars aforementioned and the practice which occurs in the classroom setting, it could also be debated that theories such as that of Vygotskys Scaffolding Theory could be applicable to the education of teachers in relation to the SPHE curriculum. The training that is currently provided is for selected teachers on designated training days. Even though the Minister Bruton announced in 2017 that training would be provided for the ‘Incredible Years’ and ‘Friends’ programme, only teachers in all DEIS schools would be offered training. It seems that there is therefore a discrepancy in the manner in which teachers are trained depending on the location and status of their school. In order for learning to be meaningful and ensure that educators are adequately trained in all relevant areas, it could be suggested that training should be provided for all teachers regardless of school location or type. The underpinning value of the scaffolding progress for students, including teachers who are learning a new skill, is to have the opportunity to see a skill modelled and then have the opportunity to practice the new skill before transferring it to others.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction to Methodology

This chapter will explore the variety of research methodologies that have been used in this study. The emphasis of the research is to identify if primary school teachers feel that they are proficient to effectively implement the SPHE curriculum in their classrooms. This study will take a pragmatic approach to research. Bryman (2006) argues that by taking a pragmatic approach, the research question is highlighted throughout the discourse of the study. Bryman states that a pragmatic approach to research through the use of a mixed methodology of both quantitative and qualitative data ensures that the results are ‘not only feasible but more importantly desirable and required for answering a combination of questions’ (Bryman, 2006 p.118).

Data was gathered using a mixed methods approach which included a survey/questionnaire using Survey Monkey and a focus group, therefore the researcher gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. The anonymous questionnaires/surveys were believed to be best suited for this project as they were completely anonymous and data could be gathered from a wide variety of teachers teaching in a range of primary schools. Teachers that participated in the focus group have not been named to ensure their schools are kept anonymous also. A profile of participants will be outlined below. The author continuously adhered to ethical guidelines throughout all stages of the data collection of this project.

3.1 Methodologies Applicable to Research Question

The overall purpose of this research was to obtain primary teacher’s attitudes and feelings towards the effective implementation of the SPHE curriculum in the primary classroom nowadays in a curriculum that is often regarded as being ‘overcrowded’ (Looney, 2014 p.17). The research question emerged after much thought from the researcher and discussions with fellow colleagues. The researcher identified that primary schools are identifying an increasing number of young children with various issues and difficulties which the SPHE curriculum aims to address, however the researcher believes that not all primary teachers are offered adequate and sufficient training in the specialist areas, such as Relationships and Sexuality Education, The Stay Safe Programme and the Walk Tall programme, among others, to effectively implement the curriculum. It is also believed that there are a number of other factors which hinder the effective implementation of the SPHE curriculum such as the increasing class sizes, multi-grade classes and time allocation to name a few. These issues were framed into a research

question and build a number of sub questions which were aimed to be answered through the use of a focus group and a survey.

Prior to this proposal, ethical clearance was sought and granted from Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

3.2 Mixed Methods Approach

3.2.1 Purposeful Sampling

The use of purposeful sampling in qualitative methods such as the use of a focus group can be disputed as a means for the research to ‘defend their sampling strategies as reasonable for their purposes’ (Sandelowski, 2000 p.338). For the purpose of this study, a range of teachers were selected so that there was a respectable combination of teachers participating. The range of primary teachers were believed to complement each other and provide information about the large range of primary schools in Ireland at present. The use of a focus group as outline by Sandelowski (2000) is to act as a ‘counterpart to quantitative surveys. This was true in this particular case as the teachers were able to offer their views and opinions which varied depending on their schools location and setting, i.e. multi-grade class settings, DEIS and non DEIS schools, small rural schools along with large urban schools. Age, gender, role and experience were the four main priorities for purposeful sampling of the qualitative data method for the study.

Three out of the five participants have completed masters and two of these three participants had conducted focus groups in previous years. The first participant was a 50 year old, female, teaching principal who works in a rural disadvantaged school. She has 30 years teaching experience working in all classes from junior infants up to sixth class and also including learning support. The second member of the group is a 37year old female who is also a teaching principal in a rural school. She has been principal for one year and has fourteen years teaching experience, also in all classes including the special education sector. This teacher has is one of the three members that completed a master’s in education recently and also one of the members that used a focus group as one of her selected methods therefore she was very comfortable with it. The third contributor was a 37year old male newly qualified teacher who works in a large urban school. This is his first full year teaching and he teaches fourth class but has experience teaching in a learning support setting and also has completed teaching practice recently in a variety of classes including multi-grade. He also has recently completed his masters, his second masters. He also was familiar with the function of a focus group. The fourth participant was a

48year old female who has recently been appointed principal in a disadvantaged urban school. She has twenty-eight years teaching experience mainly in the senior end of the primary school, fourth to sixth classes, however she has taught in all areas at some point throughout her career. The final member of the group is a 38 year old female who works in a rural school. She has completed her masters in special education and she has been working as a resource teacher for almost ten years. She has fifteen years teaching experience in total. Some of the teachers that were selected for the focus group were familiar with each other and some had previously worked together and there was a sense of ease among participants when we began. The participants were led by the researcher who had questions to keep discussion centred on the topic in question. The questions ensured that everyone was kept on track and participants were concentrated on the research aims and objectives. They were all able to provide valuable experiences and opinions, along with identifying both positive and negative aspects associated with the implementation of the SPHE curriculum, which was an aim of the focus group in order to able to begin to answer the research question.

This research was conducted using a mixed methods approach, as mentioned above. Bryman (2007) identifies barriers that can hinder the correct analyse of using a mixed methodological approach. He argues that while using a mixed method approach is becoming increasingly popular among researchers, there has been inadequate consideration given to analyse of both qualitative and quantitative data. Some barriers that he identifies will be reflected on while the author gathers and analyses data for this particular study in order to give equal methods equal weighing. Such barriers, Bryman suggests, are writing for specific audiences and methodological preference. Some researchers prefer one method over another however may use a variety of methods to validate another (Bryman 2007, p.17.). This type of validation can also be recognised as an advantage; where one type of method does not substantially answer all research questions, a researcher may decide to adopt a mixed method approach. The author believed that this would be the case for this project. By using a mixed method approach, researchers can eliminate some of the disadvantages associated with using either qualitative or quantitative as a single method. This can reinforce a study and can also add value to the piece of work. Qualitative and Quantitative methods complement each other and in turn can give valuable results (Cresswell et al, 2003).

3.2.2 Quantitative Data

The use of quantitative data in any research is considered numerically. Bell (2010) advises that when using quantitative methods such as surveys in which the author used and in particular the use of the Likert scale, it is important that questions and statements are clear for the participants to ensure that no claims are made about the findings. For this particular study questions were tested with friends and family members that were not going to be participating in the study which ensured that questions and statements were kept clear and easy to understand. By testing surveys prior to distribution with people who are not in the education sector, misleading or leading questions were able to be identified. Every effort was made to make surveys as accessible as possible to all primary teachers and ensure that no questions were leading or unclear. Feedback from some participants suggested that the surveys were clear and short which would encourage people to take part and complete surveys. The importance of piloting surveys cannot be ignored for both execution and operational reasons (Bryman, 2015, p.260). A survey/questionnaire was sent to various different primary schools who were asked to distribute the email to their staff. This ensured anonymity of all participants who wished to take part. Quantitative data was also collected by using the Likert scale in a number of questions as mentioned before. Quantitative results will be presented using statistics calculated using Survey Monkey. Results will be discussed and interpreted in the findings chapter of the project.

3.2.3 Qualitative Data

Qualitative research during this research project was done using a focus group. The benefits of qualitative data is that it offers as much 'transparency as possible' (Life, 1994). Qualitative data facilitates the inclusion of participant discourse and therefore facilitates the inclusion of voice and semantics to support analysis. The focus group method used as part of this study for data collection was decided as the best method for qualitative data collection as it gave the author an opportunity to have a range of primary teachers in the one place to discuss and exchange views. It provided deeper understanding as to what teacher's opinions really are in relation to the research questions and it also provided the author with some previous factors that can hinder implementation of the curriculum which had not been thought on previously which was interesting. Through the use of qualitative data, different approaches that various schools take to ensure quality implementation of the Social Personal and Health Education programme were encountered and investigated. These will be discussed in the recommendations of this project. The use of a focus group allowed for clarity and an insight as to what real teachers experience

in the classroom from others perspectives and it also allowed for an interactive discussion. This deeper insight is an advantage of using a focus group rather than individual interviews as a part of qualitative research methods (Baumgartel, 1989).

Participants were offered a choice of locations including the use of one of the classrooms in the Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT). Participants were reluctant to meet in the LYIT and decided to meet at a location that is often use by the teachers for various meetings. They all agreed that it would be more comfortable and free from distractions for recording purposes. They were reluctant to be recorded in such a formal setting but agreed that they felt comfortable in a house which they described as 'more informal'. This was something that had to be approached at the beginning of the focus group. A number of times were suggested for the focus group. The participants are all working in primary schools and therefore were not available until after 4pm. They decided that they would rather meet at 7pm mid-week rather than gathering at the weekend. Participants were given a time to ask questions about the research prior to recording starting. It was outlined to everyone that there were certain questions that would be asked in order to keep on track.

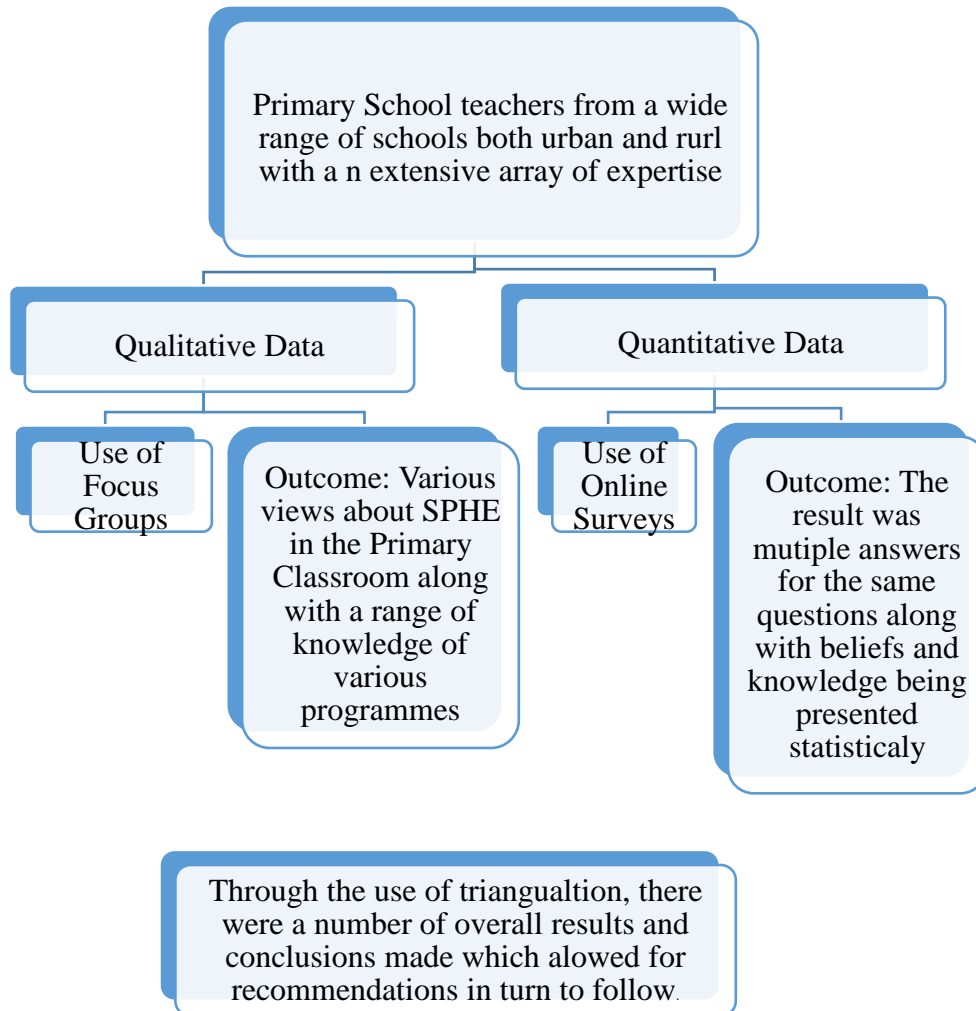
3.3 Reliability and Validity

The author aimed to use the best methods that were thought to be suitable for this research. There was an aim throughout the data preparation and collection stage to ensure that all information collected was reliable and also valid. This is essential in any research project. The use of a mixed methods approach was also considered by the author to provide more reliability to the project and also to aim to prove validity of the study. The additional material and evidence that the use of two or more methods provides is better than the use of a single method (Abowitz and Toole, 2010). Beliefs and attitudes as a primary schools teacher have been clearly set out in the research in the introduction and the author was very aware of observing their own opinion throughout. Questions were piloted using friends and family who are not primary teachers to identify if any questions or statements were deemed to be leading in any way for participants. Questions for focus groups were also piloted with non-teachers to ensure again that there were no leading statements and that questions were open ended and allowed participants to answer freely. This, again provided clarity and avoided leading or misleading questions. The title, aims and objectives were outlined to all participants at the start of the focus group. When selecting participants for the focus group, the author tried to get a gender balance however this was not possible and the focus group only included one male participant. The

focus group consisted of a mixture of teachers, teaching principals, learning support and resource teachers, teachers from both rural and urban schools and a wide range of experience from 1 year to 30 years. Again, this provided the author with a more reliable method of data collection and allowed for research to be collected objectively.

It can be said that triangulation allows information to be collected in such a way that nothing escapes from the findings. Figure 3.4 below shows how triangulation in this case was used.

Figure 3.1 Use of Triangulation in a Pragmatic Approach to Data Collection



*Diagram variation based on Creswell *et al*, 2003 p. 226

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaires were unproblematic to oversee and collect data from. Both Hopkins (2008) and Mc Kernan (1991) agree that this form of data collection offer good feedback for analysis. Data was analysed using reoccurring emergent themes. Triangulation was also used throughout data analysis. Triangulation is useful when analysing data in terms of themes as noted by Creswell and Miller (2007). For the purpose of this particular study, the same topics and many of the same questions and opening statements were used in both the focus group and questionnaire/survey. Thematic analysis was conducted as part of this study by analysing

the focus group data. They are considered to be one of the most common types of data analysis in qualitative research because they allow the researcher to discover and analyse in more depth patterns that occur throughout the session. (Creswell, 2007). Themes can present themselves throughout data analysis. As this data was analysed using a thematic approach, it meant that qualitative data was arguably more meaningful. The transcripts were reviewed a number of times and the session which was recorded was listened to repeatedly to ensure nothing was left out and that the entire focus group was put correctly into context when analysing it. The qualitative themes that emerged were then compared to that of the quantitative data analysis and from this emerged the main themes. Of the entire project from which late recommendations were made.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

On the 25th of October 2017, an ethics application was submitted to Letterkenny Institute of Technology’s Ethical Department. Included in the submission was a sample consent form for participants of the focus group, a sample list of questions for the anonymous survey and also a participant’s information sheet. On the 16th of October 2017 ethical clearance was granted for this study.

The aim of the research was outlined and a research ethics checklist completed. Sample questions and statements that were proposed to be used in the research were:

- I teach SPHE on a weekly basis in my classroom
- I feel that 30minutes allocated to the teaching of SPHE is sufficient.
- 30minutes allows me to implement the curriculum effectively
- I feel adequately trained to deliver the SPHE curriculum
- I am trained in one or more of the following SPHE specialist programmes (Please tick one or more if necessary)

Stay Safe	Walk Tall	Zippy’s Friends	Incredible Years	RSE	Friends

- 1) There are ample opportunities for teachers to become trained in one or more of the above mentioned specialist programmes. (Please state which programmes)
- 2) According to the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (2013) it is estimated that one in three young people will, by the age of 13, experience some form of mental health disorders. Mental Health and Wellbeing issues are becoming increasingly prevalent in primary schools.

I feel that I am prepared to deal with such issues should they arise in my classroom.

After much consideration of which would be the most effective method of research collection to use, it was believed there should be no ethical concerns for this particular study. All parties were informed prior to focus group and questionnaires about the nature of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured. Data that was collected has been stored on a password-protected personal computer. Data was accessible to the researcher and the supervisor of this research. All data has been stored securely and in conjunction with LYIT guidelines. The research questions were open and participants were informed of the purpose of the research prior to participation. This was achieved via a short introduction at the start of the focus group and same for questionnaire, online. This ensured that participants understood the nature of the study and what was required from them. The importance of ethics in research cannot be argued especially within the area of social science. By specifying that all data collected will be maintained confidential, participants in a focus group or volunteers taking a survey or questionnaire, provide more accurate and honest answers throughout which engages individuals and allows for more accurate research (Haney-Caron, Goldstein & DeMatteo, 2015).

CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction to Data Analysis

This chapter will examine the data collected through the use of a mixed method approach. Both the anonymous online survey and the focus group findings will be analysed simultaneously. The use of a qualitative method has many benefits which have been outlined in previous chapter, one of which is to supplement and support the findings that were presented in the quantitative data collection phase. To begin, it must be stated that the participants of the focus group were asked questions that were set out in the questionnaire, with the focus group providing an opportunity to progress into greater detail with members of the teaching profession. The use of a 'mini-group', with only four to six participants is favourable to some research as it allows for 'in-depth' gathering of information (Greenbaum, 1998 p.3). The focus group lasted approximately 25minutes and flowed effortlessly throughout with all participants very eager to voice their opinions and share their practices in confidence. A profile of participants was provided in Chapter Three and location of focus group discussed also. An online anonymous questionnaire was sent out randomly to schools in one geographical area of Ireland through the use of Survey Monkey. Unfortunately the response rate was extremely low with only 5 responses. Consequently, a link was added to a social media website and primary teachers were invited to take the survey and in turn, share it with their colleagues. Due to time constraints, 100 of the 300 surveys received were randomly selected for analysis using the random selector option within Survey Monkey. Results were interesting with both the survey and focus group presenting with similar statistics and responses with the focus group providing suggested reasons for answers within surveys. A summary of the transcript from the focus group can be found in the appendix. Full results of the survey are also available in appendix. The focus group was an effective methodological tool for explaining results from questionnaire. Arguably, using mixed methodologies is more reliable as it allows for diversity and ensure that results are collected in a more efficient and reliable process which also aims to eliminate or reduce 'cultural bias' (Cresswell, 2011). For the purpose of this study, teachers were surveyed from random schools and focus group members were chosen whom work or have worked in a variety of different primary educational settings as outlined in 3.2.3, purposeful sampling.

4.1 Limitations of the Study

While every effort was made to ensure that data was collected from a wide range of sources, it must be acknowledged that participants of the focus group were predominately female and there was only one male participant therefore result may have been different a more balanced gender ratio was available. Results therefore may have been different if more male participants were available for inclusion in the focus group. As surveys were anonymous, it was not feasible to identify whether participants were predominantly male or female.

4.2 Data Analysis

SPHE is set out in the primary curriculum of 1999 as a discrete subject which is allocated 30minutes each week. Its aims and objectives are clearly fixed and teachers are expected to deliver a variety of programmes in order to fulfil the curriculum however when surveyed about the delivery of the SPHE curriculum, teachers responses were quite surprising. When surveyed, 51 per cent of teachers surveyed said they teach the subject each week while four out of the five teachers who participated in the focus group said they also taught it weekly. Some of the suggested reasons why more teachers might not teach SPHE every week were suggested by the participants of the focus group. They pointed out that often teachers ‘block teach’ SPHE as they believed that 30 minutes a week was too restricted to successfully implement the full curriculum.

<p><i>‘It is down on my timetable so I suppose I do, it is a special allocated time in the week’.</i></p> <p><i>‘30 minutes is too short to teach SPHE so often I block teach it every fortnight’.</i></p>
--

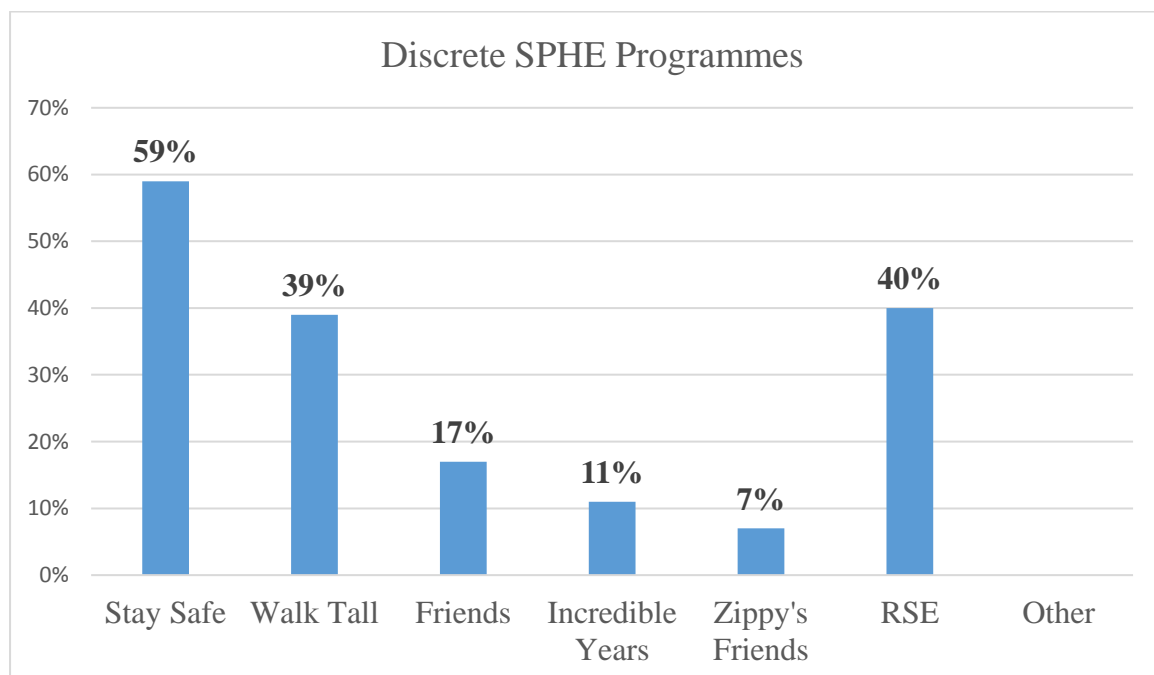
Discretionary time that is outlined in the curricular time allocation model can be used to implement the subject as well as implementation through linkage and integration with other curricular areas such as English or Drama. It could be disputed that this discretionary time should be used for other non-curricular activities during the school week. If discretionary time is a prevalent time where teachers are using to implement in totality a subject, this suggests that time allocation is not appropriate for SPHE. Only 20 per cent of the people surveyed agreed that 30 minutes was adequate to implement the subject which was conclusive with the focus group. Teachers were asked if they enjoyed teaching SPHE. 60 per cent of the survey responses said they did and 34 per cent said sometimes which was also interesting as this was similar to the responses of the focus group, the teachers that said they did not enjoy teaching it offered

reasons why they did not enjoy teaching it and why they only enjoyed teaching it sometimes. One member pointed out that she would rather teach English.

‘With other areas of the curriculum, teachers are given a very clear programme to follow which is often broken into fortnightly plans for them. SPHE differs in this respect as it has so many different programmes, some of these programmes carry really important messages and teaching for children but are almost impossible to cover in the school year and especially in 30minutes each week’.

Others suggested that training was not sufficient for all teachers which was also concurrent with the responses from the surveys; only 26 per cent of teachers agreed that they felt ‘adequately trained to deliver the SPHE programme’ while 47 per cent of teachers either ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with this statement.

Figure 4.1 Percentage of Teachers Trained in a Variety of SPHE Specialist Subjects.



The Walk Tall programme is considered to be one of the specialists programmes that has the greatest ability to ‘deliver much of the SPHE’ curriculum (PDSP, 2016). Based on the above figures, it is evident that not all teachers are trained in the two primary specialist programmes, nor are they correctly trained to deliver the other valuable programmes available to schools. 4 out of the 5 focus group participants had been trained in Walk Tall recently however the

training too place on the same day as the training for the revised Stay Safe programme and they all agreed that it was too much for one day and ‘too rushed’ as one member pointed out.

‘Training is too rushed, I felt like they skimmed over it, you know, it definitely is good but you know I think if it was done properly, it needs to be done for a longer period of time’.

Another participant mentioned that only two members of staff were allocated training therefore they had to come back and relay information onto other staff members which the all agreed was not ideal for a number of reasons. The Stay Safe programme is a very important part of the SPHE curriculum which is taught from junior infants to sixth class. There are five topics which need to be taught in succession to each other. There is an average of 12 lessons in total to order to complete the programme, this varies from class to class with senior classes having slightly more lessons to cover. According to the Department of Education and Skills, all schools must implement the Stay Safe programme in its entirety in the SPHE time. The content of the Stay Safe programme is sensitive in nature with some of the language and issues discussed are very complex. Its aim is to prevent sexual abuse and to educate children about topics such as bullying, feelings, touches and secrets. From teachers surveyed, 68 per cent did not feel that there were adequate opportunities for them to be trained in specialist subjects including Stay Safe. Effective training is key to successful implementation of these programmes and teachers in the focus group commented on the importance of training and time allocated to training.

‘Every teacher needs it (training) to get it delivered properly’

Some of the participants said they did not feel comfortable implementing areas of the Stay Safe and Relationships and Sexuality Curriculum however the participants that did feel comfortable said it was because they had invited an outside trained professional to deliver the programme to the older classes and they had observed how it was delivered and therefore felt more comfortable to teach it themselves.

‘What we do is we have a designated block for RSE and the teachers from infants to third teach it and forth, fifth and sixth, we have a facilitator come in... she takes forth on their own and then fifth and sixth together, boys on their own, girls on their own.’

When asked why a facilitator was brought in the response was:

'Because I want to make sure it is done right, and I know, like, in the past my sixth class teacher was not happy or confident in delivering it so, it helped for to implement it'.

A reoccurring theme emerged throughout the review of literature and also throughout data collection using qualitative data, this was the effect of environment on a child's learning. As Vygotsky (1987, p.157) noted, a child's environment can determine how they think and what they become. During the focus group, an interesting point was raised during discussion about time allocation for certain strand units and lessons within the SPHE curriculum. Two of the participants noted that while teaching in a disadvantaged school such as a DEIS school, whole school planning may need to include more time being spent teaching children about basic life skills whereas in other schools in different locations, children have these basic skills that are inherent when they come to school.

A: *'I think it depends on your area, I mean we are disadvantage and quite a percentage of our children aren't being guided correctly by their parents because I mean their parents don't have the ability to do it so, you know, there needs to be a lot more support in areas where you have greater numbers of disadvantages'.*

B: *'But I mean you probably have to go over hygiene as well as all the other internet safety stuff'.*

A: *'Absolutely'.*

B: *'Whereas say for us, we are not disadvantaged, our children come in clean and you don't really need to teach them that because they are taught at home'.*

A: *'Yes definitely and we have had many discussions about this as a staff so many times, that we need to keep teaching it and teaching it so that the older ones get it into their heads and they know how to do it themselves so they become aware that they are not washing everyday... we are probably doing twice the amount or more, especially as they get up the school'.*

As outlined in Chapter two, this identifies again the theory of scaffolding that children in certain circumstances need for learning to be repeated and learning needs to accumulate in order for children to acquire the skills they need to become active and accountable members of society (Smit, van Eerde and Bakker 2013).

After analysis of both methods, the qualitative approach provided a more in depth insight to teacher's beliefs and attitudes about the teaching of the SPHE curriculum. The quantitative approach supported the opinions of the focus group in quantity however it would have been more beneficial to further investigate these respondents on 'why' they answered as they had. For the focus group, the author was enabled to do this and it provided rationale and validation for answers. The focus group provided further considerations of the SPHE curriculum that had not been thought on before such as SPHE within the Special Educational setting from the point of view of the Special Education Teacher (SET). The resource teacher alleged that because she is the only member of staff trained in 'Friends for Life' in her school and she takes groups out to deliver the programme however the class teacher is not familiar with the programme so she does not 'really know what the full content is'. There is lack of consistency in delivery of the curriculum because all teachers are not trained in all programmes. When the group were asked whether or not they thought a SET should be involved in the teaching of SPHE their responses were interesting and somewhat conflicting in opinions.

A: "Special Educational Teachers wouldn't have time' to teach SPHE"

B: "I recently heard that the PDST are recommending that SET's should be taking part in SPHE curriculum for children that have autism or other complex needs".

C: "Even though most of the time is spent focusing on Maths and English, part of the job is taking into account the social skills and social stories based on the child and their needs".

This area was not addressed in the survey as it was not considered at the outset. This was one of the negative aspects of carrying out the focus group after the surveys were sent however there were positives associated with sending surveys prior to focus groups too and one of these was that the focus group were able to be questioned on why they thought so many teachers had answered the way they had and they were able to provide suggested reasons for such answers. Participants were asked if they thought parents needed to be more involved in SPHE as parents had been mentioned at various times throughout the focus group.

'Friends for Life involves parents but I found that they didn't really do it, like we have very good parents but they didn't really do it. They didn't take the home link on at all and I mean like the best parents in the groups didn't take it on...I think when they get to the senior classed they don't see, like the really good kids don't see benefits in that, the ones that are

being pushed are being pushed into English, Irish and maths, that's what we found in our school and everything else, it's like what are we doing that for?

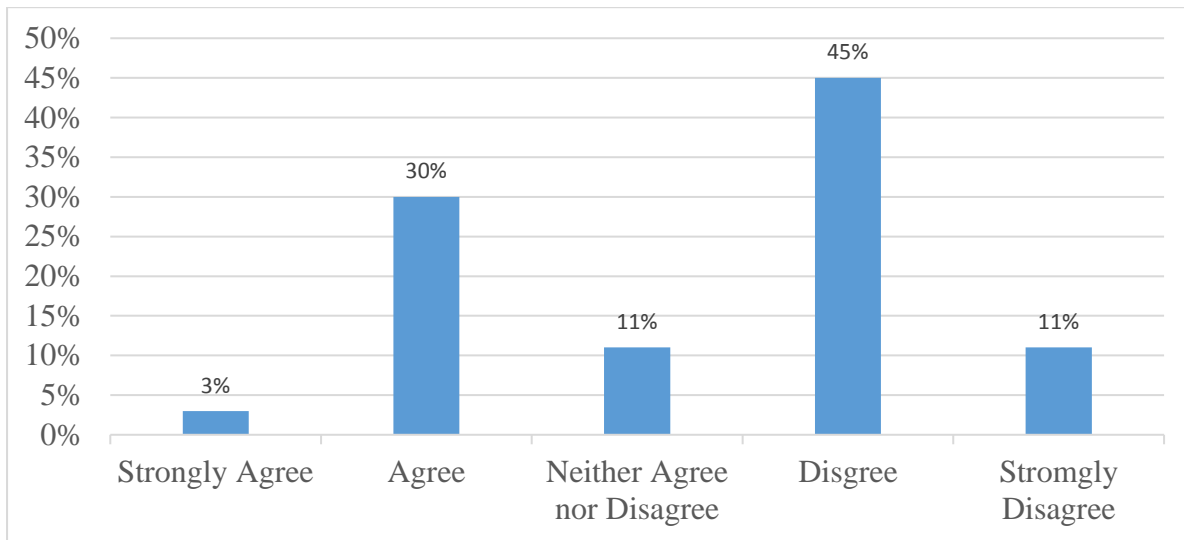
'It's a schools job, yeah I think so too.'

Another positive of the focus group in comparison to the surveys was that information about other special programmes were discussed, some of which other teachers were not familiar with one of these such programmes was the MindUp' programme which the teacher felt took a lot of preparation time but was worthwhile. He said that a few of the lessons took a couple of weeks to gather all required material for it in order to deliver the programme to the children. He was then asked about the MindUp programme and if that was about incorporating SPHE into all areas of the curriculum and throughout the day rather than segregating it to a 30minute lesson. He said that they were told that this was their SPHE programme for this year. He also assumed that the school also teach RSE in the school year. He then explained the programme to the other teachers; Three times a day the children engage in a mindfulness breathing exercise with one lesson each week. It is a programme that is based on neuroscience and understanding the chemistry of the brain. It was stated to the group that mindfulness was nothing to do with religion, the programme is about giving the 'brain a break'. The school collectively agreed on what times throughout the day to give the breaks to the children. The group thought that it sounded like a great programme and were especially impressed that the whole school had adapted the programme and were implementing it as a whole. The teacher then shared with the group that some children hate it as they 'have to sit still' which they find difficult for three minutes.

The members of the focus group offered suggested recommendations they believed would improve the implementation of the SPHE programme which the surveys did not. Recommendations will be discussed further in Chapter 5. An interesting point to note that was mentioned during the focus group was that while the DES have directed that all schools deliver the Stay Safe programme to all children, one of the group members pointed out that their school does not allow them to implement all of the curriculum due to the Catholic ethos of the school. This is something that also had not been considered before by the author and would be an interesting question to put to more teachers teaching in catholic schools.

Figure 4.2 Questionnaire Response in Relation to Time

30 Minutes allows me to implement the curriculum effectively.



The research finds that while the SPHE programme is a very important part of the primary curriculum, it is overcrowded in content and varied in delivery throughout different schools. There is evidence that there is a lack of consistency in teaching among teachers and this is due to a number of factors, predominantly including lack of teacher training and lack of time (see figure 1.1 above) to effectively implement the curriculum in its entirety. Planning of the subject in schools is difficult for principals to do because there is an excess of programmes that are all individually valuable to children however there is simply not enough time to effectively implement each one. While teachers are continuously trying to establish and implement an effective SPHE curriculum in which children will learn and develop their skills, because of the limits and constraints they face, it can be argued that the theory of scaffolding, while it takes place in some form, is not being practiced as well as it could be. Both Rosseau (Wills, 2009) and Dewey (2004) believed that children need to learn in an environment that is free from restrictions or barriers, it could be therefore suggested that in a restricted time frame that is allocated to SPHE, children are not reaching their full potential or having the experience that would be available to them if time was not an issue. Likewise, curricular overload in other areas could be said to be a problem for teachers in their planning and implementation of the SPHE curriculum. As Flood et al (2013) recognised, Froebel's theory of active learning requires children to be active in their learning and for the classroom to be an active place. The SPHE curriculum, in some classrooms, contradicts this theory because of time restrictions again and also due to the lack of training for teachers. While Bandura (1994) suggested that

self-efficacy can motivate people to learn and also could be linked to motivation to teach, if training is insufficient for teachers it could be argued that this is not the reality in the primary classroom in Ireland at present. If teachers believe that training is not sufficient or allocated enough time and resources, it could be said that their motivational level to teach SPHE is not going to be as high as it is for areas in which training is more extensive or areas in which they have an interest in.

CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This project aimed to establish how Irish primary schools teachers experience the SPHE curriculum and whether or not it is being effectively implemented in primary schools. While there is evidence of past research, and curricular review bodies are annually trying to improve the primary curriculum to improve education in primary schools in Ireland, it was believed that there was a gap in the area of SPHE, a central subject in the primary curriculum which is often not considered a 'core' subject, yet equally, if not more important in an ever changing society. A number of factors that can limit effective teaching of any subject were presented in this research. A number of questions were sent out using the anonymous surveys online. These were the basis for the focus group also, however the focus group enabled the researcher to clarify why teachers had certain beliefs and attitudes to teaching SPHE. Data was collected and analysed in Chapter 4. This chapter will examine the findings in terms of themes. Consequently, three main themes that were found to appear throughout data collection. Recommendations will be made from these findings. It must be reiterated that there were some limitations to this study. A small number of participants were involved in the focus group and there were 100 teachers responses analysed during collection of the surveys therefore if this same question was to be examined and considered in a larger study results may be different and findings and recommendations in turn adapted.

5.1 Findings

5.1.1 Time as a factor in the effective implementation of the SPHE curriculum

Teachers were confident that *time* was a key problem when ensuring the curriculum was delivered in a gradual and manageable manner. Teachers who participated in the focus group said that they felt 30minutes each week was not sufficient and suggested that 30 minutes each day would not cover all of the SPHE curriculum especially for children who are in disadvantaged areas or who are coming from homes where there is a lack of parental involvement and support. The surveys supported this view as only 42 per cent of respondents agreed that 30 minutes was enough time however only 33 per cent of participants agreed that 30 minutes allowed them to 'implement the curriculum effectively' showing that there is clearly a gap in what teachers believe is correct implementation.

5.1.2 Training is insufficient in the specialist areas of the SPHE curriculum

There are many different programmes available to schools which aid the curriculum and ensures that the wide curriculum is covered. Teachers are not automatically trained through teacher training colleges in these specialists' areas however. Furthermore, courses are usually only offered throughout the year biannually. Not all teachers are able to attend training with places limited often to two staff members. Many of the courses, as stated by the principals involved in the focus group, do not provide substitute cover, making it very difficult for teachers to leave classes for a full school day. These teachers are then expected to relay information to the rest of the staff which many believe is a huge undertaking and not essentially the best practice for training all teachers. Time was also mentioned as a key problem with regard to teacher training. Training days for specialist programmes were considered too short and often 'rushed'. Stay Safe and Walk Tall are two of the central programmes that are delivered in all schools around the county yet when examining the figures presented by the surveys, only 39 per cent of teachers surveyed were trained in Walk Tall and 59 per cent in Stay Safe. Four out of the five members of the focus group were trained in these programmes. In relation to training, when surveyed, only 26 per cent of teachers felt 'adequately trained' to deliver the SPHE programme. Training for these specialist subject areas need to be accessible to all primary teachers including teachers in a SEN setting to ensure that schools are standardised when delivering instruction to children. It could be contested that the same guidance is not offered to teachers for SPHE in comparison to other 'core subjects' such as Irish, English and Maths.

5.1.3. Content Overload in SPHE

This was an issue that arose during the focus group. The researcher acknowledges that even though it was not part of the surveys, it is believed to be a central factor in why SPHE is perhaps not being as effectively implemented as it should be in the primary classroom. While there is no quantitative data to report from the surveys, teachers from the focus group categorically argued that there is a gap in planning and resource material provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. The teachers irrefutably stated that there is a desire for a solitary unique manual for SPHE which outlines a breakdown of what should be delivered and when. A timeframe, essentially, which is prevalent in other areas such as maths and SESE to mention only two, would be beneficial for teachers to follow and to keep on track throughout

the year. The SPHE curriculum is a vital subject that children need to be immersed in each week and the content seems to be in excess for teachers to accomplish.

5.2 Recommendations

Constructed from the data that was collected, the following assumptions and recommendations were made;

- It is a recommendation that SPHE is allocated more than 30 minutes each week, approximately 45 minutes for the junior classes, who have a short day and one hour for the senior classes. Discretionary time is also a suitable time to implement some of the key areas of the SPHE curriculum however it is suggested that this is not where the remainder of the SPHE curriculum should be implemented. It is paramount that SPHE is designated a special time each week. One member of the focus group suggested that all classes teach SPHE at the same time each week which would ensure that there are no disruptions from resource or learning support teachers during this time. SET could be involved in the delivery of the programme throughout the school at this designated time also. This is a recommendation that all schools could implement in their school policy for SPHE. This would ensure that this subject is unquestionably taught each week by all teachers.
- Training for all is of the utmost importance. It is recommended that all teachers are offered training in specialist programmes which are expected to be delivered to all children. It is not satisfactory to expect educators to teach material they are not familiar with or material that contains sensitive subjects and topics which are mandatory for all children to be taught such as relationships and sexuality education.
- Teachers should be offered extra support or training for the delivery of RSE to the older classes as some teachers do not feel comfortable teaching RSE without prior help or observation of a professional RSE trained external tutor.
- It is recommended that specialist training should take place for all teachers on a designated training day when schools are allowed to close for teacher training. This would ensure that teachers are focused on the learning that takes place and also will

ensure that the onus is not placed on any one or two teachers to communicate to other members of staff what was taught in one full training day.

- All teachers should be provided with one manual that covers all SPHE areas for delivery rather than producing more programmes which many in principle carry similar messages. This would ensure that all teachers are coherently teaching the same programme and there is accountability for all areas of the curriculum that need fulfilled in the classroom on a yearly basis.
- There should be a school policy on the time allocated to the teaching of SPHE so that all teachers including SET are involved and are aware of when SPHE is being taught to ensure that no children are being removed from their classroom for other curricular activities such as learning support or resource teaching. It would also ensure that all teachers are teaching SPHE at the same time each week to ensure full implementation of the curriculum.
- Further research is needed into the teaching of SPHE in primary schools. This small scale study merely identified some factors that can hinder the effective implementation therefore further research is needed to examine the gaps in training and teaching of this imperative subject.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter identified the main findings of this research. Findings were presented in terms of themes; three main themes emerged throughout which were time, training and curricular overload in content. A number of recommendations were made based on these findings. While this research has addressed the issues that impact the correct implementation of the SPHE curriculum in the primary classroom, research has been carried on a relatively small scale, therefore there is evidence to suggest it would be worthwhile for educational policy makers and government bodies such as the NCCA and DES to examine in greater detail and review the SPHE curriculum content and implementation including teacher training, which should be available for all teachers to ensure that all children are receiving the same standard of curricular delivery regardless of what school they attend. The objectives of this study were believed to be

met throughout data collection and analysis; barriers were identified and discussed throughout the focus group session. Through examination of the online surveys, it was discovered that not all teachers are trained in the specialist's programmes, some of which are mandatory in primary schools such as the Stay Safe Programme. Teachers who participated in the focus group also suggested that training was not sufficient and provided clear and substantial evidence as to why they hold this belief. The third objective that was met throughout data collection was that the study identified that while some teachers feel that 30 minutes each week is sufficient for teaching the SPHE curriculum, not all teachers agree. Some teachers believe that the time needs to be increased in order for effective implementation. The research question, as set out in chapter one was: Do teachers feel that the SPHE curriculum is both adequately recognised and implemented in classrooms? After analysis of both online surveys and focus group participants responses, it can be argued that while most teachers are implementing the SPHE curriculum each week, teachers are not satisfied with the training that is provided and the way in which training is provided. Teachers also feel that it is still not recognised or perceived to be as important as other 'core' subjects such as English, Irish or Maths, especially by parents. Teachers also feel that for correct implementation to be achieved there needs to be more consistency for all teachers in all classes including SET.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aaron, L 2008, 'Writing & research. Writing a literature review article', *Radiologic Technology*, 80, 2, pp. 185-186, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, EBSCOhost, viewed 10 October 2017.

Abowitz, D, & Toole, T 2010, 'Mixed Method Research: Fundamental Issues of Design, Validity, and Reliability in Construction Research', *Journal Of Construction Engineering & Management*, 136, 1, pp. 108-116, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 9 April 2018.

Ahern, J. (2012) 'The New International Emotional Intelligence Curriculum', Irish National Teacher's Organisation, available at <https://www.into.ie/ROI/Publications/InTouch/FullLengthArticles/FullLengthArticles2012/EmotionalIntelligence.pdf> [accessed 05 March 2018]

Ajzen, I., 2002. Perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, locus of control, and the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of applied social psychology*, 32(4), pp.665-683.

Anon, (2018). [online] Available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Curriculum-Evaluations-in-Primary-Schools/14910S_CEM_6998_20180116.pdf [Accessed 12 Jun. 2018].

Baker, B., 1998. Child-centered teaching, redemption, and educational identities: A history of the present. *Educational Theory*, 48(2), pp.155-174.

Bandura, A. and Wessels, S., 1994. Self-efficacy.

Bandura, A., 2004. Health promotion by social cognitive means. *Health education & behavior*, 31(2), pp.143-164.

Barnardos (2011) *End Child Poverty Coalition: Child Poverty, Ireland in Recession*, available: <https://www.barnardos.ie/assets/files/Advocacy/ECPC%20Child%20Poverty%20in%20Ireland%202011.pdf> [accessed 06 June 2018]

Baumgartel, HJ 1989, 'Focus Groups/Focus Groups as Qualitative Research (Book)', *Personnel Psychology*, 42, 3, pp. 625-627, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 9 April 2018.

Bell, J. (2006) 'Doing your research project', *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 37(5), pp.813.

- Bell, J. and Opie, C. (2002) *Learning from Research: Getting More from Your Data*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bell, J. and Waters, S. (2014) *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Boyatzis, R.E. (1998) *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Brannen, J. (1992) 'Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches: an overview' in J. Brannen (ed.) *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(21), pp.72-101.
- Briggs, F. and Hawkins, R.M., 1994. Follow up Study of Children of 5-8 years Using Child Protection Programmes in Australia and New Zealand. *Early Child Development and Care*, 100(1), pp.111-117.
- Bryman, A 2006, 'Integrating quantitative and qualitative research: how is it done?', *Qualitative Research*, 6, 1, pp. 97-113, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 27 November 2017.
- Bryman, A 2006, 'Paradigm Peace and the Implications for Quality', *International Journal Of Social Research Methodology*, 9, 2, pp. 111-126, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 06 June 2018.
- Bryman, A., 2007. Barriers to integrating quantitative and qualitative research. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 1(1), pp.8-22.
- Bywater, T, & Sharples, J 2012, 'Effective evidence-based interventions for emotional well-being: lessons for policy and practice', *Research Papers In Education*, 27, 4, pp. 389-408, Education Source, EBSCOhost, viewed 8 March 2018.
- C., J 2008, 'Mixed feelings about mixed methods', *Psychologist*, 21, 6, p. 481, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 27 November 2017.

Cammock, T, Carragher, N, & Prentice, G 2009, 'Undergraduate intentions to apply to the Northern Ireland Civil Service: the application of a theory of planned behaviour model', *European Journal Of Social Psychology*, 39, 3, pp. 401-414, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 7 June 2018.

Clarke, A.M., 2011. *An evaluation of Zippy's Friends, an emotional wellbeing programme for children in primary schools* (Doctoral dissertation).

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. 2007. (6th Edition) *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.

Creswell, J, & Miller, D 2000, 'Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry', *Theory Into Practice*, 39, 3, p. 124, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 27 March 2018.

Creswell, J.W., Plano Clark, V.L., Gutmann, M.L. and Hanson, W.E., 2003. Advanced mixed methods research designs. *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research*, 209, p.240.

Creswell, J.W., Hanson, W.E., Clark Plano, V.L. and Morales, A., 2007. Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. *The counseling psychologist*, 35(2), pp.236-264.

Data Act 1988, Dublin: Stationery Office. *Protection*

Department of Education and Skills (2017) Resilience & Wellbeing Teacher Training Programmes being rolled out to all DEIS schools [press release], 9 October, available: <https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2017-Press-Releases/PR2017-10-09.html> [accessed 5 Dec 2017].

Department of Education and Skills (2009) *Social, Personal and Health Education in the Primary School*, available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/insp_sphe_in_the_primary_school_09_pdf.pdf [accessed: 6 June 2018]

Department of Education and Skills (2005) *An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools*, available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports->

[Guidelines/insp_evaluation_curriculum_implementation_p_pdf.pdf](#) [accessed 7 June 2018]

Denscombe, M. (2003) (2nd Edition) *The Good Research Guide – for small-scale social research projects*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Denscombe, M (2010) *The Good Research Guide: For small scale research projects* (4th Edition) Open University Press, Berkshire, UK

Dewey, J., 2004. *Democracy and education*. Courier Corporation.

Dunphy, E. (2010) ‘Assessing early learning through formative assessment: key issues and considerations’, *Irish Educational Studies*, 29(1), 41-56

Education Act 1998, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Fani, T. and Ghaemi, F., 2011. Implications of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) in teacher education: ZPTD and self-scaffolding. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 29, pp.1549-1554.

Fitzpatrick, F., Twohig, M. and Morgan, M. (2014) ‘Priorities for primary education? From subjects to life-skills and children’s social and emotional development’, *Irish Educational Studies*, 33(3), pp.269-286.

Flood, E., Hardy, C. (2013) *Early Childhood Education and Play*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan

Glenn, J.C. (2010) *Handbook of Research Methods*. USA: Global Media

Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. & McKee, A. (2013) *Primal Leadership*, Boston: Harvard Business Review Press

HART, C. 2005. *Doing your Masters Dissertation*. London: SAGE Publications LTD.

Hopkins, D (2008) *A Teacher’s Guide to Classroom Research*. UK: Open University Press

Irish National Teacher’s Organisation (2005) *Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Discussion Document and Proceedings of the Consultative Conference in Education in* , Dublin: Irish National Teachers Organisation

Goleman, D., 2001. An EI-based theory of performance. *The emotionally intelligent workplace: How to select for, measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organizations, 1*, pp.27-44.

Goleman, D., 2002. Emotional intelligence: Five years later. *New Horizons for learning*.

Haney-Caron, E, Goldstein, N, & DeMatteo, D 2015, 'SAFE FROM SUBPOENA? THE IMPORTANCE OF CERTIFICATES OF CONFIDENTIALITY TO THE VIABILITY AND ETHICS OF RESEARCH', *Akron Law Review*, 48, 2, pp. 349-382, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 10 April 2018.

Harris, A. (2014)' *How do Irish classrooms compare with others in Europe?*', *Irish Times*, 14 January, available: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/how-do-irish-classrooms-compare-with-others-in-europe-1.1651236> [accessed 7 June 2018]

Kaltiala-Heino, R., Rimpelä, M., Rantanen, P. and Rimpelä, A., 2000. Bullying at school—an indicator of adolescents at risk for mental disorders. *Journal of adolescence*, 23(6), pp.661-674.

Ireland, Department of Education and Science (2005) *An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools*, Dublin: Department of Education and Science

Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills (2005) *Beginning to Teach – Newly Qualified Teachers in Irish Primary Schools*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Ireland. Department of Education and Skills (1999) *Primary School Curriculum*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Ireland. Government of Ireland (2000) *National Children's Strategy*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Irish National Teacher's Association (1993) *Among School Children – INTO Response to Government Green Paper on Education*. Dublin: Irish National Teacher's Association.

Irish National Teachers Organisation (1997) *Possibilities for Partnership*, Dublin: INTO

Jeffers, A. and Fitzgerald, M., 1991. *Irish families under stress*. Dublin: Eastern Health Board.

Kidzmatter (2008) *About Kidzmatter* [online], available: <https://www.kidzmatter.edu.au/about-kidzmatter> [accessed 10 March 2018].

- Kidsmatter (2008) Rubber Band Kids: Kidsmatter and Resilience*, Australia: Kidsmatter
- Kirby, P., (2016) *The Celtic tiger in distress: Growth with inequality in Ireland*, Springer.
- Koops, W 2012, 'Jean Jacques Rousseau, modern developmental psychology, and education', *European Journal Of Developmental Psychology*, 9, sup1, pp. 46-56, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 4 December 2017.
- Lankshear, C. and Knobel, M. 2004. *A handbook for teacher research – From design to implementation*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Lawlor, M. and MacIntyre, D., 2003. The Stay Safe Programme: A mental health initiative for Irish children. *Irish families under stress*.
- Lawlor, M.S., 2014. Mindfulness in practice: Considerations for implementation of mindfulness-based programming for adolescents in school contexts. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 2014(142), pp.83-95.
- Life, R.S., 1994. Qualitative data analysis.
- Linsky, M. and Lawrence, J. 'Adaptive challenges for school leadership' in O'Sullivan, H. & West-Burnham, J. (2011) *Leading and Managing Schools*, London: Sage, 3-15.
- Looney, A. (2014) 'Curriculum Politics and Practice: From Implementation to 'agency'', *Irish Teacher's Journal*[online], 2(1), 17, available: https://www.into.ie/ROI/Publications/IrishTeachersJournal_2014.pdf [accessed 16 March 2018)
- Malla, A., Iyer, S., McGorry, P., Cannon, M., Coughlan, H., Singh, S., Jones, P. and Joobor, R., 2016. From early intervention in psychosis to youth mental health reform: a review of the evolution and transformation of mental health services for young people. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 51(3), pp.319-326.
- MacIntyre, D, Carr, A, Lawlor, M, & Flattery, M 2000, 'Development of the Stay Safe Programme', *Child Abuse Review*, 9, 3, pp. 200-216, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 18 March 2018.
- McCoy, S., Smyth, E. and Banks, J., 2012. *The primary classroom: Insights from the growing up in Ireland study*. Dublin: ESRI

McLellan, R, & Steward, S 2015, 'Measuring children and young people's wellbeing in the school context', *Cambridge Journal Of Education*, 45, 3, pp. 307-332, Teacher Reference Center, EBSCOhost, viewed 17 October 2017.

Merriam, S. and Associates (2002) *Qualitative Research in Practice; Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) Primary School Introduction. Dublin: The Stationary Office

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2007) Assessment in the Primary School, Curriculum. Dublin: The Stationary Office

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2009) Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. Dublin: The Stationary Office

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2018) *Primary Developments: Consultations on Curriculum Structure and Time*, available: https://www.ncca.ie/media/3244/primary-developments_consultaion-on-curriculum-structure-and-time_final-report.pdf [accessed 6 June 2018]

Neill, C 2017, 'Writing & Research. Writing a Literature Review', *Radiation Therapist*, 26, 1, pp. 89-91, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, EBSCOhost, viewed 17 October 2017.

New Zealand, Department of Policing (2017), Keeping Ourselves Safe, [online], available: <http://www.police.govt.nz/advice/personal-and-community-advice/school-portal/resources/successful-relationships/keeping> [accessed 08 June 2017].

Power, S. and Forum, A., 2014. Challenging the Norm and Promoting Well-being: Changing Times for Substance Use Education in the Midwest of Ireland. *Understanding Well-being in Changing Times*, p.12.

'Primary Curriculum Time for a Change' *The Irish Times* [online], 16 Sept, available: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/primary-curriculum-time-for-a-change-1.227325>

Rigby, K., 1998. The relationship between reported health and involvement in bully/victim problems among male and female secondary schoolchildren. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 3(4), pp.465-476.

Ritchie, J. and Lewis, J. (eds.) (2003) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: SAGE Publications.

Ruffin IV, M, Creswell, J, Jimbo, M, & Fetters, M 2009, 'Factors Influencing Choices for Colorectal Cancer Screening Among Previously Unscreened African and Caucasian Americans: Findings from a Triangulation Mixed Methods Investigation', *Journal Of Community Health*, 34, 2, pp. 79-89, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 08 June 2018.

Runco, M.A. 2004, "Creativity", *Annual review of psychology*, vol. 55, no. 1, pp. 657-687.

Salmon, G., James, A. and Smith, D.M., 1998. Bullying in schools: self reported anxiety, depression, and self esteem in secondary school children. *BMj*, 317(7163), pp.924-925.

Smit, J, A. A. van Eerde, H, & Bakker, A 2013, 'A conceptualisation of whole-class scaffolding', *British Educational Research Journal*, 39, 5, pp. 817-834, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 20 March 2018.

Stake, R.A. (2004) *Standards – Based & Responsive Evaluation*. McGraw Hill Publishers.

Towler, L. and Broadfoot, P. (1992) 'Self-Assessment in the Primary School', *Educational Review*, 44(2), 137-151.

Van Der Kreeft, P, Wiborg, G, Galanti, M, Siliquini, R, Bohrn, K, Scatigna, M, Lindahl, A, Melero, J, Vassara, M, & Faggiano, F 2009, "Unplugged": A new European school programme against substance abuse', *Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy*, 16, 2, pp. 167-181, Education Source, EBSCOhost, viewed 08 June 2018.

Vygotsky, L., 1987. Zone of proximal development. *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*, 5291, p.157.

Willis, R 2009, 'Playful Learning', *History Today*, 59, 2, pp. 20-21, UK & Ireland Reference Centre, EBSCOhost, viewed 4 December 2017.

Wilson, A. (2009) *Creativity in Primary Education*, 2nd Ed., SAGE: Great Britain

World Health Organisation (2001). *Mental Health, New Understanding New Hope. World Health Report 2001*, Geneva: World Health Organisation

APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire/ Survey Questions and Statements:

Q1: I teach SPHE for 30 minutes every week

Q2: I enjoy teaching SPHE

Q3: I feel that 30 minutes allocated to the teaching of SPHE is sufficient.

Q4: 30 minutes allows me to implement the curriculum effectively

Q5: I feel adequately trained to deliver the SPHE curriculum

Q6: I am trained in one or more of the following; Stay Safe, Walk Tall, RSE, Zippy's Friends, Friends, Incredible Years, Others

Q7: There are ample opportunities for teachers to become trained in each of the above mentioned specialist programmes

APPENDIX 2

Focus Group Question Prompts

1. Can you tell me a little about the schools that you teach in (Rural, urban DEIS, non DEIS, multigrade etc...)
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. Do you enjoy teaching SPHE?
4. Do you teach SPHE every week?
5. Would you say that you spend the 30 minutes teaching SPHE each week or does this vary?
6. Why does this vary?
7. What are the factors for the differences in teaching time allocated? Class size/other curricular areas taking priority
8. Do you feel other subjects are more important than SPHE?
9. Why?
10. Do you feel that SPHE is an important part of the curriculum? Has this always been the case or has it become more important in recent times with children and families experiencing a variety of difficulties that ever before?
11. Are you trained in any of the specialist SPHE programmes?
12. Which ones? How long for? Have you been retrained in any of these over the years?
13. How do you decide as a principal who goes on the SPHE training?
14. Is SPHE training offered on a regular basis to ensure all staff members have the chance to train in the specialist areas?

APPENDIX 3

Focus Group Transcript

E: Thank you for coming tonight, as explained, I am currently completing a masters in teaching and learning and as part of that I have to do a research project. The title for my project is “Teachers Perspectives on the Effective Implementation of the SPHE curriculum in the Primary Classroom”. This is going to be confidential so any information you do share will be kept anonymous and you don’t need to mention any names of people or school names or locations etc... I am just going to start of by asking each of you to tell me a little bit about your experience teaching, the type of school you teach in and what class group you teach.

A: I have been teaching 30 years. I am a principal in a rural DEIS school. I am in learning support at the minute.

G: I have been teaching 28 years. I am a principal also in a rural type school, also DEIS. Most of my experience is in 4th/5th class but I have experience in all classes over the years.

T: 14 years, principal in rural school I am in learning support for the first year. I have been in infants for the past 8 years roughly. I have experience in all classes too through.

P: 15 years, I am a resource teacher in a rural school.

D: 1 year! I am an NQT in a large urban school. I have 4th class. I have experience subbing in all classes though too.

E: Thanks for that. So, do you teach or have you in the past when in a class taught SPHE every week?

A: Absolutely I teach SPHE every week

T: yes I suppose.

G: Yes

P: Yes

D: Yes

Do you spend the 30 allocated minutes every week teaching it?

A: It is down on my timetable so I suppose I do, it is a special allocated time in the week.

G: Yeah I definitely would have.

T: Yeah, Sometimes more than half an hour.

Would you ever spend less?

T: it is impossible to spend less than 30 minutes covering a lesson in SPHE.

G: It is really too short for such an important subject.

D: Yeah it is too short, I would never spend less

P: Same as that it is too short for the lessons.

What length of time would you feel would be suitable in comparison to other allocated times for other subjects.

A: 1 hour. 45 minutes to 1 hour

P, G+D: 1 hour.

T: Definitely an hour, minimum. Maybe 45 for infants.

Why do you think some teachers might not engage in teaching SPHE every week or why it may be avoided in comparison to other areas of the curriculum?

G: pressure from the core subjects, they want to get the core subjects taught and covered first.

A: I think maybe more senior classes definitely they might want to cover the core first.

T: yes definitely I agree with that the senior classes and you would block then SPHE. You're still doing the time equivalent but just not according to the time guide.

D: Our school is collectively doing the 'MindUp' programme it is great but takes a lot of preparation time. A few of the lessons took a couple of weeks to gather all required material for it in order to deliver the programme to the children.

(The group were keen to know about the MindUP programme so a discussion/explanation about it followed). The group thought that it sounded like a great programme and were especially impressed that the whole school had adapted the programme and were implementing it as a whole.

E: Is that incorporating SPHE into every aspect of teaching?

D: Well we were told that this was our SPHE programme

E: So n stay Safe or walk tall?

D: Well I mean there's RSE and that but this is the SPHE curriculum.

D: Some of the kids hate it because they have to sit still which they find difficult for three minutes. It's all linked to brain chemistry. We agreed as a whole school to have mind breaks. It is good.

E: So I know one of you had mentioned to me before this about how you would like a whole book for SPHE...

T: With everything in it...

E: so for example the Stay Safe, the Walk Tall, RSE...

T: Everything.

G: You see these are mandatory, the stay safe...

D: but even though they are mandatory, we were told there were certain things we weren't meant to teach in it.

T: but that is because of your catholic ethos.

D: mmm, yeah.

A: I think there are a few very strong stories in it and I know that is what some of my teachers have issues with teaching these.

D+T: yeah

E: Have you all been trained in the Stay Safe programme?

A: A long time ago!

E: so do you feel you need a refresher course?

A: Well I mean I was at the principal's day for it but I don't think it should be just principals, I think it should be the whole staff

T: no it should not be just principals I agree.

A: The whole school needs to be briefed on it.

T: There was no sub cover for it ether.

G: Two of my teachers, well myself and the vice principal went to that but there were courses offered later in the year so two of ours went, 4th and 6th class but the rest had all done the old training.

P: I was trained in November, there are four of us now trained in it.

E: So your principal let you do it even though you aren't in the classroom, you are in resource?

P: Yeah, you see I end up taking a lot of groups out to do SPHE with them outside of the mainstream classroom that way.

D: I haven't had training in it.

E: So you don't think it is adequate that only some get to do the training?

A: no, it is not adequate, to get it delivered properly everyone needs it.

T: You are always getting the information second hand.

A: Absolutely.

E: What about Walk Tall?

A: No I have books but was never trained.

G: Same,

T: Same, it was the same thing, there was a principal's day but that was it.

D: no I am not trained in that either.

P: no

E: and what about RSE...?

A: What we do is we teach RSE in a designated block. Teachers from junior infants up to third class teach it to their own classes and an outside facilitator comes in to deliver the programme to the older classes; fourth to sixth class with boys and girls being separated for the delivery of this programme.

Why did you recruit an outside facilitator?

A: I wanted to make sure it was done properly and in the past my sixth class teacher was not happy or confident in delivering it so it helped for to implement it effectively.

T: I got in the facilitator last year but she gave us all her notes and PowerPoints and I think we will do it ourselves this year.

G: I might get them off you too.

A: have you someone confident enough to deliver it?

T: yeah, me! No do you know what, when I watched her do it, it was very scientific and last year we thought oh are these kids ready and able for this but you have to do it

D: yeah you really do.

The way she settled them at the beginning, she said you know if you aren't mature enough you might giggle and that is ok, it's alright to do it once and get it out of the way, but maybe if you keep giggling you might not be ready for it. And that was it.

G: putting it back on them. That is very good.

T: yeah and then she just did the talk and it was actually fine.

P: I wouldn't participate be confident delivering it.

D: I would

A: If I had to I would. It depends on the class.

T: what the facilitator said to me last year was she doesn't want to be coming out, she wants to get you confident enough to deliver it yourself.

A: One of my staff who doesn't; teach any of those classes said she would do it.

T: she took the boys out just to talk about personal hygiene but 95% of it was together.

A: two years in succession we have had two boys pass out, I know you might laugh but that it is. It is the innocence of them, they are shocked beyond belief. It is very scientific and graphic.

G: they think they know everything and they don't.

D: yeah that is true.

P: they don't know the proper, yeah they don't.

A: Yeah and the child this year that passed out comes from a home that he wouldn't get it at home so I wasn't; surprise, I felt sorry for him

E: So are there any other SPHE programmes you are trained in?

D: I have done the MINDUP

G: Zippy's friends, friends for life

P: Same as that

A: incredible years

T: yeah, same here

E: and would you all be comfortable delivering the programmes you had mentioned that you have had training in?

All: yes

E: Do you think they are all worthwhile programme, do you think there are any in particular that are really good and work well or ones that don't work as well in the classroom?

G: There are two of our teachers doing the incredible years now and they are very experienced but as they said it reinforces that what they are doing in the classroom is right but makes them mindful of continuing that on every day. It just is taught in 7 week blocks, once a month.

A: I did that training but I felt it was rushed. I felt like we were getting skimmed over it, it is good but I feel like if it was to be done it needs to be taught to teachers over a longer period of time. We did the friends for life and we thought it was good in the school. We also had roots of empathy.

G: They have stopped the funding for that this year.

A: That's right, they have.

P: I loved Zippy's Friends and they have stopped that as they didn't have the funding for that and then NEPs took over that. But it was really good, it dealt with bereavement which was important.

G: When you're talking about bereavement, NEPs this year offered a course on bereavement and there are children of mine going to it, it's an outside thing.

T: We were offered that too for a child but it was too soon.

A: it was the same with us.

E: Do you think that parents needs to be more involved than in SPHE or as you said about some parents not being able to do it at the house, do you think they need to be more involved? I know MindUP does involve parents for example..?

T: it is part of the programme,

A: yes it is

T: I found that they didn't really do it, now we have really good parents but they didn't take the home link on at all. And I mean the best parents in the groups didn't take on the home link.

E: Why is that do you think?

T: I think when they get to a certain stage, the senior classes, the really good kids are being pushed into English, Irish and maths, that's what we found.

D: yeah absolutely

T: everything else, it's like what are we doing that for?

A: it's the schools job...yeah I think so too.

E: so the emphasis is still on English, Irish and maths?

T: yeah and even for the parents that really push their kids, like when I think on last year four or five really good parents just didn't see the value in friends for life.

E: So that is probably seen as less important to parents?

A: I think parents would definitely view it like that.

E: and what about assessing SPHE, do you think it is difficult to assess or would you do any assessment of it?

D: no, it's too kinds of qualitative

G: no,

E: So more observations?

P: Yeah

G: why would you assess it, it isn't a subject that should be assessed.

E: not even to see if they understand it? For example things like the RSE, do you think that should be assessed in some way?

G: no

A: no definitely not.

E: What do you think are the main things that children are presenting with in school nowadays?

G: Anxiety

D: Anxiety

A: no coping skills

D: no resilience

T: no none

P: no coping skills at all.

G: and the parents, anxiety is just...

T: the buzz word.

E: and there are so many children presenting with these problems, do you think the focus should be more on mental health and wellbeing?

G: yeah

D: yes

T: yeah but you can't do it in half an hour

D: No! You couldn't do it in an hour

T: you couldn't do it in half an hour a day!

G: but you see as well when you are talking about this, the internet safety aspect of it, they are online constantly and the porn, the porn is apparently unbelievable. They say that young boys are so exposed to so much, it is unbelievable.

A: Well I had a group of 6th class boys up for art and they were talking amongst themselves and they were on about all the bloggers that they follow and every one of them were following the guy that put up the suicide...

D: yeah they are obsessed with him

G: he's been taken off now though hasn't he?

D: yeah

A: they are a weak group of boy's ad on Friday we do art and I was listening to them and I was thinking oh my God.

T: and they are probably impressionable too.

A: yeah, and we have senior infants who have their own YouTube channels, now it is completely innocent because the parents told me but loads of them are putting up videos and they are all talking in American accents!

T: yeah but then again you can't monitor what they are going to do at home

P: no you cannot

T: you can teach them morning noon and night about internet safety and whatever but they can access whatever they want to

A: yeah free to access whatever they want.

E: Moving onto school planning, what school policies are in your schools or what school plans are in place and do you think there is as much emphasis put on planning for SPHE as there is for other subjects?

A: I do teach definitely. Reviewed every three years

G: we reviewed ours this year.

E: and is that difficult to do?

G: YES!! My head...there was so much

E: and is that because there are so many different programmes or why?

G: yes, so many and we were lucky because we have straight classes but if they would just make one programme.

E: it's a lot to fit in, in half an hour.

T: it's too much

D: we do circles of support in our school which takes longer than half an hour, basically it is where two children go out each week, and one targeted child and one 'model' child. They don't know why they are being taken out but not everyone gets access to it, it is really good.

T: that sounds really good.

E: so in your own opinions, what could be done to fix or alleviate some of the problems that you have mentioned?

D: I wouldn't know where to start. They are really big societal problems,

A: I think it also depends on your area. We are severely disadvantaged and quite a percentage of our children are not being guided correctly anyway by their parents because their parents don't have the ability to do it so there needs to be a lot more support in areas where you have great numbers.

T: I would say in a school like yours it's probably a case where you have to go through things like hygiene whereas in our school they come to school clean and they come in knowing the basics.

A: absolutely, twice a year

T: and as well as the internet safety

A: well we have to, and we have discussed it so many times, but we have to deal with the hygiene a lot and keep going over it so that they become aware as they get older that they need to do it for themselves.

E: so you are probably doing twice as much SPHE as others

A: yes and especially as they get up the school.

T: Training is another recommendation, it's no good taking one or two teachers and having no sub cover, and it means having to put 40 children into one class for a day

A: if you want staff to buy into it you have to train them so that they understand, handing them another book and saying there you go, they aren't going to care, some will but lots won't.

G: Whole staff training and one manual

P: it is like me being trained in friends for life, I'm the only one so I'm taking groups out and the class teachers wouldn't know what it is about only from me telling her.

E: so she could be doing something similar

P: Yeah exactly

T: and she can't back it up

E: and what about SPHE in resource setting?

G: They don't have time

T: yeah they don't but a friend of mine trained to go and become an SPHE advisor and they were told that SPHE should be done in SET setting for children who have say autism, that there should be part of their plan.

G: yeah well that is true, we have a teacher who spends a lot of her time in resource who deals with SPHE issues.

P: I think part of the job is taking into account social stories and based on the child and their needs.

E: Do you enjoy teaching SPHE?

T: no I'd rather teach English or something

G: I used to love teaching it, every Monday morning my kids knew it was SPHE time and before I would even come into the room they would have the tables and chairs moved into a circle.

D: I enjoy it

P: I do

A: I like it, I don't mind it

D: I have a group that are good talkers and they just run with it.

E: it must be hard in a big class like you have?

D: impossible, it takes about 15 minutes to get them organised.

G: Monday morning was a great time to do it. They were telling you there news and it was a good chance to talk to them

E: it is so hard to get a time when all children are in the room though do you not find to teach SPHE?

D: yeah so hard there are always children coming and going

A: we do it as a whole school and maths also. The SET teachers come into the rooms and assist in the teaching.

P: that is a great idea.

T: it really is.

A: every single class gets it at the same time.

E: so a good idea would be maybe to block SPHE in a certain time?

D: yeah definitely.

T: it would put the focus onto it I think

E: Is there anything else anyone would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time and comments, I really appreciate it.