

OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES: HOW SCHOOL LEADERS VIEW DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION IN IRISH POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: School leaders play a vital role in ensuring that schools attend to issues of local and global justice within the ethos and daily practices of their school community. This article examines the attitudes and activities of school leaders in relation to development education and their vision for its integration in schools based on a national survey of post-primary school leaders in the Republic of Ireland. We consider the conditions needed for development education to be successfully implemented and the drivers of change required that can sustain it in the longer term. We examine why some school leaders and communities seem to be disconnected from development education opportunities and unaware of available supports, whilst others engage actively with it as an organic part of their school culture. This has broader implications for resilience of school leadership, the teaching profession and school community, particularly in an era of constraint. It offers a unique insight into development education from the vantage point of those leading schools.

Key words: Development education; school leadership; post-primary education.

Leading development education in Irish post-primary schools

Ireland claims a ‘proud tradition as a champion for international development cooperation’ (Dóchas, 2011: 2) and development education, in particular, is well-established in the Republic of Ireland education system (Fiedler et al., 2011; Kenny and O’Malley, 2002; Irish Human Rights Commission, 2011). However, it remains a somewhat marginal and non-compulsory part of the broader curriculum (Bryan and Bracken, 2011). The need for a holistic approach which includes school leadership in embedding development issues in education is acknowledged as important (Toland, 2006) but has only tangentially been addressed in the development studies literature (Gleeson et

al., 2007). Similarly, literature on school leadership has seldom addressed the issue of leading development education, although it does offer useful perspectives. The role of principals in leading the school through a ‘process of influence’ is vital to embedding initiatives like development education within the entire school community (Gunter, 2010: 527). Bottery highlights the inherent complexity and interconnectivity of ecosystems such as the school community wherein ‘the art of leadership lies in the balancing of the different interests’ (2013: 8). This concept of leading by influence in a context that acknowledges the complexity of the school ecosystem offers a useful lens to examine the leading of development education.

School leadership literature highlights the importance of leaders being driven by a moral purpose (Fullan, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992). The moral stance of school leadership for values-driven curriculum such as development education is also significant. The legacy of overseas missionary work in some schools very often influences the particular approach to and practices of development education they espouse (Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Kenny and O’Malley, 2002). The nature of this moral purpose or imperative of leadership is significant, with a substantive difference between the soft and critical modes of development education evident in Irish schools (Bryan and Bracken, 2011: 158). The moral purpose driving leadership is significantly different from a critical human rights stance. In recent decades, the efforts of advocacy and community activist groups, that were formed in response to mid-twentieth century civil and international conflicts, contributed significantly to critical awareness-raising about the causes of global social inequality and the significance of human rights, intercultural learning and sustainable development in school leadership (Amnesty International, 2012; Bottery et al., 2012; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2006). These approaches tend to highlight the importance of developing democratic and distributed modes of leadership that promote equal participation and governance across the school community (Amnesty International, 2012).

In the Irish research context, it is relatively rare that this literature on school leadership and development education interacts. Recent studies on

development education in Irish schools focus on teachers, students and curriculum aspects of development education (Clarke et al., 2010; Fiedler et al., 2011; Gleeson et al., 2007; Liddy, 2012; Tormey and Gleeson, 2012), with leadership only noted tangentially.

The positioning of development education in schools

Research on development education has tended to map its position within specific aspects of education, such as its role in a number of subjects on the post-primary curriculum, namely Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), Religion, Geography and Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE). More recently opportunities to incorporate development education more explicitly into revised syllabi have been identified (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment /Irish Aid, 2006). Programmes such as the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Transition Year (TY) and the emergent Junior Cycle short courses offer opportunities for development education by virtue of the cross-curricular approach and active methodologies they espouse (Honan, 2005). Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes throughout the country include elements of development education as core or elective modules (Jeffers and Malone, 2003; Liddy, 2009)

In spite of its long trajectory and apparent prominence compared to other ‘value educations’ (Irish Human Rights Commission, 2011: 168), development education, along with other such subjects, still occupies a somewhat marginal position in Irish schools and faces considerable cultural and infrastructural challenges to its successful and appropriate integration in teaching and learning (Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Clarke et al., 2010; Jeffers, 2008). Research highlights the historically low status of the so-called ‘softer subjects’ such as Religion, SPHE and CSPE and their minimal allocation of class time (Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Jeffers, 2008) coupled with the pervasive lack of comfort with ‘active methodologies’ (Clarke et al., 2010; Cosgrove et al., 2011). These factors conspire against full realisation of the educational potential of a values-based subject like development education. This makes development education a particularly pertinent challenge for school leaders,

given their central position in influencing and sustaining school values, cultures and infrastructures (Day and Leithwood, 2007; Gunter, 2010). So while we are cognisant of the achievements of the development education sector in recent years (Gleeson et al., 2007; Liddy, 2012), it is worth examining the challenges and constraints that still remain for schools from the perspective of those leading schools.

Gleeson et al.'s (2007) national study mapping 4,970 post-primary students' and 1,193 post-primary teachers' knowledge, attitudes and activism in relation to development issues and development education reveals clear evidence of engagement by teachers, students and the school community. School leadership is not a focused theme within this study, although many principals did participate in the interview part of this study. Similarly, Liddy's study of pre-service teachers' use of active learning methodologies in development education notes the importance of the support of school leaders amidst a range of other structural factors (2009: 39), but these factors were not central to her study. Bryan and Bracken's research (2011) also acknowledges the importance of supportive school leadership and management in schools which had a high visibility or moral obligation for development education. Richardson (2009) notes that the willingness and capacity of school management to support teachers is crucial, highlighting the supportive role and culture developed by school leaders. As these studies reveal, the contribution of school leadership to development education is an area that has been tangentially examined in the literature, despite research and policy emphasising the centrality of leadership in enhancing and sustaining change in schools.

Researching development education in Irish post-primary schools

This article is based on research conducted with principals and deputy principals of Irish post-primary schools in 2013. It was conducted on behalf of WorldWise Global Schools (WWGS) to inform the development of its 2013 - 2016 strategy. WWGS is an Irish Aid initiative that is being delivered on its behalf by a consortium of three organisations (Self Help Africa, Concern Worldwide and City of Dublin Vocational Education Centre Curriculum

Development Unit) supporting clusters or groups of schools that work on projects in development education. The purpose of this research was to explore school leaders' perceptions of current development education activities and networks evident in participating post-primary schools. We present the key obstacles, opportunities and supports for development education identified by school leaders and examine the conditions required for development education to be sustained in schools before discussing the implications for future research, policy and practice.

The research adopted a mixed method design comprising three elements: desk research about development education and leadership in Irish schools; a national on-line survey of school leaders about integration of development education in second level schools; and in-depth qualitative interviews with selected principals. All aspects of the research abided by institutional ethical guidelines that respect participants' rights, maintaining the confidentiality and informed consent of respondents at all times (Maynooth University, 2012). The questionnaire was distributed to all principals on the Department of Education and Skills (DES) database of second level schools in Ireland, as well as to online mailing lists of schools, education bodies and school trustees held by WWGS. The questionnaire asked principals to complete a series of closed and open-ended questions about their school's profile, its development education activities, how development education is integrated into the school curriculum, their involvement in development education networks, and a series of general attitudinal questions about opportunities, obstacles and achievements of development education in school (Rickard et al., 2013). Question formats ranged from Likert scales to open-ended questions asking for further elaboration and rationale for answers. These were analysed using SPSS and MS Excel software to examine the basic frequencies and cross-tabulate answers.

Online surveys gave a very effective and quick means of distributing the survey (Matsuo et al., 2004) to the target population of school principals. 186 school leaders (80 percent were principals and 20 percent were deputy principals) responded, representing 26 percent of the relevant schools (based

on the DES school database). This represents a satisfactory response rate, given the typically lower response rate to online surveys (Couper, 2000) and the continual demands made on school principals (Lynch et al., 2012). It raises the question of the potential skewing of results that this self-selection by 26 percent of eligible principals presented. We can assume that these represent principals and schools that are more engaged with development education issues. This self-selection leaves unexplored the attitudes and activities of those less involved or motivated, which represents a significant area for future research. Another limitation of the survey response was the gradual fall-off in participation with 92 respondents fully completing the survey. This fall-off occurred during the section asking principals about their understanding of and involvement in development education (as noted throughout the findings section). While fall-off is an acknowledged limitation of all on-line surveys (Porter and Whitcomb, 2003), we can also speculate that this implied a lowering of engagement levels in these schools and hence respondents opting out of the survey at this point. One respondent acknowledged that completing the questionnaire raises awareness that ‘I now feel very ignorant about this topic. I suppose that, in the present economic climate, global issues have been somewhat side-lined’ (Principal Survey 62.14) [1].

Qualitative interviews with principals in eleven schools chosen from WWGS’s database were then conducted. They represented a cross-selection of schools with varying levels and involvement in development education. These interviews enabled us to explore more fully the nature and type of engagement in development education activities through the lens of the school leader’s vision. Interviews discussed their understanding of the place of development education in the school, the level and extent of development education provision within school, involvement in and collaboration with development education providers, attitudes to change and capacity building within school (especially in light of curricular change and network building), and perceived barriers to development education. A semi-structured approach was adopted by two researchers who visited schools over one month to interview the principals following a topic guide based on the themes outlined above (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). The interviews offered rich and

detailed insights into the activities, motivations, and opinions of school leaders and were analysed using the qualitative data analysis software MAXqda. Through a system of open coding of the emergent themes and subsequent re-checking and categorisation of these codes (Corbin, 2007), key themes were identified. These included: general awareness and understanding of development education among school leaders; leaders' backgrounds; influential aspects in leading development education in schools; challenges to the integration of development education in schools; the impact of economic and school contexts for development education; and future opportunities for development education in Irish schools.

Profile of participating schools and leaders

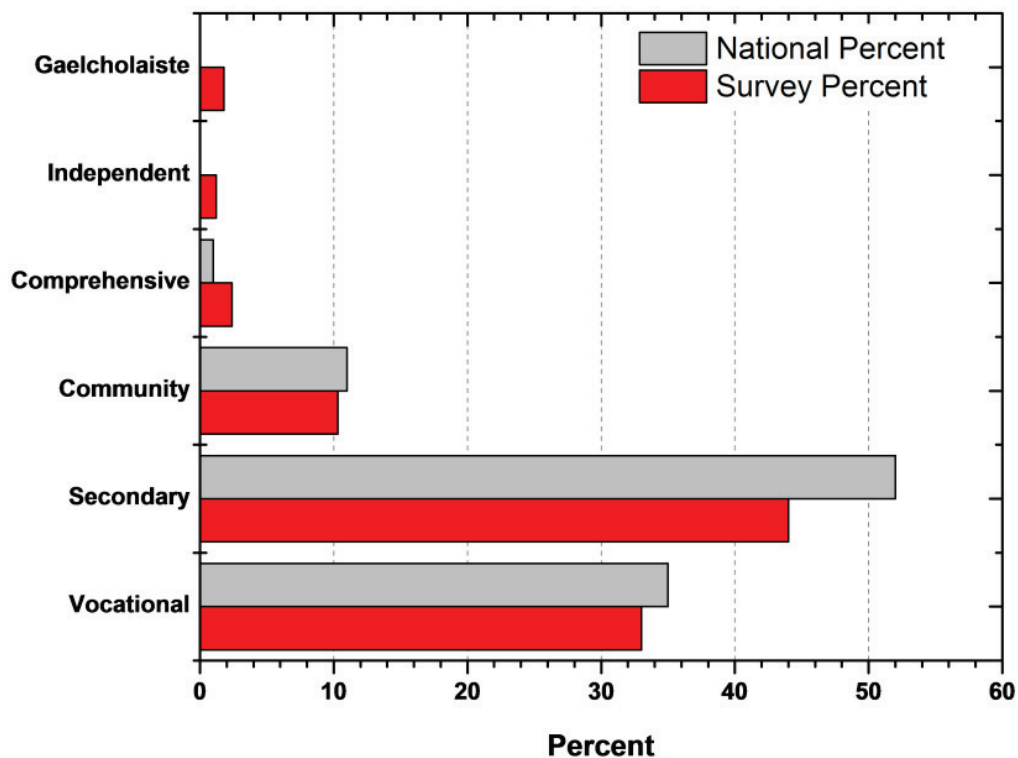
Based on the data emerging from this research, we mapped current development education activities and networks evident in participating Irish post-primary schools. The online survey was circulated to all 723 Irish post-primary schools with 186 (26 percent) schools responding. The diverse geographical spread and school type participating in the research reflected the national profile of post-primary schools as

below shows; with 33 percent vocational, 44 percent secondary, 10 percent community and 2.4 percent comprehensive schools. The remainder indicated that they were independent, gaelcholáiste or 'other'. 43 percent (60) of respondents were in single sex schools (compared to a national average of 34 percent). Similar to the national profile, there was a concentration of responses from schools based in the towns (nearly 50 percent) and cities (36 percent). Many of these responses were from Dublin, South and West Leinster, followed by a more even spread across the country. Less than 20 percent of responding schools were based in a rural location. 32 percent (46) of respondents were located in designated disadvantaged (DEIS) schools. There was a wide spread of school size ranging from 15 percent with under 200 students and 22 percent with over 800 students.

While an element of bias must be assumed in a self-selected sample such as this, the research profile of schools participating in this research

compares favourably to the national average (DES, 2012). Our response group represents a relatively balanced sample set with a mix of gender, urban and rural, single-sex and co-educational schools (see Rickard et al., 2013).

Figure 1. The response percent of school type to the survey compared to national percentages



Findings

School leaders' awareness of development education

The level of general awareness and understanding among school leaders varied significantly. When asked what they understood by the term 'development

education’, the majority of interview and survey respondents focused on the human rights aspect:

“Highlighting human right issues and the development of a more fair and equal society” (Principal Survey 14.16).

“Education which opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world, particularly including the majority world, and enables them to engage in learning for social change, local and global” (Principal Survey 14.96).

A quarter of survey respondents associated development education with the Third World or developing world, ‘helping to promote and develop education in Third World countries’ (Principal Survey 14.94). ‘Awareness’ and ‘Understanding People and Cultures’ appeared in 20 percent of explanations. A diverse range of understandings of development education in schools was evident, ranging from more critical and embedded perspectives on global studies:

“Development Education is about increasing awareness and understanding amongst people about the unequal world in which we live. It aims to support people in understanding and acting to transform the cultural, social and economic structures which affect their lives and others at local, national or international levels, as it encourages critical examination of global issues” (Principal Survey 14.19).

This view contrasted with the softer and more traditional notion of development education as embedded in charity fund-raising and the:

“[W]hole idea of vocation, the ... Voluntary Service Overseas ... wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could encourage young people for instance to do a developmental year. What do you call it – a gap year – we don’t do enough of that in this country” (Principal Interview H.12).

These diverse understandings of development education by school leaders are key to understanding how principals approach development education in Irish schools. The global human rights approach fits with current curriculum practices and the active learning approaches promoted by curriculum bodies and development education organisations. The charitable approach expressed by many school leaders enabled greater distancing and an aspirational stance rather than active involvement in development education. It implies a softer approach that neglects the complex culpability of the global North and dilutes the critical capacity of development education (Andreotti, 2006; Bracken and Bryan, 2011).

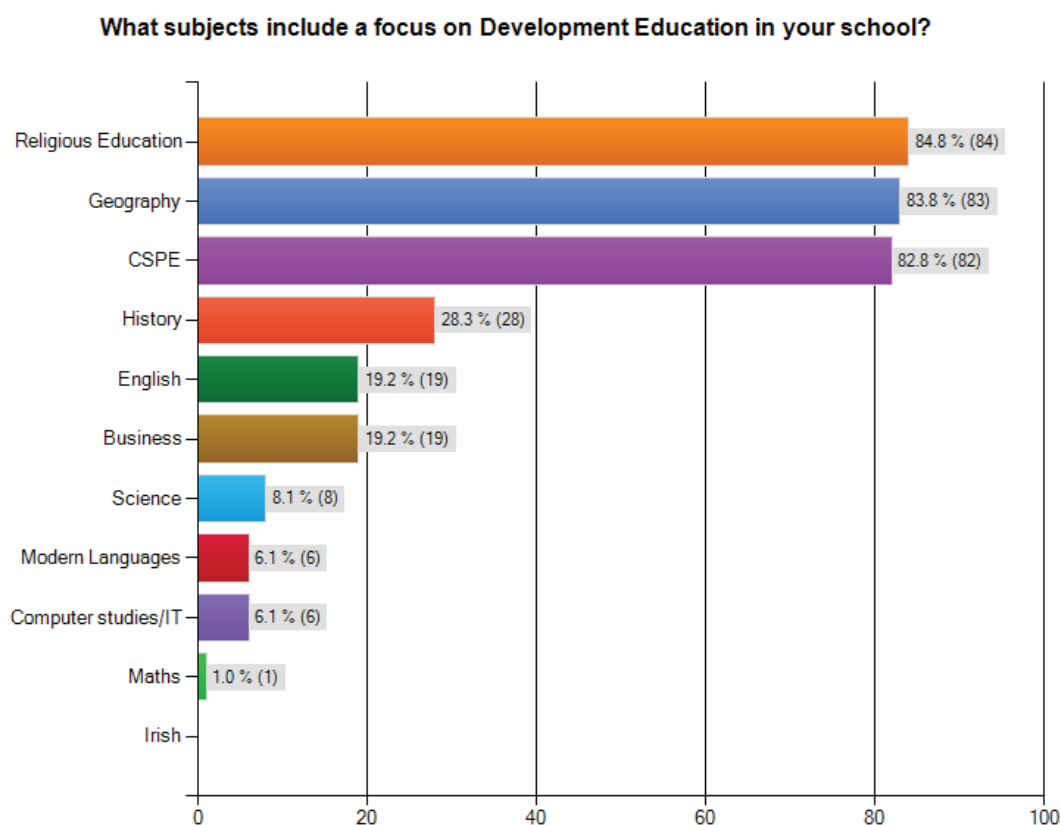
School leaders were also asked about their awareness of the organisation responsible for Ireland's development aid and to name organisations involved in the provision of development education to gain an insight into their knowledge of structural issues. Half of the survey respondents were not aware of the organisational structure for Irish development education or gave a wrong answer, revealing a lack of visibility and awareness about the systemic structures of development education.

Development education activities

The majority of school leaders described how they integrate development education into a wide variety of school activities and support the embedding of development education across the curriculum. Respondents described how most development education activity (77 percent and 80 percent respectively) takes place at the early parts of the school cycle, the Junior and Transition Year level respectively. 33 percent (31) of respondents include development education in Transition Year where modules such as 'Social Education' and 'Development Education' cover development education topics. This raises issues about the status of development education in the school cycle and curriculum. Similar to the Gleeson et al. study (2007: 55), many school leaders favoured a broad approach that diffused development education across the curriculum where 'development education should be a component of nearly every subject rather than being separated out' (Principal Survey 62.31). However, in practice, they described how development education delivery is

concentrated in particular subjects. Figure 2 shows the spread of subjects which leaders felt included a focus on development education.

Figure 2. Subjects which include a focus on development education



32 percent (29) of principals responding also noted a development education component in their extra-curricular activities. While the subject is taught mainly through Religion, Geography and CSPE, associated activities such as the Trócaire and Concern fasts or Concern debates take place on an extra-curricular basis.

While development education may percolate across the curricular and extra-curricular aspects of the school day, it does not have a whole school focus in most schools. Gleeson et al. (2007: 58) similarly note that the general support and ‘status ascribed to development education is not necessarily reflected in the practice of the school’ as evident in their research through the lack of discussion about it at staff meetings. 87 percent (88) of principals in

our study did not include development education as part of their staff or student planning days. Introducing development education as part of school planning days received the least interest overall with 24 percent (22) principals rating it as '0'. The majority of schools, 98 percent, do not have a written policy on development education with only 21 percent considering developing a policy in the short term. In many instances, principals felt that development education was inherent in the school mission and ethos. Developing a school approach and policy was acknowledged as time consuming and resource intensive, yet probably the best way to get whole school involvement: 'it was a bit of a trawl to get everybody on board working on this so that it became a school wide thing' (Principal Interview G.1).

During the previous school year, 54 percent (56) of schools accessed some development education resources. Principals listed sources such as Waterford One World Centre; DevelopmentEducation.ie, Schools Development Ireland, Fair Trade, Trócaire, Loreto Education Centre, WorldWise, Concern debates resources and Concern Worldwide staff, as well as the Development Education Research Centre. 31 percent (32) of schools have developed some of their own resources and support links, but 68 percent (63) acknowledge that they would like additional development education resources and called for 'support from development organisations to reinvigorate and reintroduce development issues into the school' (Principal Survey 62.5).

Several schools indicated their involvement in networks such as Science for Development, with 27 percent in SciFest, 26 percent participating in BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition (YSTE), and 2 percent in Google Science Fair. 46 percent (46) of respondents are involved with Young Social Innovators (YSI). By participating in these competitions, principals felt that action at a local and global level can be fostered and developed; a finding that was also echoed by Bryan and Bracken's research (2011: 158-9).

Leading development education in schools

Several principals acknowledged how their awareness of development education was shaped by their own professional background as teachers:

“[My] interest in DE evolved initially as a teacher” (Principal Interview H.1).

“I am not usually [aware of development education]. I’m new. As a principal I have been here only four years. Up to that I was teaching engineering” (Principal Interview K.1).

This raises interesting questions about the background influences, especially teaching, that impact on school leadership and is an area that warrants further research. Principals spoke about the factors that shaped their capacity to lead development education. The context and ethos of the school for example was considered vital, whereby schools with an explicit religious or social justice mission were perceived as being most attuned to development education.

While school leaders acknowledged that a whole school approach is important, teachers were identified as central to establishing development education in schools: ‘Ideally you want a group of teachers but you do need a single person that’s going to share everything’ (Principal Interview J.6). Others described this person as ‘a warrior’ (Principal Interview G.3); a committed individual who ‘is a leader and somebody who has the energy to keep going with it’ (Principal Interview I.2). Principals acknowledged the need for support for individual teachers, especially younger teachers echoing Liddy’s findings from Ubuntu network (2012).

The investment in the commitment of the individual teacher points to both the strength of this leadership approach; supporting the passion and energy of a committed advocate, but also to its potential weakness and subjectivity, as it is ‘down to the goodwill of the individual teachers who were promoting their individual projects’ (Principal Interview G.3). Principals were very conscious of the limitations of this approach as staff move on or their circumstances change. Given this reliance on staff, the people management skills of leaders are vital to nurture such approaches within schools as they

‘have to go back and sell this and get people, or get a teacher or a group of teachers that will bring this forward’ (Principal Interview J.2). Liddy (2012) and Bryan and Bracken (2011) also describe a similar dependency on the personal investment and commitment of individual teachers.

A recurring theme among school leaders in the research was an acknowledgment of what impels leadership, with development education identified as particularly resonant for schools with an explicit religious or social justice ethos. Bottery et al. (2012) note the importance of educational leadership being seen as driven by a moral purpose that frames how leaders engage with each situation and issue they face. Development education matches the religious and/or social justice agenda of many schools but with very different motivations and ends, as explored later in this article. There was a clear acknowledgement that leadership has to be set within broader support structures such as the school bodies that support principals, teachers and schools. While this is often taken for granted in schools with a religious trusteeship, it can be difficult, with one principal commenting that they expected a greater level of support from their school trustee: ‘I would have thought they would have jumped on the thing a bit more and run with it a little bit more strongly’ (Principal Interview G.5).

Challenges to leading development education in schools

Findings in our survey and interviews revealed a range of issues that represent challenges to the integration of development education in schools. The pressures of time were noted as the most significant factor impacting on development education activities:

“In school we are already trying to do far too many things. The same people are so busy all the time and we are at breaking point” (Principal Survey 55.3).

This is related to the complex pressures of a full timetable (65 percent) and little class time for development education (42 percent), a busy extracurricular

timetable (29 percent) and the related issue of overworked teachers (53 percent), with calls for more to ‘be done through the curriculum i.e. in the classroom not extra-curricular’ (Principal Survey 62.35). These challenges of time and curriculum were also noted by Jeffers (2008), Bracken and Bryan (2010) and Liddy (2012), as well as in the general literature on school leadership (Sugrue and Goodson, 2010; Lynch et al., 2012).

Respondents called for ‘a clear priority to dev-ed and a cross-curricular/integrationist approach [which] means that some of the above cease to be obstacles’ (Principal Survey 55.4). The cross-curricular nature of development education was cited as an opportunity with some respondents, while others described its cross-curricular nature as a constraint in the current context where development education struggles to find a place in the existing subject-based system – similar to what Bryan and Bracken (2011) have noted. Respondents highlighted cultural factors within the school environment that potentially hinder development education as:

“[T]he idea that you’d have to work closely with other subject departments and work as more of a team rather than individual – unfortunately teaching has been in the past very much a sole trader kind of approach where teachers went in and closed their doors and they were the masters [sic] of their domain” (Principal Interview G.8).

The challenge of making cross-curricular links where ‘the price of a strong ethos of teacher autonomy can be a culture of teacher isolation’ was also noted by Jeffers (2008: 18) in the context of CSPE. Tormey et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary literacy which could build interdisciplinary diversity and a critical awareness of knowledge production and power. The broader context of pressures on the educational system was also mentioned by principals, acknowledging that:

“Given the current ‘change process overload’ complaint from schools, it is crucial that any DE focused processes are seen to be within, not additional to, existing and emerging change processes ... otherwise they will be rejected” (Principal Survey 62.40).

Other obstacles that respondents described were examination-related factors; that development education was not an examination subject (28 percent) and the pressure of achieving exam results (26 percent), which reiterates Bryan and Bracken's (2011) point that development education is difficult to deliver in an education system dominated by a strong focus on terminal examinations:

“I support Dev Ed and think it is important but in an already crowded curriculum, with the pressures of exams etc. people might just see this as another added hassle for teachers and schools to take responsibility for” (Principal Survey 62.9).

Other principals cited logistical reasons that restricted network building and event participation, such as geographical location and the centralised location of development education agencies and events. For example one school leader said, ‘we used to do YSI but logistics of always having finals in Dublin is an obstacle’ (Principal Survey 62.38). In-school communications were also noted by some, with principals citing a limited scope of general announcements in assemblies and school noticeboards as the main way of transmitting development education across the school community.

Issues to do with the teaching profession were particularly significant, as principals acknowledged the impact of the increased workload where:

“[T]eachers are very stressed and the burden of their work has increased hugely over the last 5 years, [but] teachers who are passionate about DE [sic] will always make room for it and promote it” (Principal Survey 62.29).

This issue of individual commitment to the values of development education is vital and one to which we will return later.

Principals focused on developing curricular opportunities for development education as a short course for the new Junior Cycle and Transition Year (38 percent and 28 percent very interested in these options

respectively), acknowledging that it ‘could fit in very well with new Junior Cycle and Transition Year’ (Principal Survey 62.38). This is related to their interest in developing subject support for staff (24 percent very interested in this), seeing broader potential for development education in ‘the context of this school and with the new Junior Cycle, I think there definitely could be greater scope’ (Principal Interview H.2). The potential for development education to facilitate participative learning methods was noted, given its capacity to focus on:

“real ‘stories’, not abstract, and also be pertinent to life stories that our students can relate to. For example, move from discovery of a particular family’s life story in Sierra Leone to a discussion on conditions in that country” (Principal Survey 62.31).

The impact of economic and school contexts for development education

“It’s getting the focus ... Everybody has the ideas but we need to be very realistic in what we can manage and have something – when the funding has gone – that it is still going to keep going” (Principal Interview J.3).

Despite the context of economic recession in the country, the relationship between development education activities and finances was not to the forefront of leaders’ minds. However, those involved in immersion projects did highlight funding pressures, describing the frustration when the immersion project that:

“is an integral part of school life and feedback from the previous students who have travelled have described it as a ‘life changing’ event. However, as you can imagine it has become extremely difficult under the current economic climate to come up with funding and donations” (Principal Survey 57.21).

Generally, principals perceived a wide range of opportunities through existing initiatives and networks such as Young Scientist Ireland (38 percent), Science for Development (33 percent), development education day/week in

school (21 percent), UNESCO awards (23 percent) and Linking and Immersion programmes (20 percent). Several principals cited the ‘benefits of close partnerships’ describing how it:

“empower[s] students to understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens, as well as how they have the potential to effect change for a more just and equal world” (Principal Survey 62.10).

They welcomed support from development education providers and policy-makers to nurture initiatives and networks.

The opportunities noted by principals must be set within the context of the supportive school culture with clear commitment to development education, with one principal describing how ‘students and adults can get more out of helping someone else than from any other activity’ (Principal Survey 62.41). Others placed this commitment within the institutional context of their school ethos: ‘we are a Catholic school, I think that it is important and should not be just a “tick the box” thing in school’ (Principal Survey 62.9). This context cannot be taken for granted as other issues take precedence in some schools, with one respondent acknowledging that:

“[I]t was very difficult to answer this survey as I have little information or involvement in this area. That is not to say that some of my teachers are not interested in being involved or they may not - certainly in terms of awareness it isn’t a high priority in our school as many of our students and families are disadvantaged” (Principal Survey 62.11).

Conclusion: future opportunities for development education in Irish schools

Ireland’s post-primary schools are clearly active in many forms of development education and are eager to develop an awareness of global issues such as social justice, human rights and intercultural relationships at national and international levels. We found diverse approaches to development education amongst participating schools, revealing how the complexity of the

school setting, institutional culture and broader education system impact on involvement in development education.

Different approaches and aspects of development education were evident amongst respondents. For some, a charitable approach dominated where the focus of students' actions remained limited to inviting 'visiting speakers and fundraising' to use a phrase coined by Jeffers (2008: 15); or the approach described by Bryan and Bracken (2011) as 'development-as-charity'. As these authors would argue, such approaches tended to dilute power and eschewed critical approaches to teaching about global social injustice. They focused on relatively passive forms of action rather than encouraging critical analysis or systemic transformation. A second approach of individualism was often allied to this and focused on the commitment of individual teachers and students, leaving an over-reliance on the energy of individuals rather than a systems-level commitment to development education. Many school leaders expressing this perspective spoke about time pressures and their constant frustration at trying to fit development education into the formal structures of the curriculum and current system.

The third approach emphasised an institutional level of cultural support that was seen as key to ensure that development education became an 'organic ... part of the culture of the school'. Many schools successfully encouraged greater participation on the part of students, teachers and the school community on diverse issues, thereby integrating social justice, human rights and development education into school culture and practice. Drivers of change were acknowledged as crucial with development education initiatives often starting from something very simple and being driven by committed individuals and a supportive school management and wider school community. This cultural identity and commitment to development education was key to understanding the level of dedication and ongoing sustainability of development education, but one which must be located within a supportive environment and structures.

Leaders noted the need for a broader level of support from school bodies and trusteeships for development education efforts. Bryan and Bracken (2010: 24) similarly highlighted the willingness and capacity of school management to support teachers in development education endeavours as crucial, especially new teachers as they develop their professional capacities. Pedagogical capacity-building was important, with many respondents calling for staff workshops to give confidence and support for teachers, especially in the use of the more active learning methodologies associated with development education, echoing Liddy's findings (2012).

Linked to this is a cross-curricular emphasis with many respondents highlighting the need for broader school networks and institutional and curricular supports for development education. This was often contextualised by the opportunities offered by Transition Year or the new short courses for the Junior Cycle. Many principals felt that development education should be integrated in as many subjects as possible and on a cross-curricular basis. However, others saw its cross-curricular nature as a constraint in the current context where it would struggle to find a place in the existing subject-based system, as also noted by Bryan and Bracken (2011). Systemic level issues are very pertinent with development education's cross-curricular nature posing particular challenges and opportunities in the current structure of the post-primary curriculum, examination-driven system, ownership structures and broader educational system.

A fourth element was the local-global emphasis in development education, beginning with local issues and concerns to which students could readily relate, such as a:

“local scheme. Even though I know development education is global ... But it would be a strong starting point. It's about developing what we have and being aware of what's around locally but also on a wider scale” (Principal Interview J. 3).

This local focus was seen as a way to explore how some of these issues may impact on attitudes to other cultural and diversity issues within Irish society

(Tormey and Gleeson, 2012). Principals called for a diverse range of development issues and contexts on a truly global level to be emphasised; not just about Africa. This acknowledged the wider development education conversation, highlighting development education as a way of transversing local and global issues; and moving to a more critical and systemic analysis of power.

These findings raise important implications for development education and for social justice in Irish schools. A holistic sense of commitment to development education in the institutional structures and culture of an organisation is crucial. The traditional ‘silo’ approach of the individual teacher in the classroom leading to isolation and stasis has been part of the teaching culture of the second level system. More collaborative conditions, critical reflexivity and supportive contexts are needed for development education that promotes active learning (Fullan, 2003; North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, 2008). The holistic nature, active methodologies, capacity-building and collaborative ethos encouraged by development education offer potential for a re-imagination of the values of education.

This article identifies the important role of the school leader in supporting development education in schools as well highlighting the challenges and limitations of this perspective. Ultimately, these leaders highlighted the greatest resource for development education as students:

“Young people still have passion, young people have still vision and they’re the people, that like sometimes when we get a bit older we lose a little bit of it ourselves. So I think that we should be tapping that” (Principal Interview H.15).

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Notes

[1] Referencing style (Principal Survey 62.14) refers to principal survey Q62 and respondent 14.

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