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Using restorative practices to enhance the teaching of social-emotional learning

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Declaration

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Orla Moloney

9/09/22

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the social and emotional well-being and health of children worldwide. In the 'Social Impact of COVID-19 Survey August 2020: The Reopening of Schools', 42.2% of parents reported that school closures had a negative impact on their child's social-emotional development. Social distancing and lockdown measures increased children's anxiety and impeded their social-emotional development. The impact of the pandemic on children's social-emotional wellbeing has called upon an urgent need for more effective and innovative approaches to expand students' social-emotional learning support in schools. Schools provide a structured social setting in which children can learn and practice social-emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy. In response to the above findings, the key aim of this research was to explore and create innovative, pedagogical practices that can develop and support the teaching of and learning of these social-emotional competencies in school.

A social-emotional learning intervention comprising of restorative practices was implemented. This included the use of daily restorative circles, the creation of a social-emotional language framework and the delivery of a restorative practice programme for students. Action research was chosen as the methodology and qualitative data was collected using reflective journals, surveys, observation and feedback from critical friends. Findings that emerged from the study were in relation to the importance of teacher modelling, the power of restorative circles and relationship building. A key finding was the importance of teacher vulnerability and seeing it as a strength for teachers developing students' social-emotional learning. This finding inspired a significant change in my teacher identity and how I will foster social-emotional learning in my classroom for years to come.

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Abbreviations

CASEL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

CPD: Continuing Professional Development

DES: Department of Education and Skills

DCSF: Department for Children, Schools and Families

EQ: Emotional Intelligence

HSE: Health Service Executive

IIRP: International Institute for Restorative Practices

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

RP: Restorative Practice

SEL: Social Emotional Learning

SPHE: Social Personal and Health Education

UNSDG: United Nations Sustainable Development Group

WHO: World Health Organisation

Glossary

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): Social-emotional learning is an educational method that aims to develop social-emotional skills within school curricula. These skills include but are not confined to self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and communication skills. SEL is also referred to as "socio-emotional learning", "social and emotional learning" or "social-emotional literacy". A broader definition of SEL is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

"Social-emotional learning is learning how to understand and talk about your own feelings and another people's feelings"

(Student 17)

Restorative Practice (RP): Restorative practice is a practice based primarily on a set of core values and the explicit promotion and enhancement of social-emotional skills such as self-awareness, empathy and communication. It is a proactive structured practice that scaffolds the expression of feelings and the building of positive relationships. The building of relationships is based on the values of respect and empathy. Restorative practice can also be understood as a reactive approach that promotes conflict resolution between two or more people. Examples of restorative practices include the use of affective statements, restorative community-building circles and conferencing. Restorative Practice is defined and explored in more detail in Chapter 2.

"Restorative Practice means spending time learning how to be a good person or a good friend, like learning how to be a good listener and learning how to show empathy.

(Student 21)

Emotional Intelligence (EQ): Emotional Intelligence otherwise known as "emotional quotient" or "EQ" is the ability to understand, use and manage your own feelings and emotions in positive ways during social interactions. It is the ability to empathize with others and resolve conflict. A more detailed definition and discussion of Emotional Intelligence is presented in Chapter 2.

"*Emotional intelligence does not mean you are really good at maths or reading, it means you are good at talking about your feelings and showing empathy to others*"
(Student 4)

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter defines social-emotional learning (SEL) and provides a rationale for why there is a need for teachers to prioritise and support children's social-emotional learning in schools, now more than ever. The significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' social-emotional development is presented, followed by my own personal and professional rationale for carrying out this research project. This chapter will conclude by outlining the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

1.2 What is Social-Emotional Learning?

According to CASEL the term 'social and emotional learning' is "the processes by which people acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand and manage their emotions, to feel and show empathy for others, to establish and achieve positive goals, to develop and maintain positive relationships, and to make responsible decisions" (2012: 4). It comprises a wide range of skills, attitudes, and behaviours that can affect student success in school and in everyday life. Consider the skills not necessarily measured by tests, for example self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and communication skills. SEL can be best understood by breaking it down into social-emotional skills or competencies. For example, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2012) created the 'CASEL 5' framework, which defines SEL as five interrelated social-emotional skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-

making (See Figure 1.1 below). According to research, these skills can significantly impact a person's academic success, self-esteem, relationships and employability (CASEL, 2012).

Social and emotional skills are often referred to as one's 'emotional intelligence' or 'EQ' which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. Some of the skills associated with emotional intelligence include regulating one's emotions, expressing emotions appropriately, developing effective listening and communication skills, resolving conflict and acting according to values and not emotions (CASEL, 2012). An understanding of how to best support my students' SEL in the classroom proved most valuable during this project, due to the significant social-emotional impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on both teachers and students. Therefore, there currently exists a societal need to support our children's social-emotional development in schools now more than ever.

Figure 1. 1: CASEL's 5 Social and Emotional Learning Competencies

1.3 COVID-19: A Shock to Students' and Teachers' Lives

The past two years have been an unprecedented time for education and the world. Global education systems have had to respond to new challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as adapting to online learning and adhering to social distancing measures. As a result, classrooms, student relationships, and support systems were all upended by school closures, with students facing the emotional stress of adapting to new learning and social environments. The unprecedented COVID-19 school closures across Ireland in March 2020, virtually ceased all social activities and as a result, many students were negatively impacted both socially and emotionally (CSO, 2020; Viner et al., 2022). Restrictions meant that students had very few opportunities to see friends in person or engage in after school activities. Children also might have had to navigate the pandemic's frightening impacts on their family's health and welfare, such as illness, the death of a relative or economic hardship. International research shows that enforced school closures had a major negative impact on children's social development (CSO, 2020; Viner et al., 2022). A significant number of young people have experienced negative impacts on their mental or social-emotional health during the pandemic and rates of anxiety among students have increased (CSO, 2020). In a recent SEL report, educators reported that students were fearful of COVID-19 and social interaction and emphasized that extra time and attention is needed to relearn social-emotional skills in schools (McGrawHill, 2021). I am a teacher who has first-hand observed these same concerns and findings after having returned to the classroom following school closures. As such, this research was inspired by these first-hand observations. I was keen to explore what pedagogical practices would best support and expand children's SEL in schools in line with the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2013.

1.4 The Societal Need for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools

As a nation, our mental health has never been more important, and it's essential that our youth have the tools they need to navigate these life challenges. While ensuring that the cognitive skills of students are not affected in the current context of the pandemic, the development of student's SEL is equally if not more important. It's becoming increasingly critical that we embed evidence informed SEL practices in schools now more than ever. While SEL has always been an essential aspect of school life, this unique time has made it clear that our purpose as teachers is not only to teach content knowledge relating to SEL but to provide an environment that nurtures students' feelings and relationships. According to Elias et al. (2007), emotions can facilitate or impede children's academic engagement, work ethic, commitment, and ultimate school success. This implies that emotions can affect how and what we learn, so schools and families must address these aspects of the students' education for the benefit of all students. This calls for an integrated and responsive system of education in Ireland, one that can flexibly meet each student's variable academic and social emotional needs on a post-pandemic scale.

1.5 Values Statement

It is my personal belief that teaching children how to grow and nurture relationships is essential in schools. As a Froebelian teacher, my core value of relationships is underpinned by the Froebelian principle of attending to the education of 'the whole child', that "all aspects of a child's life - thoughts, feelings, actions, and relationships are interrelated" (Tovey, 2020: 6). A key element of the action research process is engaging in reflective practice to identify your values, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3. Naming values helps with the "framing of one's research question" and can also be used to formulate the criteria for assessing the

research project' (Sullivan et al., 2016: 3). My personal vision of an ideal school community is one dedicated to fostering and enhancing relationships. I wanted to complete a project that not only had personal meaning to me, but also allowed me to teach in a way that was closer to my values. The main reason why students come to school is to socialise and be with their friends, meaning relationships can be a motivating factor. I too believe that children have lots to learn about how to manage their relationships, such as how to make friends whilst maintaining their own sense of self; "how to disagree with or challenge their teachers and their friends in respectful ways, how to express strong emotions and be heard and how to listen with empathy" (Hopkins, 2011: 13). The decision to carry out research in the field of SEL was therefore, largely influenced by my core value 'relationships'.

1.6 Rationale

The goal of this research was to find out which combinations of support and interventions would help students regain and develop their social-emotional well-being and age-appropriate social-emotional competencies, based on their highly varied experiences of the pandemic. At the beginning of the research process, we were invited to reflect, identify and discuss an area of interest in our own personal and professional lives. As previously mentioned, I have always been an advocate for attending to the needs of the 'whole child' and always believed that the teaching and learning of social-emotional skills were equally if not more important than traditional academic learning such as numeracy and literacy (Goleman, 2006). After having completed an action research project in the field of SEL as an undergraduate prior to the pandemic, I reaped the rewards of my findings and discovered that there was potential to expand research in this field. As I have engaged in further research, I realised that this was a perfect opportunity to examine if I was truly living to my values of providing time for children

in school to develop their social and emotional skills. However, I knew that this research was being explored in a new context, as a large number of students in my class were struggling with anxiety and the trauma of the pandemic with regards to bereavement, sickness and adapting to change. I observed that most children struggled to communicate their feelings, worries and experiences and began to wonder what I could do to facilitate students' SEL support in the classroom.

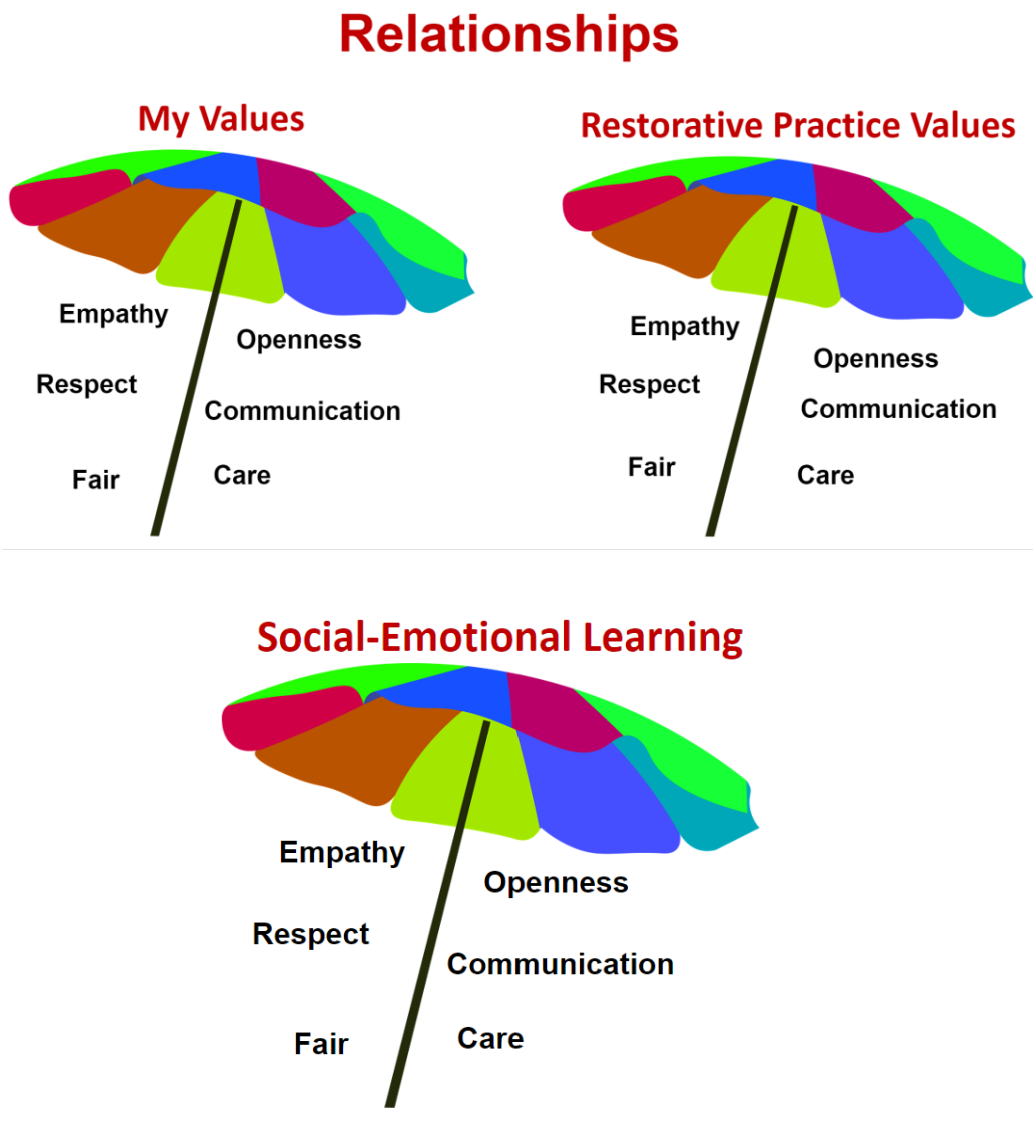

Figure 1. 2: Values underpinning restorative practice and social-emotional learning

For this reason, I sought to investigate a method of integrating social-emotional learning, my values and my interest in the field of emotional intelligence, in line with the SPHE curriculum guidelines. After having read the literature, I identified a strong synergy between SEL, restorative practice (RP) and my values as I discovered that all three components were underpinned by the umbrella value 'relationships' (See Figure 1.2). For this reason, I proposed to adopt restorative practice as a proactive pedagogical approach to enhance my values and my teaching of SEL, with the aim of developing my students' SEL. The connection between these three key components of the research will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 and later in Chapter 4.

1.7 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided up into five chapters. They include the following:

Chapter One: is an introduction to the research which includes my values statement and gives an insight into the rationale that underpins the research project.

Chapter Two: contains a literature review of SEL and RP research and an insight into other key elements of my research project. The literature review covers a number of different themes such as: SEL and RP as concepts, the need for SEL post COVID-19, the policy and context of SEL and RP in Ireland, SEL school programmes, the barriers of SEL in schools, the role of teachers and finally approaches for teaching RP in the classroom.

Chapter Three: outlines the methodological approach that was chosen and the design of the

research. The decision to use self-study action research is explained and justified, while also highlighting the data collection tools that were used.

Chapter Four: contains the analysis of my findings. The findings are explored and put in context with the relevant literature. The findings discussed are:

- The power of check-in circles
- The importance of teacher modelling
- Relationship Building

Chapter Five: contains a conclusion of the learning from the research process. How I am living to my values and the implication for my future practice is discussed. There are also recommendations for school policy and future research. To finish, there is a personal reflection on the research process.

These five chapters, as a collective, document the journey of creating innovative and reformed restorative practices to enhance the teaching and support students' SEL in schools.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature pertaining to social-emotional learning (SEL) and restorative practice (RP). It is structured into several key topics which are discussed in detail. First, the evolution of SEL and how it developed from the concept of emotional intelligence (EQ) is discussed. The current societal need to prioritise SEL in schools is discussed in line with Ireland's current Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 (2018). The literature explores the current SEL approaches adopted in primary schools in Ireland, the United Kingdom and America. There is an exploration into the practices and methodologies that are deemed effective for the teaching of SEL in schools: the implementation of SEL programmes, active learning and teacher modelling. A notable synergy between the fields of social-emotional learning and restorative practice is identified following the exploration of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) (NCCA, 1999) and the new Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) (NCCA, 2015). In the second half of the review, literature on RP is presented. The implementation of RP as a reactive approach to resolve conflict and RP as a proactive approach to promote SEL is examined. The potential to use restorative practices as a proactive, pedagogical approach to enhance the teaching of SEL in schools is concluded.

2.2 The Evolution of Social-Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning can be dated as far back as 380 B.C. in Plato's writings about holistic education in the '*The Republic'* (1943). Plato (1943) proposed a holistic education that required balanced learning in physical education, the arts, maths, science and character education. He stated that "by maintaining a sound system of education and upbringing, you

produce citizens of good character" (Lane, 2013; Plato, 2016: 424). This philosophy of holistic education continued to gain interest with Thorndike's (1920) proposal of a social intelligence, a person's ability to understand and navigate interpersonal relationships. However, it was Gardner's theory of seven intelligences (1983) that first broke the misconception that there was one type of intelligence. Gardner (1983) maintained that there are many forms of intelligence but stressed the importance of integrated "intrapersonal" and "interpersonal" intelligences. These intelligences are comprised of social-emotional skills such as self-awareness of one's feelings, empathy, communication skills and the ability to create positive relationships. By the late 1980s, much evidence supported Gardner's (1983) idea of integrated social and emotional skills and later became better known as 'emotional intelligence'.

2.3 Emotional Intelligence

Mayer and Salovey (1990) first defined social-emotional skills as emotional intelligence (EQ), a concept that has continued to gain recognition to this day. After having carried out a series of studies that supported the concept of EQ, they created a definition and a measure for assessing it, which subsequently demonstrated its validity and reliability as an intelligence. They defined it as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Today, there are three primary models of EQ: the ability model (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), mixed models (Bar-On, 1997), and the five-component model (Goleman, 1996). These founders of EQ defined the key skills and characteristics of SEL (See Table 2.1 below for a brief summary of these models). However, it was Goleman (1996) who first popularized the concept of EQ after he added social components to the definition in his book, 'Emotional Intelligence'. Goleman defines emotional intelligence as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing

emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships" (2009: 317). For Goleman (1996), these skills could be understood as social-emotional skills, which is why emotional intelligence became better known as the term SEL in education.

The Salovey and Mayer approach to Emotional Intelligence (1990)
1. Accurately perceive emotions in oneself and others and in one's ambient context 2. Use emotions to facilitate thinking or that might inhibit clear thinking and task performance 3. Understand emotional meanings and how emotional reactions change over time and in response to other emotions 4. Effectively manage emotions in themselves and in others
Bar-On's Five Key Components of Emotional Intelligence (1997)
1. Be aware of, to understand and to express our emotions and feelings non-destructively. 2. Understand how others feel and to use this information to relate with them. 3. Manage and control emotions so they work for us and not against us. 4. Manage change, adapt and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature. 5. Generate positive effects to be self-motivated.
Goleman's Five Elements of Emotional Intelligence (2007)
1. Self-Awareness. 2. Self-Regulation 3. Empathy 4. Motivation 5. Social Skills

Table 2. 1: Early Conceptualizations of Social-Emotional Learning/Emotional Intelligence Skills

2.4 Linking Emotional Intelligence and Social-Emotional Learning

Emotional intelligence theory further developed the importance of SEL for children. For Goleman (1996), EQ looked beyond the measurement of a student's IQ as an indicator of

success. Instead, he captured the practical value of EQ and defined it as someone's ability to understand feelings, listen to others, show empathy and to express emotions in a productive manner (Goleman, 2007). In Goleman's book 'Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ' (1996), he argued that the teaching and learning of SEL skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and communication were equally it not more important than the traditional learning of literacy and numeracy in schools. For Goleman, enhancing children's social intelligence in school would "support their well-being, creativity and help them become better students" (Goleman, 2006: 55). With the view that SEL skills are prerequisite before academic learning can take place, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) which was co-founded by Goleman in 1994, first initiated a movement based on EQ theory, to incorporate SEL in educational policy in America.

2.5 Social-Emotional Learning in Educational Policy

John Dewey (1933) was among the first to theoretically propose that empathy and effective interpersonal communication were important skills to be taught and practiced in the educational environment. However, it was Goleman (2006) who first incorporated SEL into educational policy with the support of CASEL. CASEL's (2021) work integrates cognitive, social, and affective components of learning and emphasizes the synergy between social and emotional skills and academic achievement. Its mission is to establish social-emotional learning as an integral part of education by advancing evidence-based practices of SEL (CASEL, 2021). As outlined previously, CASEL promotes SEL as five major emotional, cognitive, and behavioural competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision-making (Zins et al. 2007). According to research, if young people are equipped with such skills, they are more likely to make caring

and responsible decisions and avoid engaging in negative behaviours such as substance abuse and bullying (Elias, Zins, Weisberg et al., 1997). In recent years, CASEL's work to promote these SEL skills has expanded, and the group's influence has grown. Several state boards of education across the world have approved standards for SEL and researchers continue to study its impact on children's academic and personal success.

2.6 The Challenges of Social-Emotional Learning in Educational Policy

The barriers and challenges of incorporating SEL in educational policy and curricula cannot go unnoticed. SEL has for many years, battled with the traditional view of education, the long-held assumption that the measurement of a person's intelligence quotient (IQ) is the primary indicator of a person's success in life. This view of intelligence argues that the teaching of core curriculum subjects and knowledge alone "will equip students to meet the challenges they will face as adults" (Humphrey et al., 2007: 237). Freire (1970) was one of the first to criticise this practice of education and referred to it as the 'banking concept', whereby students had to learn the knowledge presented to them by the teacher in the form of rote-learning or now more commonly known as 'learning off by heart'. This implies that students' success in schools is determined only by the measurement of their IQ through standardised testing. This magnifies the absence of valuing students' SEL in schools.

This observation was also made by Noddings who stated that that as educators, we should want more from education than just academic achievement and that "we will not achieve even the meager success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others" (Noddings, 1995: 675). This implies that while the assessment of literacy and numeracy is important in schools, the approach to education requires expansion in the human domain, with SEL deserving equal time and attention in schools. For Freire (1970), educators

need to engage in ‘Conscientization’, also known as ‘Critical Consciousness’, the process of teachers becoming aware of their own needs and the needs of their students, this includes developing communication, learning, and social interaction skills. This process inspired this research project, as I observed a need to develop and support students’ SEL.

Initial research on interventions to enhance and assess SEL in schools raised questions about incorporating SEL in educational policies, with several educational policy makers failing to see its value. It was debated that SEL is a Piagetian stage of development, implying that social-emotional skills improve with age and experience, meaning it cannot be taught. However, research has confirmed that SEL skills can be taught, developed and measured as it was reported that SEL in schools promotes positive development, reduces anti-social behaviours, and improve students’ academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). This highlights the need for further empirical investigation, to better support the development of SEL in schools.

2.7 The Importance of Social-Emotional Learning

What once was a wishy-washy concept, is now an integral part of educating the whole child. Attending the whole child or holistic development of children has been at the forefront of educational policy in recent years. That is why researchers in the field of SEL are trying to create a balanced paradigm regarding the role of academic learning and SEL in schools. A considerable body of research has identified a positive correlation between SEL and academic attainment. Research found that the promotion of emotional competencies can lead to enhanced wellbeing and academic attainment at all levels of education (Low & Nelson, 2004; Duckworth and Seligman, 2005). This indicated that effective mastery of social-emotional competencies is associated with greater well-being and better school performance, whereas the failure to

achieve competence in these areas can lead to a variety of personal, social, and academic difficulties (Eisenberg, 2006; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Preparing children to be responsible and caring citizens is the goal of 21st century education today with many employers seeking to hire adults with a balance of academic and social-emotional competencies. As such, the OECD (2017) declares that the role of the school is now a place which develops the 'whole child', who should leave school with a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills to face the challenges of the 21st century. How best to do this in our modern school system, however, is a new and evolving area of research and is the key question the SEL movement currently seeks to answer.

2.8 Social-Emotional Learning in Educational Policy

Wellbeing has been the buzzword in Irish education in recent years, particularly now following the COVID-19 pandemic. Children have thankfully been largely spared from the direct health effects of COVID-19 to date, however research states that "the crisis had a profound effect on their wellbeing due to unanticipated school closures" (United Nations, 2020: 2). 'The Impact of COVID-19 on Children' policy stresses the importance of doing everything possible to minimize the risks and impact of the pandemic through information, solidarity and action (UNSDG, 2020). Highlighted in this policy, is the call on governments worldwide to "build upon best practices adopted and take additional steps to counter unforeseen effects on children to increase their wellbeing both during the pandemic and after it ends" (UNSDG: 2020: 14).

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice Policy recognises "the connection between the cognitive and the emotional world of children and young people" and states that within the school environment, social and emotional skills cannot exist in isolation but "must interact with cognitive skills development" (2018:12). In this policy (2018), it is also

emphasised that schools need to create and provide more opportunities for social and emotional learning. It specifically draws attention to the development of children's self-awareness, self-management, relationships and responsible decision-making skills in schools. There is broad agreement among educators, policy makers, and the public that educational systems should graduate students who are proficient in core academic subjects, able to work well with others from diverse backgrounds in socially and emotionally skilled ways, practice healthy behaviours, and behave responsibly and respectfully (Greenberg et al., 2003). This reinforces Goleman's (1996) argument that schools have an important role to play in raising healthy children by fostering their cognitive and social-emotional development.

2.9 School-Based Social-Emotional Learning Programmes

As highlighted earlier, one of the main difficulties educators encounter lies in clarifying what approaches are most effective in developing students' SEL in schools. When Goleman (2006) first prompted the incorporation of SEL into educational policy, he argued for the necessity of 'Self Science' programmes to enhance the practice of SEL in schools. These 'Self Science' programmes, now known as SEL programmes, are evidence-based intervention programmes that focus on the teaching and learning of social-emotional competencies or skills. To date, SEL programmes have proven to be one of the most effective universal mental health promotion strategies for young people. They have demonstrated many positive outcomes including improving social-emotional skills, mental health, well-being and academic outcomes, as well as reducing negative health and social behaviours (OECD, 2015, Joseph A. Durlak et al., 2011, Dowling and Barry, 2021). These findings have resulted from the implementation of SEL intervention programmes that teaches CASEL'S (2005) 5 social-emotional competencies. It has been concluded that universal school-based efforts such as the implementation of SEL programmes, represent a promising approach to enhance children's

SEL and success in life (Elias et al., 1997). As such, formal SEL programmes have been implemented in schools worldwide and current research in these programmes has shown significant value and predictive validity. This points towards the needs for explicit SEL programmes in schools and alludes that educators need evidence-informed practices to support the teaching of SEL.

2.10 Implementation Quality of SEL Programmes

While evidence in support of school based SEL programmes seems favourable, research has found that inconsistent and variable levels of implementation can impact negatively on programme outcomes (Durlak, 2016). Implementation quality refers to the degree to which programmes are implemented, as intended by the programme developers. According to research, the implementation quality is a critical predictor of programme outcomes and the overall effectiveness of an intervention (Dowling and Barry, 2021). In other words, when implementation quality of a programme is high, intervention effects are successful but when implementation quality is poor, programmes may fail to achieve intended outcomes (Dowling and Barry, 2021). This suggests that the implementation of evidence based SEL programmes in schools are not sufficient on their own to produce positive SEL outcomes. This points towards the need to investigate what methodologies or approaches can best support the delivery of these programmes in schools.

2.11 Current Social-Emotional Programmes

Education systems around the world have adopted varying approaches for the teaching of SEL in schools. Current SEL programmes contrast in terms of their aims, design, approach, and delivery. Perhaps this is due to different education systems, which in effect, can vary the degree of need, understanding and the implementation of SEL in schools. For example, most schools

in the United Kingdom have implemented the Social and Emotional Aspects Learning programme (SEAL). This programme is a comprehensive, whole-school approach to "promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and wellbeing of all who learn and work in schools" (DCSF, 2007:4). It focuses on the five SEL skills proposed in Goleman's (2006) model of EQ: self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. In a research evaluation study, it was found that this programme successfully strengthened relationships between students, emotional well-being was enhanced and social emotional skills such as communication skills and conflict resolution was improved (Hallam, 2009). It can be delivered as a whole school approach for the purpose of creating an SEL ethos or as a small group/1:1 intervention for children who require additional SEL support. This contrasts to the systemic, schoolwide approach to SEL that is taken in America.

In America, SEL is an integral part of education from preschool to high school. CASEL has invested significant time into designing SEL programmes in schools which explicitly teaches children to apply social and emotional skills inside and outside school. CASEL (2020) maintains that quality implementation of evidence-based, classroom programmes and practices are foundational elements of effective SEL. They believe that delivering SEL in schools requires more than the implementation of SEL programmes, a view that was previously argued by Dowling and Barry (2021). CASEL (2020) further maintains that including all relevant parties in a child's life is crucial to build children's SEL skills, adopting a more holistic and collaborative approach. Teachers as well as parents, are encouraged to model and practice their own SEL with the children. This implies that the creation of a SEL environment and teacher modelling are two important factors in the delivery of SEL in schools.

2.12 Social-Emotional Learning Programmes in Ireland

Fostering and promoting a positive sense of health and wellbeing in schools has long been recognized in Irish Curriculum. In Ireland, SEL programmes are encouraged to be delivered universally in schools in conjunction with the SPHE Curriculum (NCCA, 1999). However, there appears to be an undersupply of such in Ireland, particularly evidence-informed ones. Very few SEL programmes have been developed and evaluated and there is a lack of research assessing how implementation quality impacts programme outcomes. This absence of information on implementation could be detrimental to the future success and sustainability of SEL programmes in Ireland.

Unlike the United Kingdom and America, the term SEL is absent in Irish curricula. However, the values and skills that underpin SEL can be easily identified in the SPHE curriculum (NCCA, 1999). For example, the Strand 'Myself' "contributes to children establishing ways of thinking, feeling and acting, that can help to promote and maintain health and well-being both now and, in the future," (NCCA, 1999: 5). Additionally, the strand 'Myself and Others' focuses on "developing a sense of care and respect for other people and the facility for relating to and communicating effectively with others" (NCCA, 1999: 5). In the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, it is stated that successful wellbeing promotion in schools includes "children and young people accessing curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing" (DES, 2018: 21). This implies that there is more of an emphasis on promoting SEL through an integrated curricular approach in Ireland. While there are no explicit school based SEL programmes in Ireland, there are several programmes which support the delivery of the SPHE curriculum (NCCA, 1999). I have summarised these programmes briefly below (See Table 2.2 below).

Programme	Brief Description
Walk Tall Programme (PDST, 2016)	• Aims to give students the confidence, skills, attitudes, and knowledge to make healthy choices in their lives. • Content delivered through a variety of active learning strategies, all of which facilitate social engagement by pupils. Detailed lesson plans are provided to support the class teacher in delivery of the SPHE curriculum (1999a).
Stay Safe Programme (MacIntyre and Lawlor, 2016)	• Based on the following core elements, each of which is an integral part of the SPHE curriculum (1999a) and underlies social-emotional principles: 1. Nurturing children's self-esteem 2. Building children's confidence 3. Enabling children to be assertive 4. Helping children to identify and express their feelings
Weaving Well-being Programme (Foreman, 2016)	• Aims to provide enhanced opportunities to nurture children's well-being through a whole school approach. • Creates a positive school culture combined with the teaching social and emotional skills • Focus on teacher and student well-being in schools
Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009)	• Holistic approach of care and education for children and young people from birth to six years. • Focuses on the learning and development under 4 key themes of: Wellbeing, Identity and Belonging, Communication, Exploring and Thinking • Delivery through active, social interactions: play and drama • Relationship building is at the heart of Aistear's leading principles • Aims to support children's social-emotional language through active learning

Table 2. 2: Summary of Social-Emotional Learning Initiatives and Programmes

2.13 Active Learning

The notable commonality in all the programmes outlined above is the promotion of active learning as a teaching methodology. The methodology of active learning is significantly influenced by the work of Dewey, who was a firm believer in groups of people coming together to problem-solve in a peaceful way, through a process of "discussion, debate, and decision making" (Dewey, 1938: 78). He was an advocate for the progressive education theory, which as described by Dewey, should provide socially engaging learning experiences that are

developmentally appropriate for young children (Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1938) believed that effective education came primarily through social interactions and that the school setting should be considered a social institution. Similarly, it is outlined in the SPHE curriculum (1999) that skills such as self-awareness, empathy and self-regulation are best learned through active or experiential learning. It was reported that "students learned more and mastered skills better when training involved the students engaging in active rehearsal, followed by shaping and reinforcement" (NCCA: 1999: 8). It advocates for the provision of experiential learning in schools whereby children are given opportunities to socially interact with others and their environment. It further maintains that this allows children to better develop ownership over what they learn and be able "to transfer it to different situations" when they have been "actively involved in the learning process" (NCCA, 1999: 6). For active learning to take place, it is advised that teachers provide a supportive and caring environment, in which the child is encouraged to become self-directors of their own learning and in which each contribution is valued and appreciated (NCCA, 1999). This concept of creating a caring environment is supported by Noddings (1995), who states "by including themes of care and providing a caring environment, there is much to be gained, both academically and humanly" (Noddings, 1995: 676). This indicates that the creation of an active, caring environment and the role of the teacher is central to the delivery of SEL in schools.

2.14 The Role of the Teacher

Whilst the primary aim of this study is to find out what practices can best enhance student's social emotional development, the intention of this project is to improve my own teaching of SEL, for my own benefit and for the benefit of others (Mc Niff, 2002). Therefore, it is important to explore the literature pertaining to the role of the teacher. So far, much of the research in

SEL primarily focuses on the children and seems to overlook the role of the teacher and teacher's social-emotional competencies. Teachers work in an environment where they must handle emotions every day. By human nature, teachers have EQ naturally, but if a teacher has low EQ, the development of students' SEL could be affected (Goleman, 2012). The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice states that "the qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students" and "she/he can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values, and behaviour in all aspects of wellbeing education" (2018: 2). This view is supported by Goleman (2006) who maintains that it would be ideal if teachers had a well-developed EQ so that they could not only facilitate a positive atmosphere in the classroom but also influence students to enhance their own EQ.

Similarly, adult guidance was central to Froebel's notion of freedom in education, maintaining that "the adult played a significant role as a sensitive guide helping children to gain and use their freedom in worthwhile and mutually respectful ways" (Tovey, 2017:4). Froebel believed that helping children understand the consequences of their actions and the feelings of others, was of great importance in a child's holistic development (Tovey, 2017). This implies that the role of the teacher is influential in delivery of SEL to students.

2.15 Teacher's Social-Emotional Competence and Vulnerability

It is unquestionable that teachers can have a significant impact on student's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) recommend that SEL interventions should consider teachers' own SEL competence and wellbeing to help them implement SEL effectively. They explain that teachers' social-emotional competence and wellbeing can affect the classroom management strategies they use, the relationships they form with students, and

their ability to implement SEL programmes and practices (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). They further argue that these factors can subsequently contribute to a healthy classroom climate that leads to students' own academic and SEL success (Jennings and Greenburg, 2009). This is reinforced by Jones et al. (2013), who maintain that teachers' social-emotional competence and wellbeing strongly influence the learning context and the infusion of SEL into classrooms and schools. This supports the argument that the teacher's knowledge and delivery of SEL to students is not sufficient for effective SEL to take place in the classroom. This implies that a teacher's social-emotional competencies and wellbeing is instrumental in the teaching of SEL.

Teachers' social and emotional competence and wellbeing are reflected in their classroom behaviour and interactions with students. Palmer (1997) emphasizes the importance of teacher vulnerability. She states that teacher vulnerability can cause a disconnect from students, from subjects and from ourselves, if it is absent in practice. It can build a wall between inner truth and outer performance, and teacher can end playing "act the teacher's part" (Palmer: 1997:8) According to Bullough, teachers manage vulnerability in different ways and "these differences can have a significant impact on a teacher's identity, practice and students' development and learning" (2005: 23). Some teachers make themselves invulnerable for fear of failure or uncertainty, while others enjoy risking 'self' (Bullough, 2005). This implies that teacher vulnerability and teacher-student relationships can impact students' SEL in schools.

2.16 The Importance of Relationship Building

Reinforcing the importance of positive relationships is essential to the development of any school community. Positive relationships lay the foundation for cooperation, skill development and learning (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). According to Schonert-Reichl, warm classroom

environments and positive teacher-student relationships simultaneously promote academic and social-emotional learning (Schonert-Reichl, 2017: 141). Supporting this belief, Hopkins contends that "relationships matter for effective teaching and learning to take place" (2011: 2) and advises that the adult provides an environment which motivates children to interact with each other socially and emotionally. This form of environment is defined by Hopkins as a 'restorative classroom', "a place where relationships matter" (Hopkins, 2011: 6). In this restorative classroom, the teacher is a 'restorative teacher', a teacher that is aware of their own thoughts and feelings and "creates opportunities for everyone in the class to connect as much as possible" (Hopkins, 2011: 6). According to Hopkins, the role of the teacher is "to encourage children to communicate by listening to them, interpreting what they are saying, responding to them, and by modelling good communication" (Hopkins, 2011: 34).

This implies that the role of the teacher plays a crucial role in the delivery of SEL to students by promoting relationship building. Since relationships is my core value and the concept of being a 'restorative teacher' is the teacher I am striving to become, I was able to identify a connection between SEL and restorative practice (RP). Relationships is the core value underpinning both SEL and RP. For this reason, I will now examine the literature pertaining to restorative practice and its potential to deliver and enhance the teaching of SEL in schools.

2.17 Restorative Practice

In recent years, restorative practice (RP) has become the new watchword in education. Similar to SEL, literature in RP offers a multitude of definitions and approaches in various settings. RP emerged from the field of restorative justice, which evolved when members of the Maori community in New Zealand were dissatisfied with the ways their young people were dealt with

by the criminal justice system (Hopkins, 2011). Instead of punishment, they adopted 'restorative circles' as an approach to resolve conflict and restore relationships among affected parties. This practice has gained international interest in the past decade and has been adopted in many settings including education. RP is a new movement in schools that aims to empower students to develop social skills, resolve conflict and build sustainable relationships. It rejects the status quo of punitive discipline and social control of students which has long been lingering in school policy. At the core, restorative practice in schools is about building relationships and creating positive school communities.

2.18 Reactive and Proactive Approaches to Restorative Practice

There appears to exist confusion regarding the implementation of RP in schools. At present, RP can be delivered in schools as a reactive approach, a proactive approach or as an integrated approach. The International Institute for Restorative Practices (Wachtel, 2005) distinguishes between the terms RP and restorative justice by stating that "Restorative justice is reactive, consisting of formal or informal responses to crime and other wrongdoing after it occurs". In contrast, RP is a proactive practice and is defined as "the science of restoring and developing social capital, social discipline, emotional wellbeing and civic participation through participatory learning and decision-making" (Wachtel, 2005: 86). This implies that RP in schools can be proactive- aimed at building up community, or reactive- aimed at repairing harm after wrongdoing takes place (Marcucci, 2021). In schools where RP is implemented as a reactive approach, it features in codes of behaviour and anti-bullying policies, for the purpose of addressing harm and resolving conflict between students. In contrast, schools that have implemented it as a proactive approach, focus on creating a positive relationship building environment or ethos. Therefore, there is currently no universal or 'one fit all' approach for the

implementation of RP in schools. Perhaps this is due to the varying needs and contexts of schools. Regardless, more research is needed on the implementation and impact of 'restorative pedagogy', which includes specific strategies aimed at building relationships and ensuring that all students have opportunities to participate in relational learning schools.

2.19 Restorative Pedagogy

Restorative pedagogy embraces an inclusive vision of education where the voice of all students is valued. It moves students toward active instead of passive roles, and provides students with opportunities to solve practical problems (Pointer et al., 2020). The problem-solving aspect of restorative pedagogy often relates to resolving interpersonal conflicts. While this reactive stance is important in schools, more attention is needed on the implementation of RP as a proactive approach. An approach that focuses more on the development of student's relationships and SEL. According to Stowe RP is a 'way of being' and should be understood as a proactive, values-based practice which aims to support the development of both teacher-student and student-student relationships, by developing students' self-awareness, empathy, communication, and conflict resolution skills (Stowe, 2016). As presented earlier, these are all notable SEL skills (Goleman, 2006). This proactive approach shifts the emphasis from managing behaviour in schools to focussing on the nurturing of relationships and development of SEL is a paradigm shift away from the traditional punitive approaches in schools and a turn towards enhancing teachers and students' SEL. For this reason, I implemented RP in this research as a proactive, values-based approach, as I felt it had the liable potential to answer my research questions (See Figure 2.1).

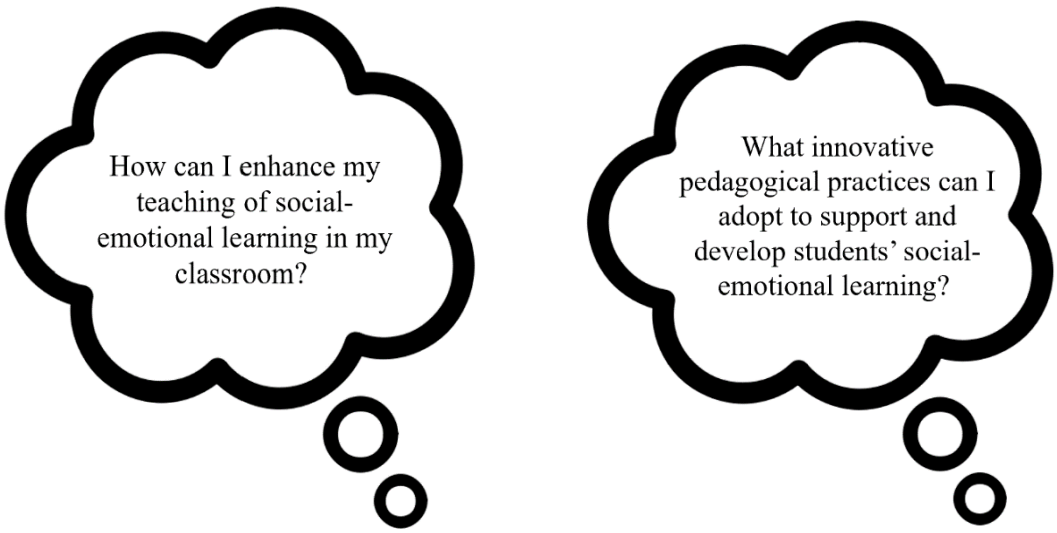

Figure 2. 1: Research Questions

2.20 Types of Restorative Practices

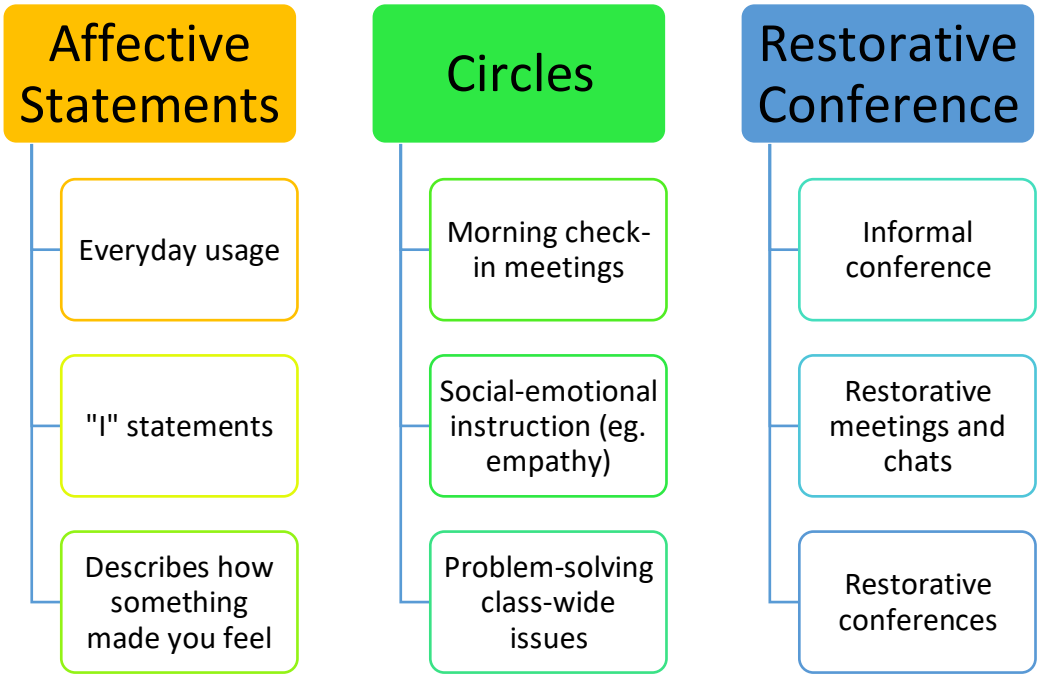

Figure 2. 2: Types of Restorative Practices

In schools, RP is typically implemented through a range of restorative practices (See Figure 2.2). There are several restorative techniques at present and the diversity of research on how they have been applied is testimony to this. Wachtel (2012) places restorative practice on a continuum, which ranges from 'informal' to 'formal' practices. He argues that some of the most informal types of restorative practices can include statements or questions that encourage people to reflect on their actions and how they affect other people. More formal approaches include group conferencing or restorative circles. The IIRP (2010: 5) places these five main strands of restorative practices on a spectrum, ranging from the least to the most structured and formal (See Figure 2.3).

Figure 2. 3: Restorative Practice Continuum (Wachtel, 2012)

According to Wachtel and McCold (2004), the key role of RP is restoring and building relationships primarily through active listening and exchange of emotion that creates emotional bonds between students. This implies that RP is best accomplished through cooperative, active learning processes that include teachers and students. Examples of restorative practices involving collaborative social activity include developing restorative language and restorative conversations, peer mediation, classroom circles, checking-in and checking-out circles for students and staff, small and large group restorative meetings, formal restorative conferences

and restorative ethos building. In an action research study, Stowe found that the inculcation of RP in a primary school setting improved relationships, promoted empathy and developed emotional literacy skills among the participants (Stowe, 2016). This implies that RP may develop the lifelong social emotional literacy skills that are essential for well-being (O'Brien, 2008).

2.21 Restorative Circles

Restorative circles are considered a part of the broader field of restorative practices, which has been expanding in recent years, due to increasing demands to enhance social connectedness (Hopkins, 2011). Although there is little evidence-informed research on restorative circles, they are the most established restorative practice with specific protocols that distinguish them from other circle processes. For example, restorative circles can be employed to allow students and educators "to check in with themselves and one another first thing in the morning or to foster significant daily transitions" (Tacker and Hoover, 2011: 60) They can also be created to allow students to check out by reflecting on their day, prior to leaving a classroom. Additionally, circles can be employed by educators to teach meaningful or complex curriculum content as they provide a safe space for expression and exchange to take place (Tacker and Hoover, 2011). All restorative circles are designed and run by 'circle-keepers', typically the teacher and there is a talking piece that gives the holder permission to speak. The circle-keeper typically presents an affective statement or question and then passes the talking piece around the circle to allow for each participant to share (See Appendix N for example affective statements and questions).

According to research carried out by Kervick et al. (2019: 600), "restorative conferences and circles promote supportive relationships and increase authentic connection between adults and students and between students and their peers". Similarly, Macready (2009: 9) states that

restorative circles "provide students with opportunities to learn about the views and priorities of other people and can create a sense of community among students". These circles are built on caring relationships and provide opportunities for meaningful social and emotional participation (Berkowitz, 2017). This implies that RP circles could be adopted as a pedagogical practice to enhance SEL and relationship building in schools, which is the key aim of this research.

2.22 Restorative Practice in the Curricular Context

At present restorative practice is not featured in Irish school curricula. However, it is recommended as a continuous professional development course for teachers and is recommended to be incorporated in schools as a whole school approach. Hopkins (2003) argues that restorative practice needs to be incorporated into the school's curriculum. It is clear that restorative practice fits with several aims and methodologies promoted in the SPHE Curriculum (1999). For example, the use of circles is mentioned as 'circle work' in the SPHE Curriculum (1999) as a teaching methodology, a practice that is identical to restorative circles. Depending on the need to bring people together, circles are a valuable practice that serve numerous purposes in our school communities. Always guided by the same values and principles, circles are employed by teachers for the purpose of reflecting, conflict resolution, brainstorming, problem-solving or community building. As mentioned in the SPHE Teacher Guidelines, sitting in a circle formation "encourages good communication and reflects the principles of sharing, equality and inclusiveness and a sense of caring for each other" (NCCA, 1999b: 83). Additionally, it highlights that in circles, children are given an opportunity to contribute to discussion and are encouraged to listen to the viewpoints of others which promotes empathy (NCCA, 1999b). This implies that restorative circles could create a caring, active learning environment that facilitates the teaching of SEL.

2.23 Restorative Language

When implementing RP, it is encouraged that a shared 'restorative language' is used by students and teachers (CDI, 2013). The Childhood Development Initiative recommended that "A consistent approach within schools requires that all teachers work with pupils in a restorative way and requires the use of a 'shared language' (CDI, 2013: 56). Research found that the use of a restorative language was effective in working with young people as it allowed them to develop an emotional bank of words (CDI, 2013 :41). It was envisaged that restorative practices such as restorative circles could offer a "common language" whereby people could share an agreed approach to the expression of feelings and the resolution of conflicts (CDI, 2013: 12). At present, this type of language is being used in schools in the form of restorative questions for the purpose of resolving conflict between students (See Figure 2.4).

Figure 2. 4: Restorative Questions used for Conflict Resolution

Restorative language is also used in the form of affective statements, whereby teachers are encouraged to model the language of emotions and provide students with opportunities to practice these statements. This language encourages the school community to move away from using blaming language and transition towards more relational language which will in effect, influence and promote SEL and relationship building in schools. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) contend that developing a common social-emotional language when implementing RP is essential. They maintain that one of the most recognisable aspects of any organisation's culture is the language used by management, staff, students, teachers and parents (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005: 10). This alludes that it is essential to use and model a shared 'restorative language' with students and staff when implementing restorative practices in schools. A language that can be used in any social interaction with an emphasis on the expression of thoughts, feelings and emotions.

2.24 Social-Emotional Language

As outlined earlier, social-emotional language was a positive outcome of implementing restorative practices in schools (Stowe, 2016). However, it doesn't appear to feature as the key aim of these practices. In the PLC, it is stated that "Language is our chief means of communicating with ourselves and others and it is key to the development of the child as a person" (NCCA, 2015: 18). Similarly, the SPHE Curriculum highlights that SPHE as a subject, provides a context in which children are provided with opportunities to "develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to the social, personal and health aspects of their lives (NCCA, 1999a: 7). Therefore, the exploration of social-emotional language is central in the PLC and SPHE curriculum. In the SPHE curriculum it is stated that "children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use

language in their relationships and in their daily interactions" (NCCA, 1999a: 7). Additionally, it outlines the need for the explicit teaching of vocabulary associated with feelings and the language of emotion. By explicit I mean the explicit teaching of vocabulary didactically by the teacher. What the curriculum does not explicitly promote however, is the implicit or everyday learning of a social-emotional language. By implicit, I refer to the process of acquiring social-emotional language and skills actively without conscious awareness. In this way, social-emotional language is learned through observation, exposure to teacher or student modelling and immersion in a SEL environment.

2.25 Using De Bono's Six Thinking Hats as a Restorative Language Tool

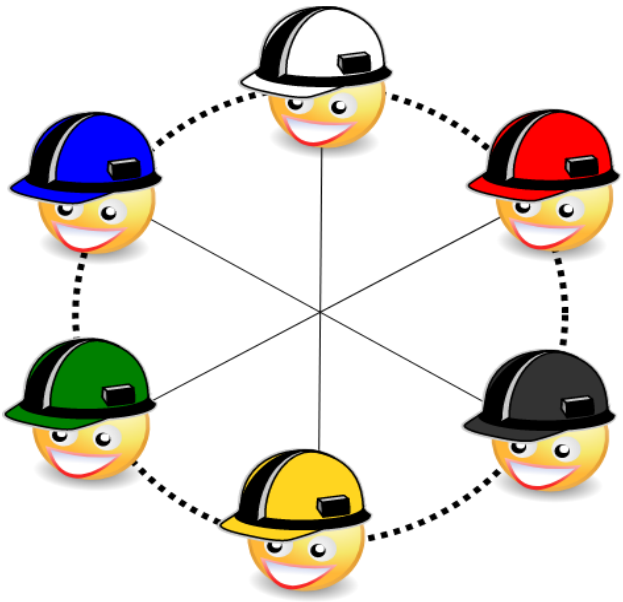

Figure 2. 5: De Bono's Six Thinking Hats (1999)

As previously highlighted, using a daily, common language among all members of the school community is essential when implementing restorative practices. As such, a shared social-emotional language or restorative language framework was created during this research study, particularly because a need for it emerged, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4. The

restorative language framework tool was created using Edward De Bono's (1985) Six Thinking Hats (See Figure 2.7). In the literature, there existed a correlation between Mayer and Salovey's mixed model of EQ (1990), Goleman's understanding of EQ (1995) and De Bono's Six Thinking Hats Critical Thinking framework (1999). De Bono's Six Thinking Hats (1999) is a methodological tool that incorporates both the integration of thinking and emotion (Mayer and Salovey, 1990) and promotes EQ skills such as Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation and Empathy (Goleman, 1995). The metaphor of the Six Thinking Hats demonstrates different types of thinking. For example, the function of the red hat is directly associated with the SEL skill 'self-awareness' as it requires one to identify and express feelings. (See Appendix K for a description of each hat).

The function of the tool also requires you to change perspectives which is linked to the skill of empathy. Although it is not a well-known tool, it is widely used in schools as a teaching strategy to scaffold the teaching of critical thinking skills, creative thinking and problem-solving skills (De Bono, 1999). Mc Aleer (2006: 44) stated several benefits of using Six Thinking Hats in the classroom which include skills relating to SEL (See Figure 2.6). Even though it has not been used in schools for the purpose of SEL, the outlined benefit of the framework implies that it has the potential to be used as social-emotional language framework.

1. They promote self-awareness and self-regulation.

2. Interdisciplinary connections integrate the curriculum.

3. They create awareness that there are multiple perspectives on the issue at hand.

4. The visual element of the hats makes it easier to understand and use.

Figure 2. 6: Benefits of Six Thinking Hats in the Classroom (Mc Aleer, 2006)

2.26 Conclusion

After having reviewed the relevant literature, I am inspired by the potential synergy between the fields of SEL and RP. Research in both fields clearly acknowledges the need for the active learning and the modelling of 'a common language' in schools to support the development of student's social-emotional learning. This literature review revealed that this can be synthesised through the promotion of positive relationships, teacher modelling and the adoption of active learning strategies. Restorative practices such as restorative circles appear to facilitate all three elements. According to researchers Jennings and Greenberg "the quality of teacher-student relationships, student and classroom management, and effective social and SEL programme implementation all mediate classroom and student outcomes" (2009, 492). This means that restorative circles, an SEL programme and De Bono's Six Thinking Hats (1985) could potentially be adopted as a proactive pedagogical approach, to develop the teaching of SEL in schools. It is implied from the literature that restorative practice is the missing jigsaw piece to expand and support students' SEL and EQ, and moreover the missing piece that could enable me to live to my values as a teacher (See Figure 2.7).

Figure 2. 7: Linking Emotional intelligence, Social-Emotional Learning and Restorative Practice

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods that were used throughout the research process and outlines the design of the research. The relationship between the chosen research methodology 'self-study action research' and the focus of the research social-emotional learning (SEL) is examined. Following the discussion of self-study action research, my research timeline and intervention is explained. The data collection tools that were used throughout the research are outlined and a rationale for why they were chosen is discussed. Finally, the ethical considerations and limitations pertaining to this research are addressed. There is discussion around the topics of subjectivity, validity, reliability, and reflexivity. The methods which are essential to protect the participants of the research are explored, particularly the concerns that come with conducting research with young children.

3.2 Research Context

This research was conducted in a class of twenty-eight 4th class children in an English medium, senior national mainstream school which accommodates children from 3rd to 6th class. Out of the 30 children, 28 children between the ages of 9 and 10 consented to participate in the study. There are 602 pupils in the school: 315 boys and 287 girls. It is a middle-class school in which there is a mix of pupils from affluent and low-income socio-economic backgrounds. The research was carried out over a 20-week period in two 10-week research cycles from January 2022 to May 2022. The project evaluated the effects of a classroom intervention over the 20-week time frame. The intervention was carried out in 1-hour slots 5 times a week. The

intervention included restorative circles, curricular lessons based on a piloted restorative practice programme (Stowe, 2016), restorative circles and the implementation of a SEL language tool.

3.3 Research Methodology

There are many methodological approaches researchers can adopt, depending on the context and aims of the research. The research methodology adopted in this study was action research. After having read the literature and examined the positivist, interpretivist and action research models, it became clear that action research was the most appealing and the best facilitated my research questions. According to Swann and Pratt (2007), it is important that the researcher allows the research questions to direct the methodology and not the other way around. Action research is a research method particularly suited in a classroom, with educators perceiving it as a practical research method "to investigate their own teaching and their students' learning inside and outside the classroom" (Nolen & Putten, 2007: 401). Since my research aimed to investigate and enhance my teaching of SEL in the classroom, I felt action research best fitted into my everyday teaching practice.

3.4 Action Research

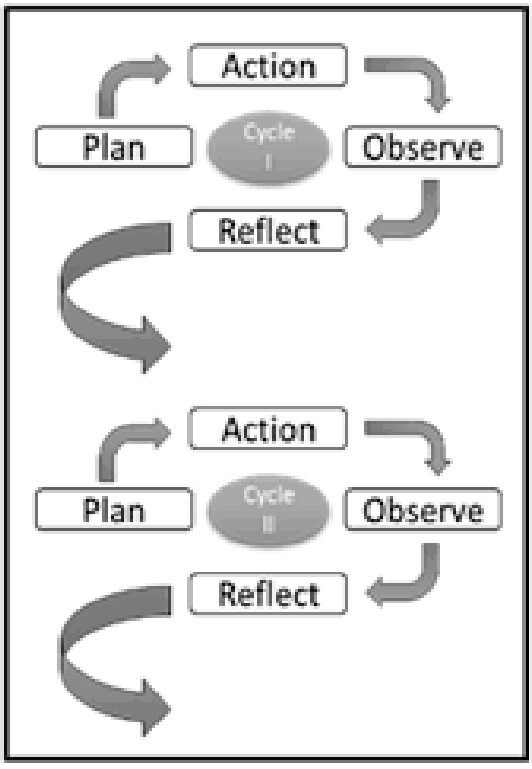

Figure 3. 1: Kemmis & Taggart (2014) Action Research model

When I first read literature on action research, I learned that it had multiple definitions and interpretations. Initially, I assumed that it involved applying a cycle of steps to the research project. I assumed that regardless of which action research approach was taken, the fundamental principles and steps were the same. This included reflecting on a situation, identifying an area of improvement, taking action to stimulate improvement, gathering data, and reviewing the chosen situation (Sullivan et al., 2016). Mc Niff defined action research as a "practitioner-based research which facilitates "learning in and through action and reflection**"** (Mc Niff: 2013: 24) to bring about change and improvement at a local level" (Mc Niff, 2002: 6). My research is best represented by Kemmis and Taggart's (2014) action research model as it demonstrates the process of two cycles, which is identical to the two cycles in this research

study. (See Figure 3.1). In saying this, after having engaged in the action research process, I have learned that action research is more meaningful than the application of a research model.

Action research is regarded as a powerful form of educational research which involves improving your own learning, which is associated with the continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning of a teacher (Sullivan et al., 2016). It is also underpinned by the concept of teacher agency, the idea of working purposefully to bring about change and influence the work of others (Priestley et al., 2015). Cohen and Mannion define it as "a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention" (2000: 186), which is essentially what occurred throughout the course of this research.

3.5 Action Research as a Living Experience

Mc Niff (1999) takes issue with action research being discussed as a process to be applied to one's practice. Her decision to reject this interpretation of action research is clear as she contends that "this perspective tends to distort the underpinning values of action researchers such as autonomy, independent thinking and accountability" (Mc Niff, 2013: 24). For McNiff, action research is "an enquiry by the self into the self, with others acting as co-researchers and critical learning partners" (Mc Niff: 2013: 23). This indicates that the researcher researches themselves in relation to others, meaning it is a social process of people interacting and learning from one another to better understand their practices and taking purposeful actions to improve them (Mc Niff, 2013: 25). Unlike other forms of research, researchers can engage in a "living experience" that allows them to identify and demonstrate their values in practice with the

intention of making them public (Mc Niff, 2013). I adopted this meaningful approach to action research as an aim of this research was to discover if I was living to my values. According to Sullivan et al., this constitutes "a living, authentic form of continuing professional development that has the potential to change both the practice and the practitioner irrevocably' (2016: 25). Its exploration of values, ontological and epistemological views, and methodological approach best suited the aims of my inquiry, which was to make students' holistic development a priority in the classroom.

3.6 Critical Reflection in Action Research

Influenced by the work of Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983), teachers reflect daily on their practice by observing, questioning, and recording what works well and what does not work well. Like action research, Dewey (1933) maintained that reflective practice must be collaborative in nature and should involve teachers and students learning together. Action research prompts the researcher to critically examine and question one's beliefs, values, and practices which requires the researcher to be critically reflective in the process. Sullivan et al. (2016) explain that self-study action research is a deeply values-based approach to critical reflection on one's own work, thereby emphasizing the importance of the reflection process when carrying out action research. Stevens and Cooper (2009) describe reflection as a complex process which aims to generate learning from experience, which implies that reflection is a vital part of understanding the findings of the study.

According to Ebbutt (1985), the process of action research was incomplete without reflecting on the actions taken. This complements the work of Schön who said that the researcher should

have “an interest in understanding the situation, but it is in the service of his interest in change” (1983: 14). This implies that the research should reflect on the learning that arises throughout various stages of the research before implementing change. In light of this reflective process, I chose to design and create my own model of critical reflection. This model was adapted from Gibb’s reflective model (1988) and De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats (1985) (See Figure 3.2 and 3.3). This allowed me to critically examine my actions in practice and to develop a better understanding of why I changed my research actions. I used the thinking hats to structure and focus my thinking which enabled me to engage in more meaningful reflective practice throughout the action research cycle.

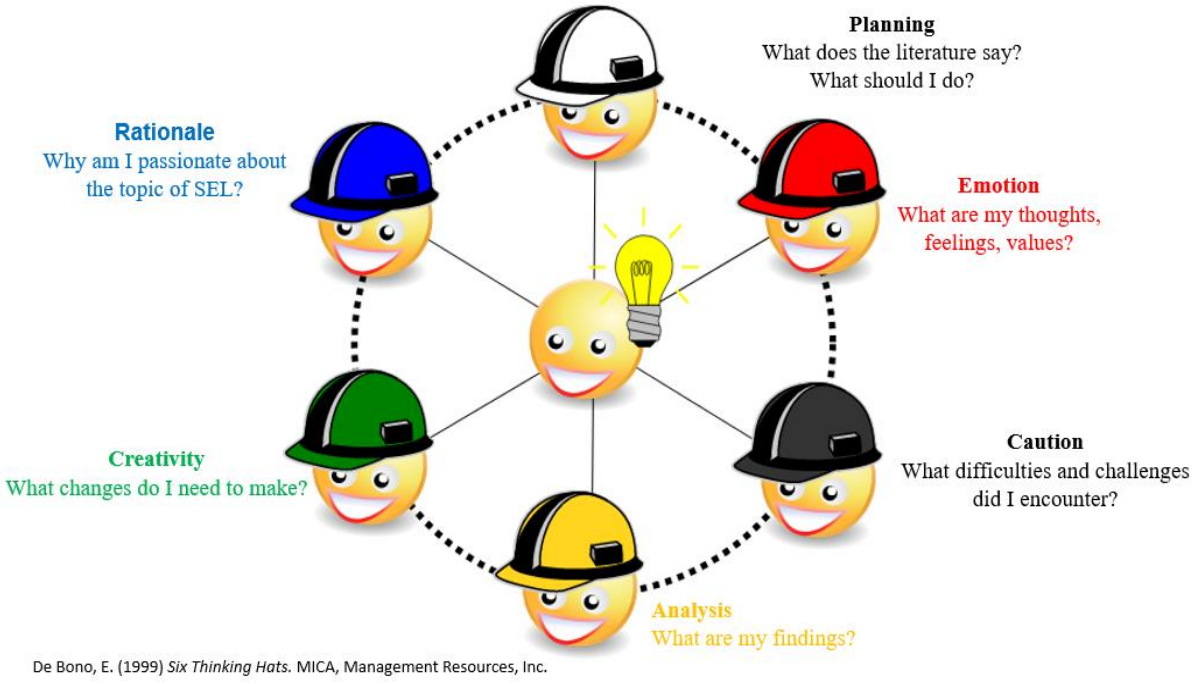

Figure 3. 2: My Action Research Design adapted from Gibb's Reflective Cycle (1988) and De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats (1999)

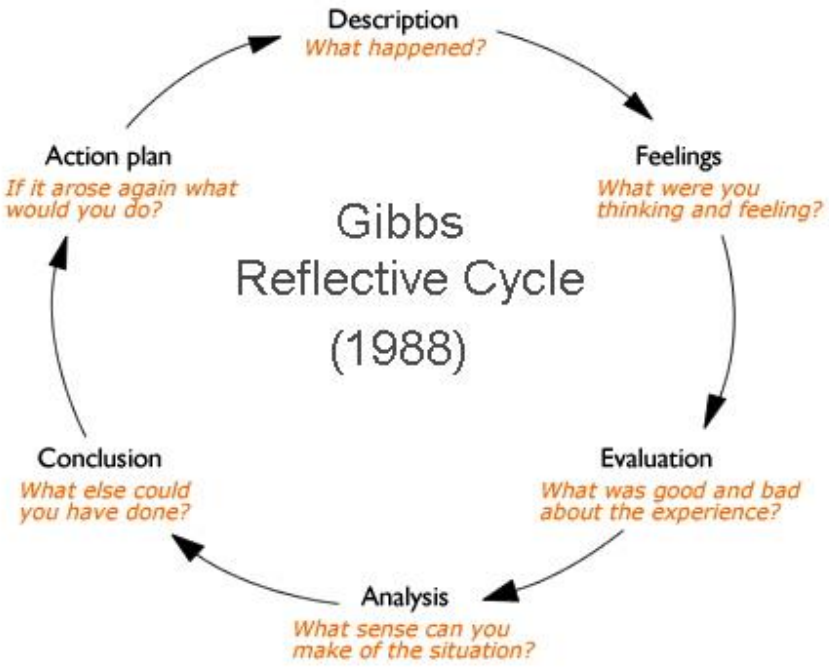

Figure 3. 3: Gibb's Reflective Cycle (1988)

3.7 Self-Study Action Research

As previously highlighted, action research embraces the idea that the researcher is informed by their 'self', their own values, norms and assumptions when carrying out their research (Sullivan et al., 2016). As such, it became clear that self-study action research best suited this study. Self-study action research is unique as it places the emphasis on the researcher studying the role they play in their own practice (Coia & Taylor, 2009). Sullivan et al. (2016) explain that in self-study action research "you are studying you in collaboration with others such as your pupils and colleagues, with a view to becoming a better practitioner" (Sullivan et al, 2016: 28). This means that the key focus of self-study is on the researcher improving their own practice while including the perspectives of others. According to Whitehead (2004), it is crucial that this form of research is informed by relevant literature, open for validation and includes critical and collaborative reflection (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). This implies that it is important to

incorporate the theoretical frameworks of reflective practitioners such as Moon (2004) and Brookfield's four lenses of critical reflection (2017) so as to invite multiple perspectives into the research (See Figure 3.4). Therefore, I have chosen to adopt self-study action research due to its collaborative, self-reflective and values-based principles, which are all key elements of this study. They will serve as crucial components in the process of answering my research questions and generating new knowledge.

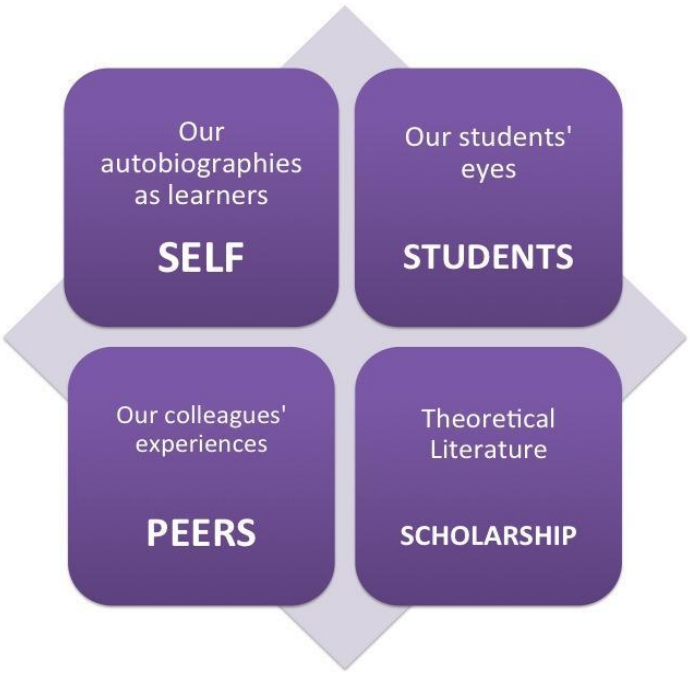

Figure 3.4: Brookfield's Four Lenses of Critical Reflection (2007)

3.22 Validity and Rigour in Action Research

Educational researchers emphasize the importance of replicability and generalization in validating research. Therefore, it is important that the action research study being carried out is accurate and trustworthy. Sullivan et al. (2016) explains that cross-examining your work from a variety of viewpoints or perspectives is an effective way to show both the accuracy and

validity of your claim to knowledge. This is also highlighted by Cohen et al. (2018) who affirm triangulation offers an opportunity to comprehensively detail the changes that have been made, while also presenting a more balanced picture of the research. Therefore, I have learned that the most visible way of assessing the quality of action research is not through the traditional view of replicability and generalization, but through authenticity (Winter, 2002). For Winter, an action research study has this authenticity when it has a "genuine voice" which "belongs to those whose life-worlds are being described" (2002: 145).

According to Sullivan et al., (2016) a key source of validation is having a critical friend and validation group to share your research with throughout the process. In inviting others to view and interpret your work, it can add authenticity and validity to the analysis as it enables you to "see a situation through other's eyes" (LaBoskey, 2004: 847). I ensured validity by meeting with my critical friend and my validation group throughout the research process. McNiff stated that any researcher who is making a claim to new knowledge must, "provide supporting evidence to show in what way the practice has improved and by what criteria they are making the claim" (2013: 136). To establish this claim to knowledge, the research was supported by relevant literature and was presented to my colleagues, peers, and relevant assessors at Maynooth University. For a data collection tool to be valid, the data collected must be relevant to the purpose and intention of the research. Validity was ensured by using appropriate data collection tools. Appropriate and accessible language was used in surveys and no leading questions were asked. To ensure rigour, it was important that I researcher used a research model as a basis for planning, reflecting on and applying research actions.

3.23 Ethical Considerations

Collaboration in action research leads to ethical issues (Creswell, 2012). The British Educational Research Association [BERA] (2018: 5) states that, "educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research; and academic freedom". Ethical concerns that were important in this research were: anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, assent and reflexivity. At the initiation stage, I distributed information sheets to the principal and board of management which outlined the principles guiding my work and I requested their consent (See Appendix H). To obtain informed consent, I distributed information sheets to the children and explicitly outlined what their participation in the study involved. Baines and Taylor (2013) mention that participation must be voluntary and based on understanding adequate information about what participation will involve and the possible consequences of participation. Since my participants were children legally under-age, I obtained both the children's assent and parental consent by distributing consent letters (See Appendix B and C).

My role as researcher was to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of my participants, Robson (1993). As such, I formed explicit agreements with the class regarding the ownership, collection and interpretation of data. All data gathered was kept strictly confidential with all hard documents secured in a filing cabinet, to which only I had access to, before being typed up and stored on a password encrypted USB stick. For the purpose of data collection, Zeni maintained that to ensure anonymity "it is wise to use pseudonyms" (1998: 15). Therefore, I decided to code the children's names using numbers. Reflection and reflexivity are central to this study. According to Ripamonti et al., reflection involves taking yourself outside the social world and analysing it from an objective glance (2015: 57) while reflexivity is understood as

"questioning what is taken for granted in one's own and other's beliefs and actions" (Ripamonti et al., 2015: 57). To address the bias in this qualitative research design, I kept a reflexive journal in which I logged any preconceptions or subjectivities. This was a key contributor during the final analysis as it aided the elimination of bias which could have negatively influenced my findings.

3.8 Epistemological and Ontological Stance

Self-study action research invites you to identify your values, as previously highlighted. Before making a valid claim to new knowledge it was important that I became aware of my epistemological and ontological values.

3.9 Epistemological Values

Epistemology raises the question of how knowledge is constructed and sustained. Mc Niff (2013) described epistemology as how we view knowledge and the process of acquiring it, while Foucault and Gordon (1980) viewed knowledge as power, not something that we impart on children. Freire (1970) went further to say that knowledge in education must be a democratic and dialogical process, meaning questioning and understanding the world was not enough, that education should lead to action as well. I agree with Freire's (1970) understanding of knowledge as a 'praxis', a combination of action with serious reflection. This reflective participation takes place in dialogue with others. For this reason, the adoption of Freire's (1970) method of 'conscientization centres' or learners coming together in 'culture circles' was adopted throughout this research as an approach to construct new learning. My students, critical friends and I engaged in dialogue, learning with and from each other socially, experientially

and culturally in a circle. The reciprocity of teacher-student with students-teachers' roles throughout the research process means that students teach teachers as teachers teach students. Dialogue will therefore encourage each participant to teach, learn and construct knowledge together. This idea is supported by Buber (1984) who maintains that knowledge should be co-constructed and should value the contribution of the children in the pursuit of learning.

McAteer (2013) argues that while most positivist research views knowledge as something scientifically proven, action research looks to challenge rationally held beliefs around the construction of knowledge. As previously mentioned, I view knowledge as something that is co-created within social and dialogical processes. For this reason, the research project can also be underpinned by Wenger's notion of a 'community of practice', a practice that focuses on a social theory of learning. For Wenger, learning is conceptualized as social participation where people come together to actively engage in "practices of social communities" and to construct "identities in relation to these communities" (Wenger 1998, 4). This idea of social participation features in this research as it explores how I can support the SEL of my students. By undertaking self-study action research, I challenged and developed my own understanding of knowledge to generate my own living educational theory (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006).

3.10 Ontological Values

Ontology is concerned with how the researcher views other people and their own position within the research. Bullough and Pinnegar (2004: 319) state that "one's being in and towards the world should be a central feature of any discussion of the value of self-study research". Whitehead and McNiff (2006: 86) describe how in a living approach to educational action

research, “the researcher’s ontological values can transform into an educational commitment”. Sullivan et al, reinforce this idea by saying “the values we hold as educators imbue every action and interaction of our day and colour the observations and perceptions we make” (2016: 60). As such, I can relate to Nodding’s (2013) commitment to the value of care in education. I have always valued the importance of attending to the needs of the ‘whole child’ (Froebel, 1826). This is an approach to learning that emphasizes the importance of the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of children. This holistic development of the child is encompassed in the ethos of all schools. The impact that teachers can have on the students in their care is instrumental to their social-emotional development. I agree with Noddings when she says (2013: 186) “the student is infinitely more important than the subject matter.” (2013: 186) which is why I have a keen interest in the fields of SEL, EQ and RP, which was outlined in Chapter 1. By adopting a care-based approach in my practice, I am putting the child’s holistic wellbeing at the forefront in my classroom while facilitating human flourishing (Noddings, 1984), which is a key aim of this research study.

3.11 Qualitative Research

For this research project, I considered what would be the best research method to adopt when obtaining data from my research participants. Having read literature on various research methods, I learned that there exists what Gage (1989: 4) calls “paradigm wars” between qualitative and quantitative research. Due to the observation and analyzation of values, reflections and feelings in this study, I chose to engage in qualitative research as it facilitates the gaining of direct experiences within a setting, to study “individual’s values, self-interpretation and representation of their experiences” (Opie, 2004: 8). Additionally, it involved the use of words rather than numbers (Bryman, 2008) which is applicable to this study

due to the open-ended nature of my data collection tools such as reflective journaling and observation. This interpretivist approach I chose to adopt was crucial as it assessed learners "self-reported changes in knowledge, skills, confidence, attitudes, or behaviours" over a fixed period, which best suited the aims of my research (Klatt & Taylor-Powell, 2005).

Although the abundance of research methods in self-study is broad and varied, the majority is qualitative in nature. For Vanassche and Kelchtermans, self-study privileges the use of qualitative research methods since the purpose of self-study action research is "articulating, refining and understanding one's professional expertise and practices" (2015: 508). Since the data collected in this study will be based on the researcher's and participants' experiences and practices, qualitative research tools best suited the aims of my inquiry. Furthermore, I believed that adopting a qualitative approach would create a more accurate picture of what was happening in the classroom, capturing the children's voices and social interactions. Therefore, the following qualitative data tools were used in this study: observation, teacher and student reflective journals, surveys and students' work.

3.12 Research Intervention

The following figures below demonstrate the timeline of the action research cycle (See Figure 3.5), the research actions carried out prior to the research and the design of the research intervention (See Figure 3.6 and 3.7)

Figure 3.5: Research Timeline

Figure 3.6: Research Actions Pre-Cycle 1

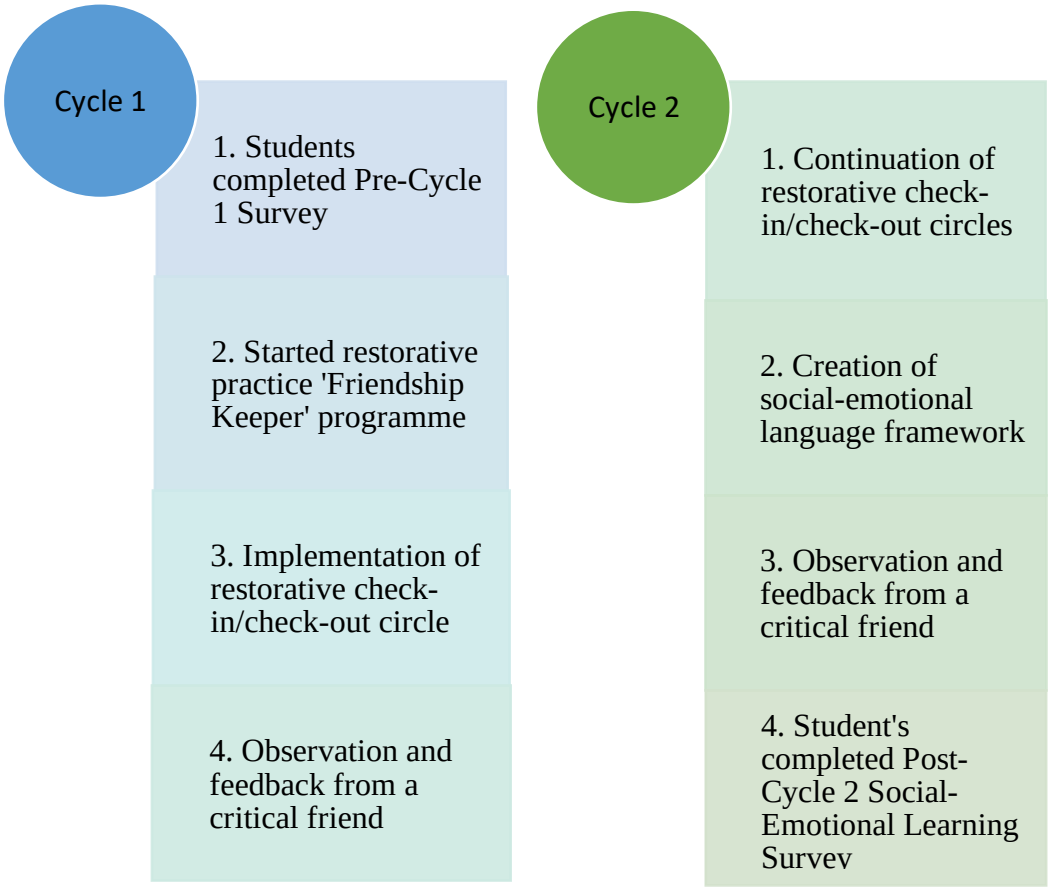

Figure 3.7: Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Research Intervention

Briefly outlined below are the research actions that were implemented during the two cycles of the research intervention.

3.13 Check-In and Check-Out Circles

Restorative circles in the form of 'Check-In' and 'Check-Out Circles' were adopted into my everyday teaching practice. This involved sitting in a circle and with the class and giving everyone an opportunity to identify and express their feelings first thing in the morning and before they left school in the afternoon. The children identified their feelings and energy levels on a scale of 1-10: 1 being sad/low in energy and 10 being happy and energetic. The aim was to introduce, model and promote an environment of SEL daily in the classroom. Check-In and Check-Out circles were used every day for a total of 30 minutes. Restorative Circles were also used for the delivery of the restorative practice SEL programme.

3.14 Restorative Practice 'Friendship Keeper' Programme

Lesson	Learning objectives
Fair	● Compare equality and equity ● Identify ways to practice equity
Respect	● Expressing respectful communication with ourselves and others
Inclusive	● Identify ways to include others
Empathy	● Identify the qualities of empathy ● Communicate with others using empathetic language 'Giraffe talk'
Nurture	● Identify feelings and emotions that underlie behaviour
Did you Giraffe?	● Use emotional literacy to communicate with others when engaged in conflict
Safe	● Identify the roots of anger

Table 3. 2: Values and Learning Objectives of The Friendship Keeper's Programme

A newly launched restorative practice programme called 'Friendship Keeper Programme', specifically designed by Michelle Stowe (2016) for 3rd to 6th class primary school students was delivered to the students over the course of two research cycles. This 'Friendship Keepers Values Light the Way' is a guided 10 lesson programme which is linked to the SPHE curriculum's (1999a) strand units 'Myself', 'Myself and Others', 'Myself and the Wider Community'. It is learning outcome based and learning intentions led with each lesson examining a different value in order of the acronym FRIENDS (See Table 3.2).

In this research, it was implemented as a resource for the explicit teaching of SEL values, language and skills. The programme was delivered in three 1-hour lesson weekly, exploring a

new value each week. According to Stowe (2016) being a 'friendship keeper' is about building positive relationships and using emotional literacy to effectively communicate with others. It fosters restorative skills including basic communication skills: "active listening; the ability both to express feelings and needs and to encourage others to do the same; interpersonal emotional literacy; relationship building and conflict resolution skills" (Hopkins 2006: 5). The first half of the programme was delivered in Cycle 1 and the latter in Cycle 2. It was delivered using restorative circles, affective questioning and affective statements. These practices served as key methodologies in the delivery of SEL, which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

3.15 Social-Emotional Language Tool

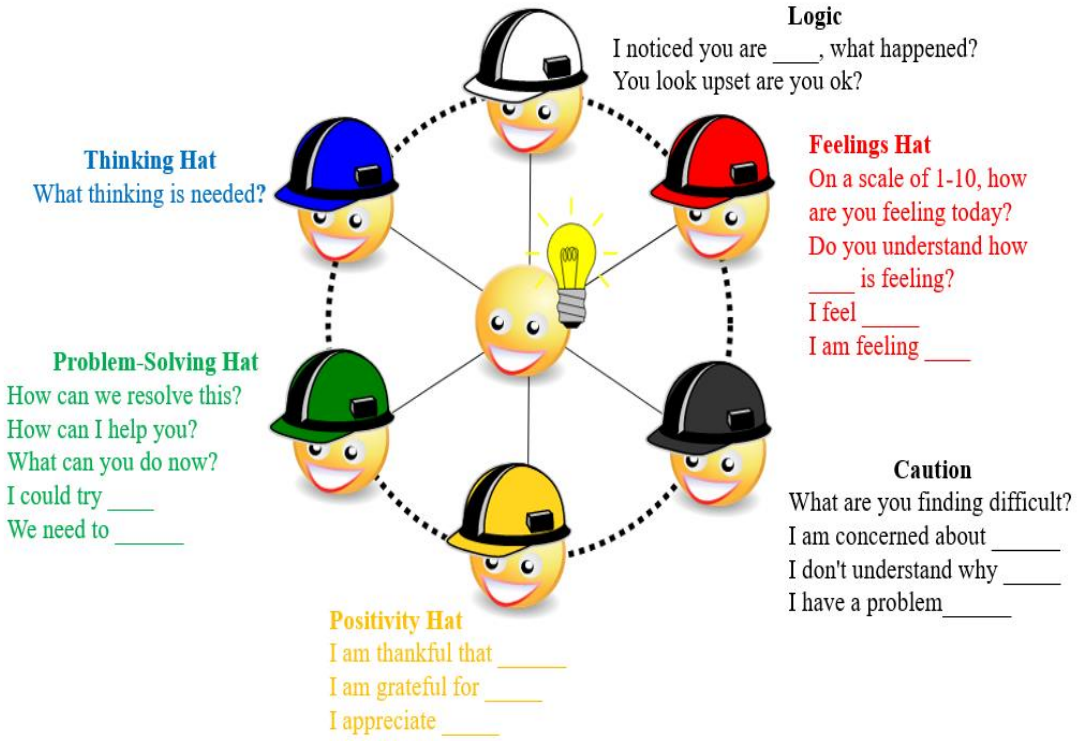

Figure 3. 8: Social-Emotional Language Tool adapted from De Bono's Six Thinking Hats (1999)

At the beginning of Cycle Two, a SEL language tool was created and designed collaboratively with the students using De Bono's Six Thinking's Hats framework (1999). The tool was used during restorative check in/check out circles, during the delivery of the Friendship Keepers programme and when impromptu teacher-student conferencing opportunities arose in the classroom. It was used as a restorative language tool and was created collaboratively with the students using De Bono's Six Thinking's Hats framework (1999). Social-emotional language and vocabulary was assigned to each coloured hat (See Figure 3.8). This multi-faceted approach to teaching and modelling social-emotional language catered and differentiated for children with varying social emotional needs and emotional literacy levels.

3.16 Data Collection

As discussed earlier, triangulation is a key element in this study to ensure validity and authenticity of claims to new knowledge. For this reason, a variety of qualitative data collection methods were chosen, including observation, teacher and student reflective journals, surveys and student's work. These research tools were used to establish triangulation and ensure validity (Sullivan et al., 2016). For example, triangulation was established by comparing and cross-examining the data from my reflective journal with the data collected from students' surveys, student's work and feedback received from critical friends. This triangulation of data will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

3.17 Observation

Observation is an important assessment tool used by teachers in their daily practice assisting the planning for and the evaluation of their teaching and students' learning. Marshall and

Rossman (2005) emphasize that observations are not simply just looking but instead systematically looking and noting the events, behaviours and facts that take place during the research process. Cohen et al. (2018) point out many advantages of using observation as a research tool. They claim that observation offers the researcher the opportunity "to collect 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations" which can reveal rich and insightful data (2007: 396). This means that the researcher is not relying on second-hand accounts of what is taking place. They further maintain that observation can be structured or unstructured but contend that it is vital that you create a criterion for what you seek to observe, to avoid recording unnecessary notes.

The observations gathered will be based on the children's ability to use social-emotional language and skills. Therefore, event sampling will be a critical observation tool in this study as it will record participant's "behaviour rather than reported behaviour" (Wellington, 2015: 247). I will use a pre-designed observation record and tally mark whenever a child expresses the emotional language or thinking associated with each coloured thinking hat (See Appendix M). Many researchers favour the rationale behind the use of structured event sampling over unstructured anecdotal records because it is believed that "pre-designed descriptions of current feelings and activities often eliminate retrospection bias" (Reis and Gable, 2000: 190), a limitation associated with anecdotal records.

However, I also considered the work of Campbell, McNamara and Gilroy who state that "simply noticing events can also provide insight into situations" (2004: 94). For this reason, I used an unstructured observation journal to record interactions between myself and the children, interactions between the children, as well as general observations in relation to the

children's SEL. These observations played a significant factor in future planning of activities and formed the basis of the reflections within my journal. For this reason, I used both semi-structured and unstructured observations to best capture what was happening in the classroom, which subsequently increased the reliability and validity of the data collected.

3.18 Reflective Journal

The concept of reflective practice has been essential to education since the writings of Dewey (1933). Sullivan et al. (2016) assert that reflection is an integral part of the action research process. For this reason, I used a reflective journal throughout the research process as recommended by Sullivan et al. (2016), as they maintain that it enables you to develop "a sense of "stepping back from your work" and "a new awareness and of what is happening in your everyday work" (Sullivan et al., 2016: 41). The use of a reflective journal facilitates what Hocking, Haskell and Linds called 'embodiment' (2001: 18). Embodiment allows for a movement away from views of knowledge being created within us, to a view of it being created through our interactions with the world. This is particularly feasible in the classroom context as each day is rich with meaningful interactions with colleagues and children. For this reason, both myself and the students kept a semi-structured reflective journal, in which we formally reflected upon our thoughts and feelings throughout the research process. Van Der Molen points out that reflective journaling enables pupils to "write down their thoughts and questions pertaining to their personal understanding of the subject matter (2015: 4). As such, the children were also encouraged to write freely in their journal at any stage. Reflective journaling is recognized as a method designed "to enhance reflection, facilitate critical thought and express feelings in writing about problems" (Walker, 2006). This tool was particularly beneficial to this study as these outcomes support the aims of action research.

3.19 Surveys

Interviews and surveys are two ways a researcher can gather information about people's beliefs or opinions. Unlike observation, which is first-hand data, these two methods can be self-reported data or data collected in an indirect manner. However, many researchers have long argued that people can be biased in how they see the world and as result, may report on their own actions in a more favourable way than they may behave (Lowe and Ziamliansky: 2011: 162). Despite the subjective issues that pertain to surveys in research, Lowe and Ziamliansky (2011) state that it serves as an excellent tool for learning about general trends in people's opinions and behaviours. For this reason, l distributed surveys at particular stages of the research for the purpose of gaining an insight into existing conditions of the research.

Pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys were administered to the children at the beginning of Cycle 1, at the end of Cycle 1 and at the end of Cycle 2, to monitor the children's self-report assessment of SEL (See Appendix I and J). They will then be compared for the purpose of recording comparisons or attitudinal changes following the implementation of the research intervention. Surveys included closed and open-ended questions. According to Cohen et al, closed questions enable "comparisons to be made across groups in the sample" while "open and word-based" questions are valuable as they will enable the children to "explain and qualify their responses" (Cohen et al., 2007: 321), which suits the sensitivity of this study.

3.20 Content Analysis of Children's Work Samples

Content analysis is when text is broken down and examined using pre-existing categories or emerging themes to generate or test a theory (Cohen et al., 2018). Helm, Beneke and Steinheimer (1997) argue that children learn by engaging in hands-on, thought-provoking experiences which challenge them to think. These experiences have the potential to stimulate personal growth and development which correlates with the key aims of this research. However, they note that a limitation associated with this research method is that experiences cannot be assessed easily by this method. In addressing this issue, Helm et al. go on to say that data which reveals, "what the child is beginning to do, or what the child is trying to integrate are often the most helpful pieces of information" (1997: 201). Accessing the children's learning and participation will be a key goal in helping me assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Like Braun and Clarke's thematic coding strategy (2006), data was interpreted from pupil's work samples through content analysis of the children's work. This involves 'coding raw data into conceptually congruent categories' (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014: 342). When the children's work was analysed this way, I gained an insight into their SEL development and their thoughts on what teaching methodologies or interventions proved most effective to support this.

3.21 Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of applying statistical or logical techniques that accurately describe and evaluate the data that you have collected. Cohen et al. (2018) emphasize that the form of data analysis chosen must be appropriate to the types of data that have been gathered. Since the data collected was entirely qualitive in nature, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step method thematic analysis coding strategy to analyse the data. This strategy involved a thematic

analysis of my qualitative data through a series of coding rounds, breaking the data down into smaller codes. This enabled me to identify the initial emergent themes and define the three findings that emerged from the study. The coding process will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

3.24 Conclusion

Discovering what strategies are most effective for the teaching of SEL was the primary goal of this research. This chapter discussed the research approach, design and methodological considerations. The data tools that were used for data collection were justified and supported by theorists. How I adhered to ethical considerations and ensured validity and rigour in self-study action research was also addressed and the relevant limitations have been acknowledged. In the next chapter, I will analyse the data collected and present the findings of this research.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This section analyses the data which was collected during Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 of the research. The data was collected using surveys, observation, reflective journals and student's work samples. In this chapter, the data is examined and discussed to present the three findings that emerged from this study: the importance of teacher modelling, the power of restorative circles and relationship building (See Figure 4.1). I will now begin the chapter by revisiting Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of coding and thematic analysis, to explain how I used it to analyse the data and identify the three findings. I will then illustrate how my findings emerged and how they answered my research questions (See Figure 4.2). For the purpose of anonymity and confidentiality, the children were each allocated a number and will be referred to as such throughout this chapter.

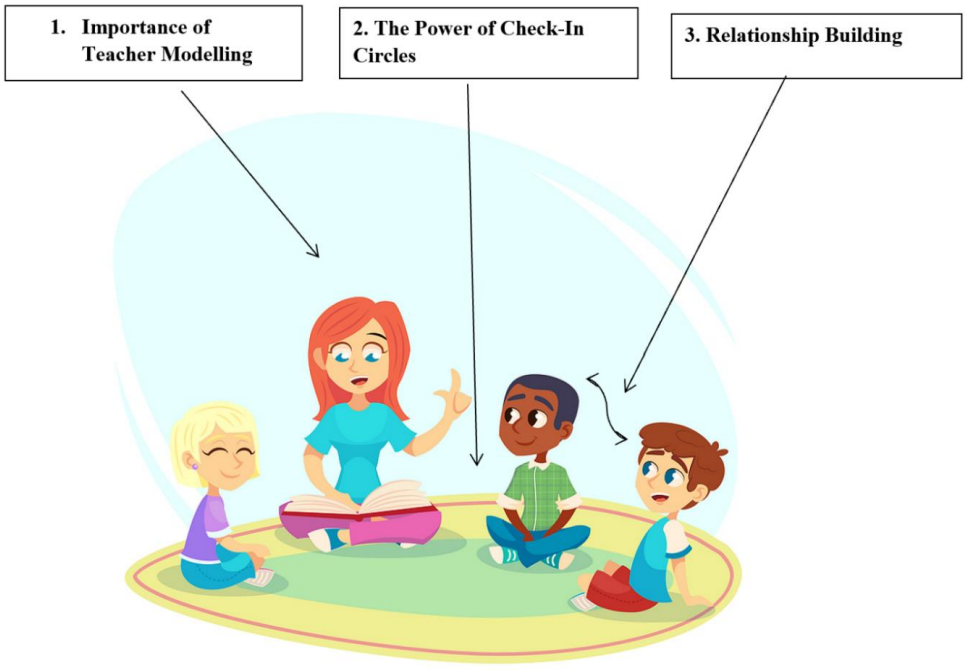

Figure 4. 1: Summary of Research Findings

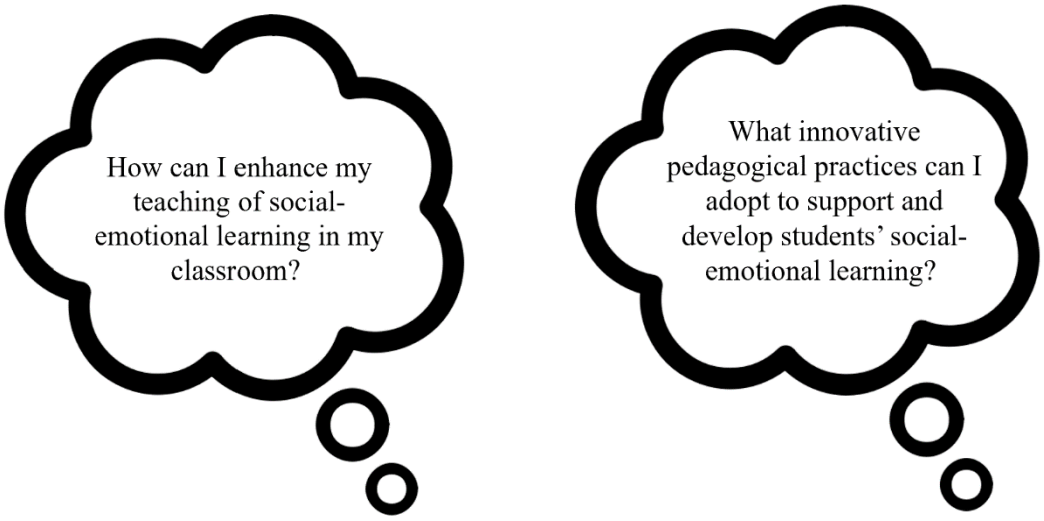

Figure 4. 2: Research Questions

4.2 Data Analysis

As the data was collected throughout the research process, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) model to structure my data analysis (See Figure 4.3). Braun and Clarke maintain that "a rigorous thematic approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions" (2006: 97). They go on to suggest that its flexibility makes it a suitable methodology for the analyzation of qualitative data, which was applicable to this study since qualitative data tools were used (Braun and Clark, 2006). This thematic analysis involved a six-step process which guided me through the process of identifying the themes that emerged from my research. These themes emerged through a process of identifying common words and phrases that appeared in the student's surveys and reflective journals children. These themes were highlighted and grouped together. (See Table 4.1 for an insight into this part of the coding process on students' reflective journals). These themes eventually allowed me to define three key findings. These findings will now be discussed in further detail.

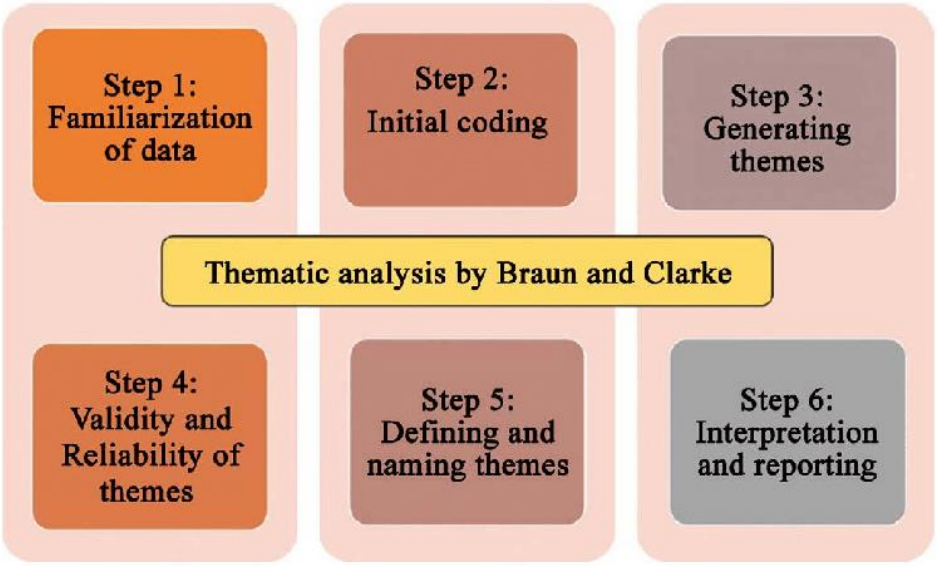

Figure 4. 3: Braun and Clarke's Coding and Thematic Analysis Framework (2006)

Student: 8 You can say whatever you want, you don't have to worry
Student 4: I like circle time because it's a place you can talk freely
Student 17: We can say how we are feeling
Student 3: The class comes together
Student 24: It helps me be a good friend
Student 7: We can always be ourselves
Student 16: It lets us share our mood of the day
Student 1: We can show friendship
Student 15: We are all honest
Student 12: it gives everyone time to talk about how they are feeling

Table 4. 1: Demonstration of the Coding Process

4.3 Thematic Finding 1: The Importance of Teacher Modelling

The role of the teacher in the lives of children is a well-researched area and is important when it comes to the promotion of SEL in schools (Hopkins 2011; Schonert-Reichl 2017; Stowe 2016). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018) outlined that the classroom teacher can have a significant impact on students' values, behaviour and wellbeing. Schonert-Reichl emphasized that "teachers are the engine that drives SEL programs and practices in schools and classrooms" (Schonert-Reichl, 2017:138). My own research corroborates this idea that the teacher plays a significant role in the teaching and learning of SEL in the classroom. While restorative practices such as restorative circles and a shared language tool facilitated ample opportunities for modelling social-emotional language and skills, which I will now discuss in more detail, teacher modelling of openness and vulnerability was an unexpected yet essential element of this finding. It is evident from the data that the teaching of SEL cannot reach its full potential until a teacher is aware of their 'self' by practicing and modelling openness with students when communicating thoughts and feelings. I will now discuss this key finding in more detail.

4.4 Teacher Modelling of Social-Emotional Language

The data collected revealed that teacher modelling was a crucial aspect in the development of the children's SEL, particularly the modelling of a shared social-emotional or restorative language. In the Pre-Cycle 1 survey, the majority of children said that they found it difficult to express their feelings with others (See Figure 4.4). Students' reflective journals dated in Cycle 1, also supported this finding. For example, Student 10 explained that he disliked restorative check-in circles because he found it difficult to express his feelings sometimes (See Figure 4.5).

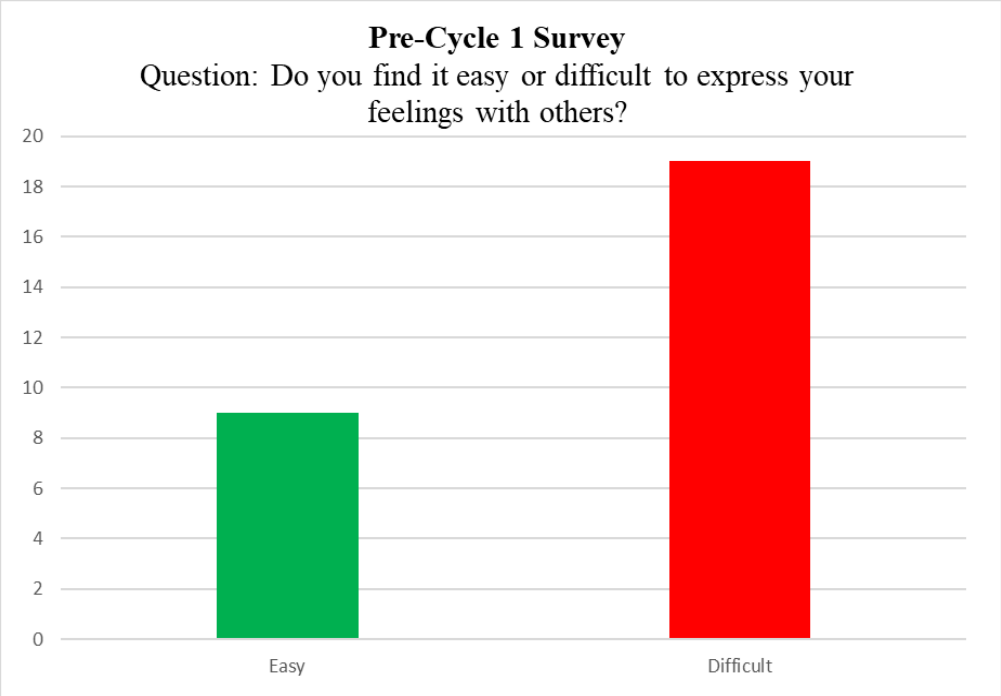

Figure 4. 4: Pre-Cycle 1 Student Survey

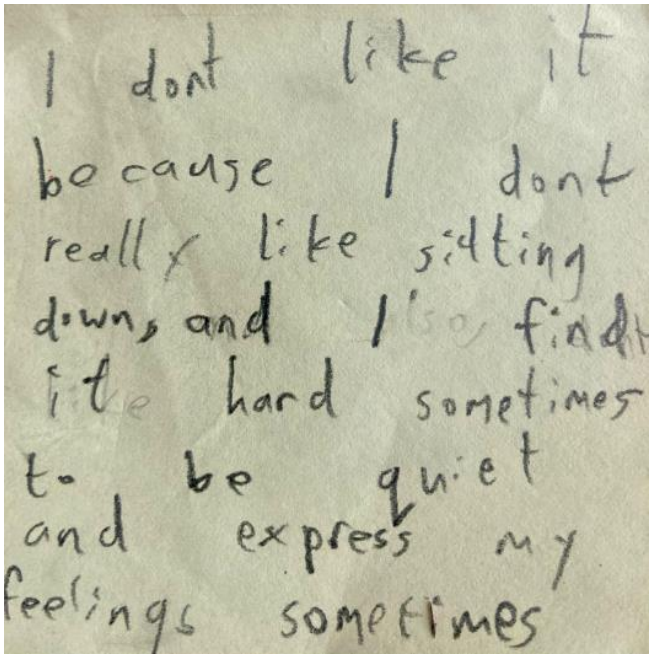

Figure 4. 5: Entry from a Student's Reflective Journal (Student 10, 17/01/2022)

Data from Cycle 1 surveys also revealed that the children had a limited emotional bank of words based on the 4 primary feelings: happiness, sadness, fear, and anger (See Table 4.2).

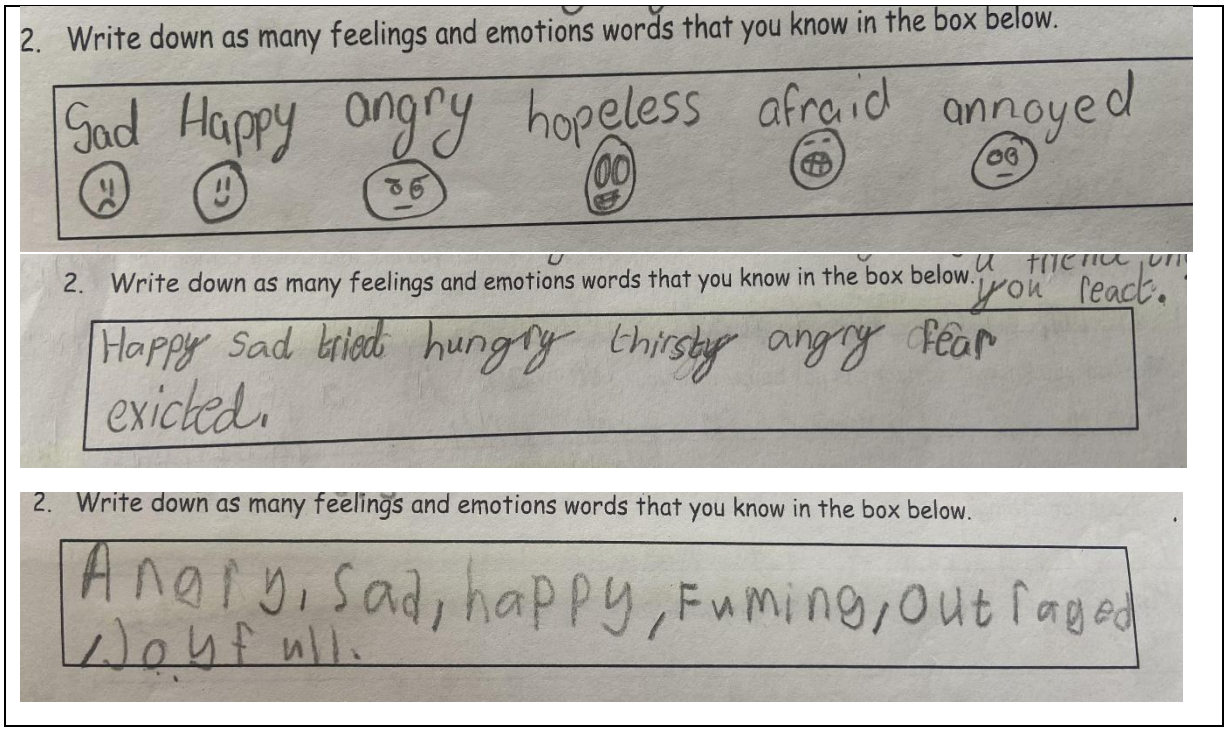

Table 4. 2: Pre-Cycle 1 Student Survey

When affective questions were asked during the delivery of the 'Friendship Keeper' SEL programme in our check-in circles (See Appendix L), I recorded in my teacher reflective journal that most children were saying 'pass' when it was their turn to speak. In my reflective journal I recorded that most children expressed that they did not know how to say what they wanted to say when it was their turn in the circle. A critical friend gave some very valuable feedback after her observation of a check-in circle at the initiation stage of the research:

"The children seem to be finding it challenging to express their feelings, it sounds like they don't have the language to confidently express themselves. They are either saying pass or copying what you say" (Critical Friend, 7/2/22).

This learning led me to the realisation that the explicit teaching of social-emotional language was not sufficient. Originally, I assumed that explicitly teaching social-emotional language and skills to students through the delivery of an SEL programme, would subsequently transfer into the children's everyday social and emotional conversations and interactions. However, at this point in the research, I knew that my role as a teacher was crucial. I had to not only explicitly teach social-emotional language, but I had to model it as 'a way of being' on a daily basis and not just during SPHE time. As outlined by Hopkins in Chapter 2, my role was essentially to "encourage children to communicate by listening to them, interpret what they say and respond to them by modelling good communication" (Hopkins, 2011).

I discovered that there was an absence of what Blood and Thorsborne (2005) called a "shared language", a language which according to them, is essential when implementing restorative practices. Therefore, the creation and modelling of a shared social-emotional or restorative language was crucial going into Cycle Two. I realized at this stage of the research that it was important to create the shared social-emotional language with the students because it is important that "language is co-constructed between the adult and child through joint attention, mutual interest and enjoyment" (NCCA, 2015: 8). As such, a 'Restorative Language Thinking Hats Tool' was created collaboratively with the students, which was essentially a social-emotional language framework associated with different types of social-emotional thinking and language (as presented in Chapter 3). Following a few weeks of modelling social-emotional language using this tool during our restorative circles, during discussions of our Friendship Keeper Programme, and when spontaneous occasions arose in the class or on yard, there was a notable development in the children's social-emotional language (See Table 4.3). There is considerable evidence in my data which highlights this improvement over the course of the two cycles:

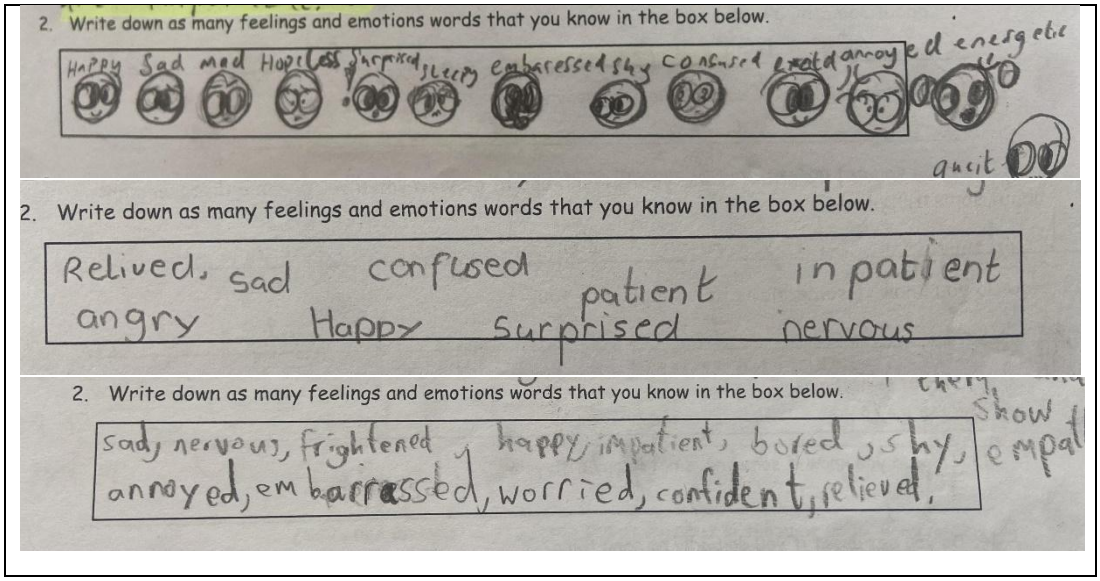

Table 4. 3: Post-Cycle 2 Student Survey

"Their social-emotional language has developed so much when I think back on our first few check-in circles, the children are more confident when communicating their thoughts and feelings with others now, I think the use of the thinking hats tool to model and scaffold the language has really supported them in their learning" (Moloney, Reflective Journal: 16/5/22).

My critical friend also affirmed this significant development:

"Their social-emotional language has improved so much, no one says "pass" now and I think your modelling of the thinking hats and language has scaffolded this learning significantly (Critical Friend: 16/5/22).

The children stated that they enjoyed using the thinking hats in school every day and at the end of Cycle 2, the majority of children reported in the Post-Cycle 2 Survey that they found it easier to express their feelings with others. (See Figure 4.6). I also recorded feedback from students on my observation record sheet that supports the positive impact of teacher modelling.

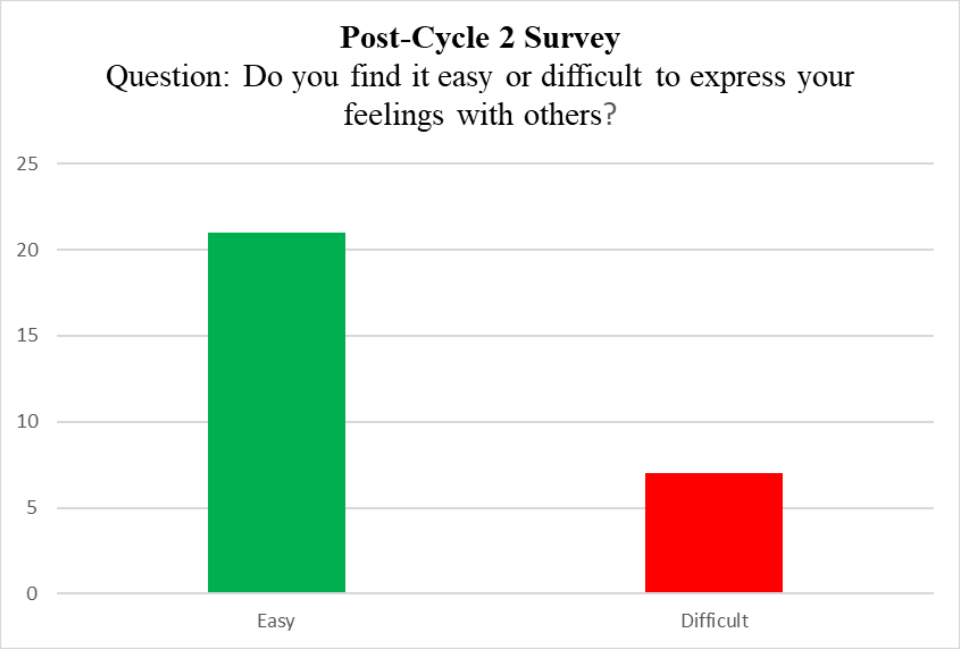

Figure 4. 6: Post-Cycle 2 Student Survey

"Ms Moloney the thinking hats are actually really good, we use them on the yard when we are having an argument about a game (Student 17, 9/05/22)

"When we started our check in circles like ages ago, everyone was so quiet and like barely talking and now our check in circles could last forever and ever, I think the thinking hats have made it easier" (Student 5, 9/05/22)

"Teacher, I just wanted to tell you that, I used the thinking hats to show empathy when I was having a fight with my sister at home yesterday and they helped so much" (Student 5, 14/05/22)

"When I am feeling sad, I put on my red thinking hat like you do and I tell my friend how I am feeling" (Student 2, 8/05/22)

This implies that SEL takes place when meaningful conversations and social interactions between teacher and students takes place where “the role of the teacher is to support and develop children’s talk during processes of exploration, discovery, and problem-solving" (NCCA, 2015: 8). As outlined in the Primary Language Curriculum, language learning is best taught in social settings as it is “our chief means of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication” NCCA, 2015: 7). I have learned that the teacher modelling of a shared social-emotional language is essential during everyday social interactions with students and not just during explicit SPHE time.

4.5 Importance of Teacher Modelling Vulnerability

As discussed earlier, teacher modelling of a shared social-emotional language during everyday social interactions with students was crucial for the development of the children’s SEL. However, during the research process, I gained an unexpected yet invaluable insight into how I needed to reflect deeper on how I was modelling and communicating my own thoughts and feelings with students. I will now outline the embarrassment I felt when a conversation with a student led me to my self-identification as a “living contradiction” (Whitehead, 2000) and moreover, the difficulty I encountered when vulnerability emerged in my professional practice for the very first time. As a result of this finding, I am now a teacher who sees modelling vulnerability and openness as a strength for developing SEL in both teachers and students.

Data revealed that most children were finding the restorative check-in circles challenging at the beginning of the research because they did not know how to say what wanted to say, as previously highlighted. Data from the Post-Cycle 1 survey revealed that a lot of children found check-in circles "difficult" or "uncomfortable" because they were "afraid" or "scared" to communicate their feelings with the class (See Figure 4.7).

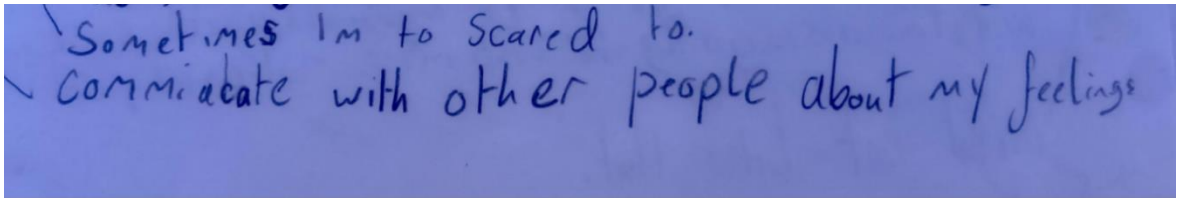

Figure 4. 7: Pre-Cycle 1 Survey (Student 6, 13/01/2022)

Feedback from a critical friend supported this finding:

"The children seem to copy what you say, it's interesting how most of the class said they were feeling happy or 10/10 this morning, do they ever place themselves lower on the check-in scale? I wonder if they are afraid to be open and honest with their peers and in front of you (Critical Friend, 7/02/22).

This was also evident in the children's reflective journals:

Everyone is copying what the teacher says or what their friends say, I don't think everyone is being honest or maybe they are afraid to say if they were feeling sad or worried" (Student 4, 4/02/22).

4.6 The Emergence of Vulnerability in my Practice

A reflection from my teacher's journal corroborated this same finding. However, instead of the data identifying the children's fear or reluctance to communicate their feelings with others, I noted my own fear of being open about sharing my honest feelings with students. This finding emerged during a restorative check-in circle near the end of Cycle 1 and was documented in my teacher reflective journal. The following reflective journal entry revealed the discomfort I felt when I discovered that I was not modelling or promoting SEL the way I thought I was:

I think I am a bit of a hypocrite, a child checked in on me in front of the whole class today during our morning check-in circle. I started the circle by expressing and sharing with the class how I was feeling on a scale of 1-10. After having placed myself 9 on the scale, this implied to my students that I was feeling happy and energized. However, Student 15 interrupted me and said "Ms Moloney are you sure you are feeling a 9 today because I noticed you seemed a bit quiet this morning. Sometimes when I am quiet it's because I am feeling sad about something. Are you feeling sad?" (Student 15, 7/02/2022.) In this moment, I felt a huge sense of discomfort. Instead of being honest and telling Student 15 she was right, I was feeling a bit sad, I thanked her for checking in on me and told her I was fine. Why did I lie? Why was I not able to be honest with her about how I was feeling? Why am I not practicing what I am preaching?" (Moloney, Reflective Journal: 24/2/22).

After having reflected on this conversation with Student 15, I discovered that I was not living to my values and I was what Whitehead calls a "living contradiction" (Whitehead, 2017). I was a living contradiction because I was not practicing openness, I was not expressing, modelling or communicating my own feelings honestly with the class. In light of this critical learning moment, I realised that I needed to attend to my own SEL and become more open with the

children when sharing my feelings and emotions. In Cycle 1, when I first introduced the children to check-in circles, I was teaching the children the importance of openness when identifying and communicating their feelings with others. However, I was not living to this value myself. In particular, I was not expressing or modelling the more challenging emotions such as sadness, worry, stress or frustration. As Hopkins previously stressed, "if we are not modelling what we teach, we are teaching something else" (Hopkins, 2011: 163).

The next day I opened our check-in circle telling the class that Student 15 was right yesterday, I was feeling a 4/10. I explained to them that I was feeling a little bit sad because my granny was very sick in hospital, and that I was worried about her. I told them if they notice that I am quiet or sad this week, that is the reason why. Upon reflection, I had not been open with the class when I was sharing my own feelings because I was reluctant to show vulnerability to my students. This data was recorded in my reflective journal:

"I was fearful of appearing weak and assumed that I had to always appear happy and strong in front of the class" (Moloney, Teacher Reflective Journal: 24/2/22).

This learning relates to Palmer's (1997) understanding of reduced teacher vulnerability in Chapter 2. The understanding that teacher vulnerability can cause a disconnect from students, from subjects, and even from ourselves (Palmer, 1997). It can build a wall between inner truth and outer performance, and we play "act the teacher's part" (Palmer: 1997: 8). As a result of this learning, I knew it was important for me to break this 'fake it until you make it' mantra that I had succumbed to since I was a newly qualified teacher. As highlighted by Palmer in Chapter 2, teachers manage vulnerability in different ways, and these differences have a

significant impact on a teacher's identity, practice and students' development and learning. Bullough (2005) also explained in Chapter 2, that some teachers make themselves invulnerable for fear of failure or uncertainty, while others enjoy risking 'self'. This emergence of vulnerability in my teaching practice has inspired me to risk the 'self' as when I started doing so, I witnessed the positive impact it had on the students' SEL. I will now discuss this in more detail.

4.7 The Impact of Teacher Vulnerability on Students' Social-Emotional Learning

It is evident teacher vulnerability can have a significant impact on a student's SEL development. Upon reflection, I had succumbed to a 'fake it until you make it' mantra subconsciously, for the purpose of achieving authority and good classroom management. However, what us teachers don't realize is that this mantra or invulnerability could potentially disable the authentic and meaningful teaching of SEL in schools Bullough (2005). Here is a clear shift in my values and practice which allowed for more honest and valuable discussions with the children as I provided them with teacher modelling that they could authentically learn from. I decided to actively become more open with the children by modelling and communicating when I was feeling sad, worried or frustrated. As a result of this new openness and emerging vulnerability in my practice, the children simultaneously started communicating more openly and honestly about how they were feeling, particularly during our check-in circles (See Table 4.4 below).

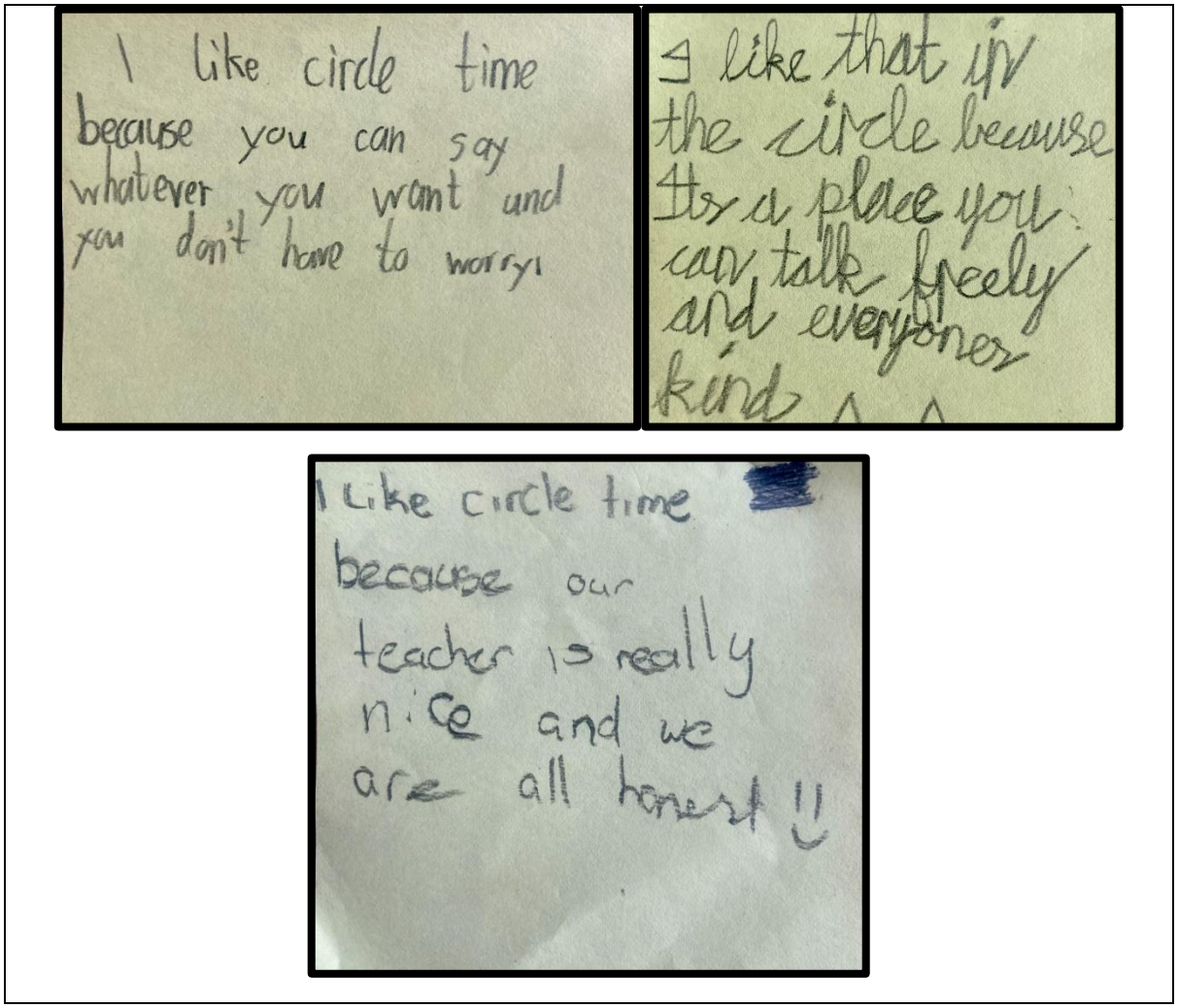

Table 4. 4: Student Responses in a Post-It Survey: 11/04/22

This data implies that teachers modelling openness and vulnerability encourages and inspires children to do the same. Although it is important to note that modelling openness and showing vulnerability to my students was initially challenging for me, I have learned that it is requisite for supporting the children's SEL development in a more meaningful way. Considering this finding, I have learned that teacher vulnerability is not a weakness which was an assumption I once held, instead I now view it as a strength for the development of both teacher and student SEL. As highlighted by Schonert-Reichl (2017) in Chapter 2, a teacher's knowledge, dispositions, and skills for creating a safe, caring and supportive classroom environment is

equally if not more important than expertise in the explicit teaching of social and emotional language and skills. This suggests that to successfully teach SEL, it is not enough to enhance teachers' knowledge of SEL alone, teachers' own level of social and emotional competence awareness and wellbeing plays a crucial role.

4.8 Froebel and Vulnerability

This finding corroborates with Froebel's notion of freedom in education, maintaining that "the adult plays a significant role as a sensitive guide helping children to gain and use their freedom in worthwhile and mutually respectful ways" (Tovey, 2017: 4). I gained a valuable insight into how it was important for me to attend to my own social-emotional competencies and re-evaluate how I was modelling my own self-awareness, empathy and my communication of my feelings. This implies that teacher wellbeing and vulnerability is crucial for the authentic teaching and learning of SEL in schools. If we don't accurately understand teachers' own wellbeing and how teachers influence students' SEL, we can never fully understand how to best promote SEL in the classroom.

4.9 Thematic Finding 2: The Power of Restorative Circles

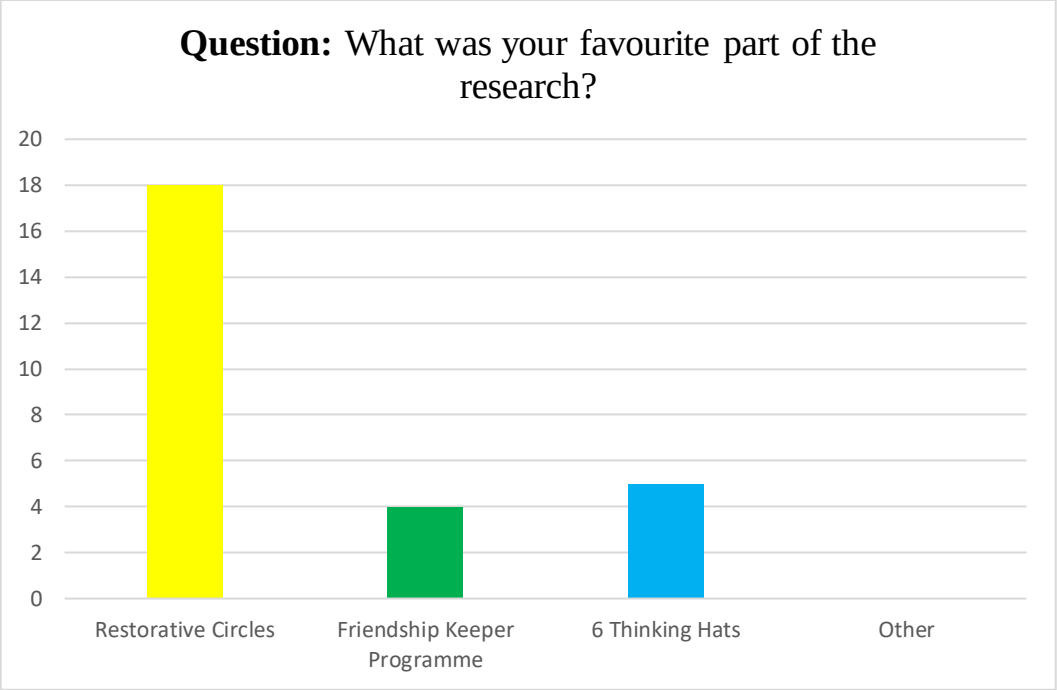

Figure 4. 8: Post-Cycle 2 Survey

Data revealed that restorative circles proved to be the most enjoyable and most effective restorative practice in this research. Data Analysis revealed that they had a significant impact on the children's SEL. In an anonymous Post-Cycle 2 Survey, the majority of the class said that their favourite part of the research was restorative circles, or as the children called them "Check-in Circles" or "Circle Time" (See Figure 4.8). The students documented multiple reasons why they enjoyed check-in circles. Most children said that restorative circles are places where they can socialize, become better friends and improve SEL skills such as self-awareness, empathy, listening skills, respect and kindness. This finding was evident in a Cycle 2 Post-it Survey and in the Post-Cycle 2 survey (See Table 4.5 and 4.6).

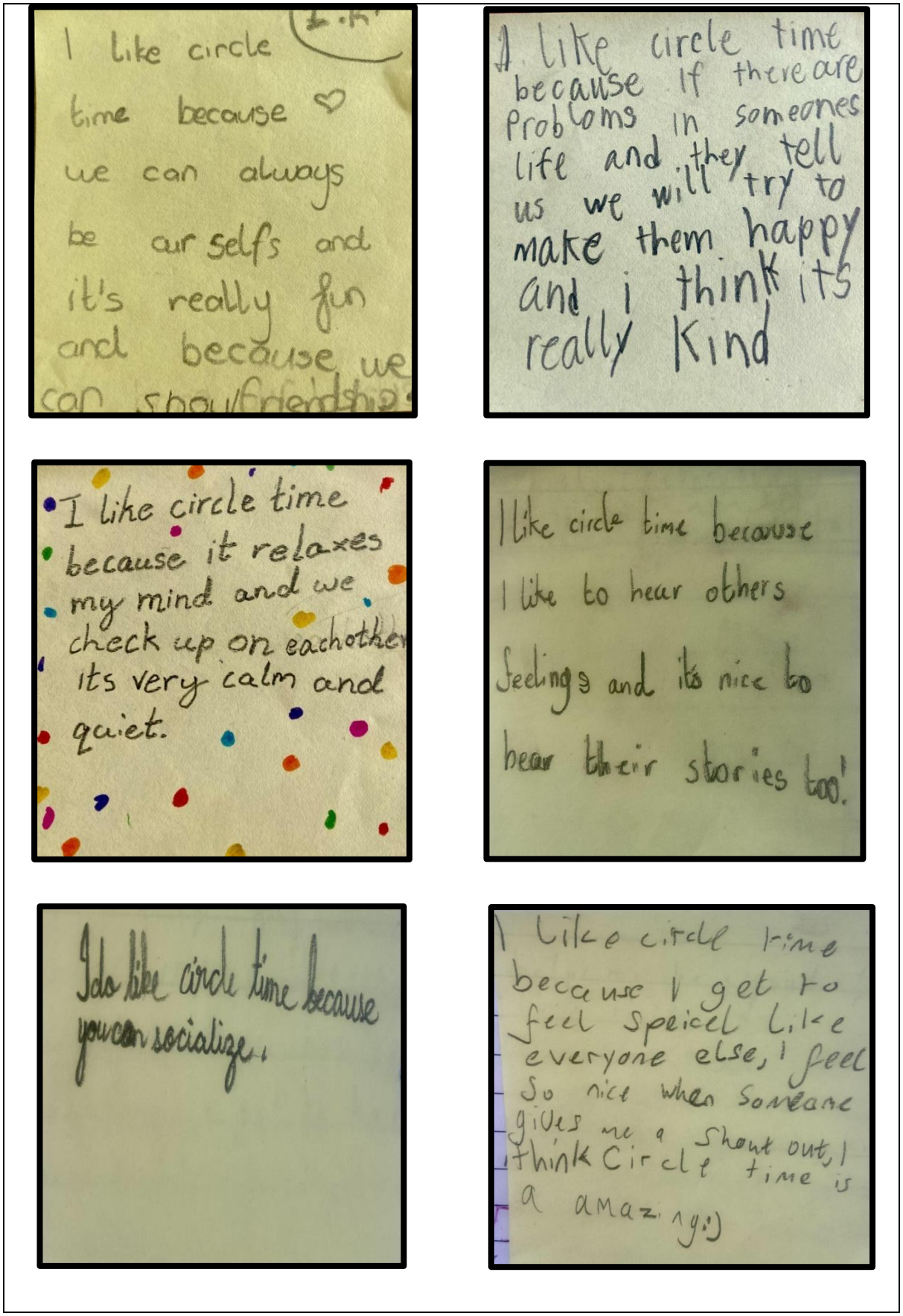

Table 4. 5: Feedback from Students in a Cycle 2 Post-it Survey

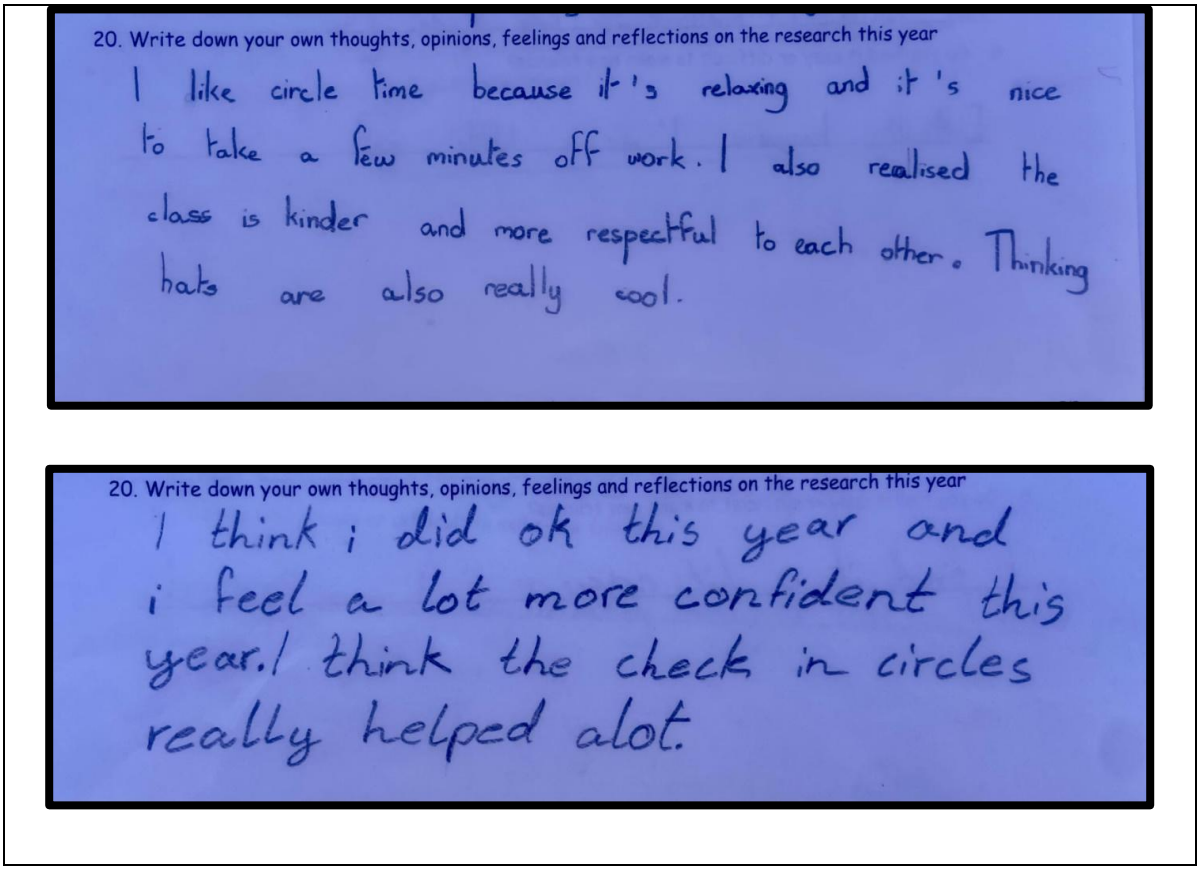

Table 4. 6: Feedback from Students in Post-Cycle 2 Survey

Data in my reflective journal and data from my critical friends also highlighted the significant impact of restorative circles. It is evident that they supported and scaffolded the development of the children's SEL. For example, the children's listening skills, empathy and respect for one another significantly enhanced by the end of the research. The improvement in their listening skills was also made evident when I compared the following two reflective journal entries:

"The children are finding it difficult to listen to one another, I wonder why they are finding it so difficult to listen to each other? It is very frustrating!" (Moloney, Teacher Reflective Journal: 7/2/22).

"Their listening has improved so much. Our check-in circles are much more enjoyable now because there are no interruptions. The children are showing great respect and empathy for one another. Their listening has improved a lot. (Moloney, Teacher Reflective Journal: 20/5/22).

A critical friend also affirmed this enhancement of SEL skills:

The children's listening skills have improved so much, you don't have to remind the students to listen anymore, it is so lovely, they are so respectful towards each another and show wonderful empathy (Feedback from Critical Friend, 20/5/22)

This finding was notably evident when I compared the Post-Cycle 1and Post-Cycle 2 Surveys (See Table 4.7 and 4.8). In the Post-Cycle 1 Survey, most children expressed that they found it challenging to listen to one another during our check in circles. Whereas in the Post-Cycle 2 Survey, students in the class reported there listening skill improved by the end of the research.

"I find it so so hard to sit and listen to everyone after it is my turn" *(Student 6,10/01/22)*
"I find it so hard to listen because it feels really weird, we never do things like this in school, we never sit in a circle and talk about feelings" *(Student 13, 13/05/22)*

Table 4. 7: Feedback from Students in Post-Cycle 1 Surveys

"I was really bad at listening in the circle at the beginning but now I am good at listening to everyone because we got to practice it all the time, practice makes perfect" *(Student 6, 10/01/22)*
"I think my listening has got better and I thank the check-in circles for that" *(Student 1, 13/05/22)*

Table 4. 8: Feedback from Students in Post-Cycle 2 Surveys

Therefore, it is evident that the restorative circles were an effective restorative practice for the teaching and learning of SEL as it provided a supportive, social environment in which children were provided with opportunities to develop and enhance their SEL skills. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the NCCA (1999a) stated that the best methodology to deliver and enhance

children's SEL in schools is through the methodology of active learning. Furthermore, for active learning to take place, the teachers should provide a supportive and caring environment, in which the child is encouraged to participate in his/her own learning and in which each contribution is valued and appreciated (NCCA, 1999a). It is clear that the check-in circles evidently provided the children with this supportive and caring environment that allowed them to develop their SEL experientially with the support and guidance from their peers and teacher.

4.10 Thematic Finding 3: Relationship Building

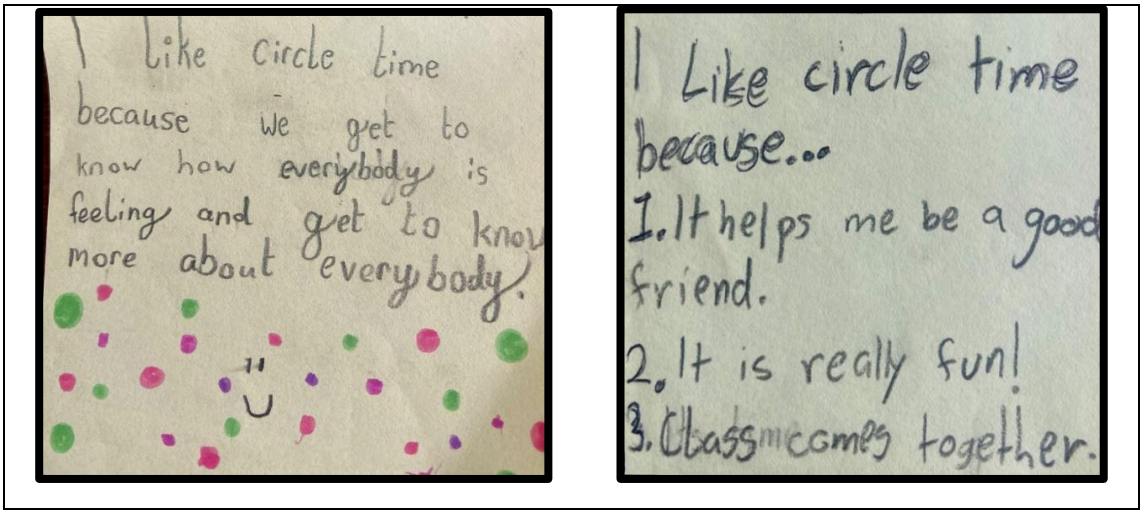

Table 4. 9: Post-Cycle 2 Survey

A key aim of this research was to facilitate time for students to build positive relationships and connections with one another. As stated by Hopkins in Chapter 2, a restorative teacher is someone who believes that "relationships matter and create opportunities for everyone in the class to connect as much as possible" (Hopkins, 2011: 6). This is essentially what occurred during this research. I became a restorative teacher who created opportunities for the children to develop and strengthen their relationships with one another. At the end of the research the class reported that they felt closer as a class. This finding was evident in the students' Post-

Cycle 2 surveys (See Table 4.9) and during a student feedback discussion during a Cycle 2 restorative circle (See Table 4.10).

"I feel like at the beginning we were all just jigsaw pieces but now we are one big jigsaw puzzle that is all connected together" *(Student 9, 18/05/22)*
"Ms Moloney, last year I only had two friends, now I feel like I know everyone in the class so well, we are all such good friends!" *(Student 11, 18/05/22)*
"I think we are closer as a class because everyone's empathy has improved because we always check-in on each other" *(Student 3, 18/05/22)*
"If we have a disagreement, we know how to talk about it and fix it now, so our friendships never break" *(Student 22, 18/05/22)*
"It is nice to know other people in the class feel the same way I do sometimes, I feel closer to them now, I even feel closer to you Ms Moloney" *(Student 14, 18/05/22)*

Table 4.10: Feedback from Students during a Restorative Circle

This finding is supported by Hopkins (2011) who maintained that circle time can build a sense of community and belonging. As highlighted by Macready (2009) in Chapter 2, adapting a restorative circle technique and inviting everyone in the class to make contributions can create a sense of community among students and provides them with opportunities to learn more about one another. Similarly, Kervick et al. also highlighted in Chapter 2 that "restorative conferences and circles promote supportive relationships and increase meaningful connections between adults and students and between students and their peers (2019: 600).

Feedback from a critical friend further supported this finding:

You have such a close relationship with the class. The children have also become closer as a unit. What is interesting is, when they pass a compliment in the circle, the children are choosing friends in the class that were not as close to them at the beginning of the research which shows that they have built new friendships (Critical Friend, 24/05/2022).

An entry from my reflective journal dated at the end of the research highlights this same finding:

Over the course of the research, I have witnessed the children become closer as a class. At the beginning of the year, they all had their small friend groups, but now they have opened up more and have created new friendships. The daily restorative circles provided them with the invaluable opportunity to create and build these friendships"

(Moloney: Teacher Reflective Journal, 24/05/2022).

The data revealed that implementing restorative circles in my everyday teaching practice provided the children with the time and environment to learn more about each other, which subsequently promoted relationships building. As highlighted in Chapter 2, this form of environment is a 'restorative classroom', a place where relationship building is supported and valued (Hopkins, 2011).

4.8 Conclusion

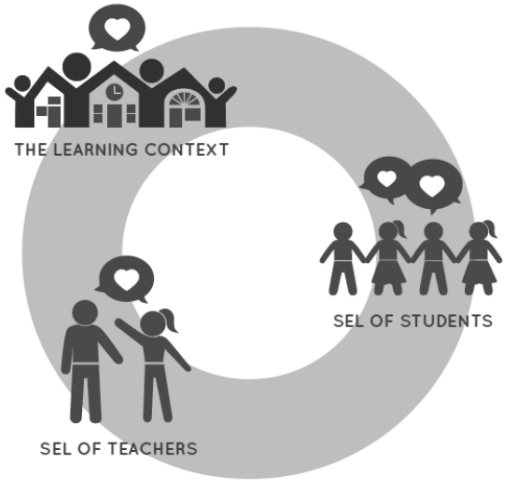

Figure 4. 9: Three-Component Framework SEL

This chapter outlined and discussed the three findings that emerged from the data gathered during the research process: the importance of teacher modelling SEL, the power of check-in circles and enhanced relationship building among students. My findings corroborate with Stowe's research (2016), as she found that implementing restorative practices improved relationships, promoted empathy and developed emotional literacy skills among the participants, which is essentially what occurred in my classroom. These research findings can be framed by Schonert-Reichl's three-component social-emotional learning framework: "the learning context, students' SEL, and teachers' SEL" (2017: 138). It is now my understanding that the teaching of SEL requires all three dimensions (See Figure 4.9 above).

The above findings have significant implications for the delivery of SEL and RP in schools. It is evident that RP offered unique and meaningful opportunities for children to develop their SEL. Significant learning has also emerged for me both personally and professionally. While the emergence of vulnerability in my professional practice was discomforting at first, I have learned that it can have a profound impact on children's SEL.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I will provide a brief summary of the research, develop my findings in further detail and outline the implications and recommendations for future practice. The chapter will then conclude with a meta-reflection on the research project. In my meta-reflection, I will explain how this research enabled me to investigate and answer my research questions. The embedded questions included "How can I enhance my teaching of social-emotional learning in the classroom?" and "What pedagogical practices can I adopt to expand and support student's social-emotional development in school?". The goal of this research was to explore the use of restorative practice (RP) as an intervention to find out if it could simultaneously enhance my teaching and the students' social-emotional learning (SEL). I will conclude this chapter by affirming that this goal was achieved.

5.2 Summary of the Research Process

This research explored literature pertaining to the fields of SEL and RP and identified a relationship between the two fields. After having identified this gap in the research, RP in the firm of restorative circles, a 'Friendship Keeper' programme and the creation of a shared restorative language was implemented. The data revealed that this innovative SEL pedagogical intervention supported and developed the SEL of the teacher and students. As presented in Chapter 3, the findings that emerged from the data were:

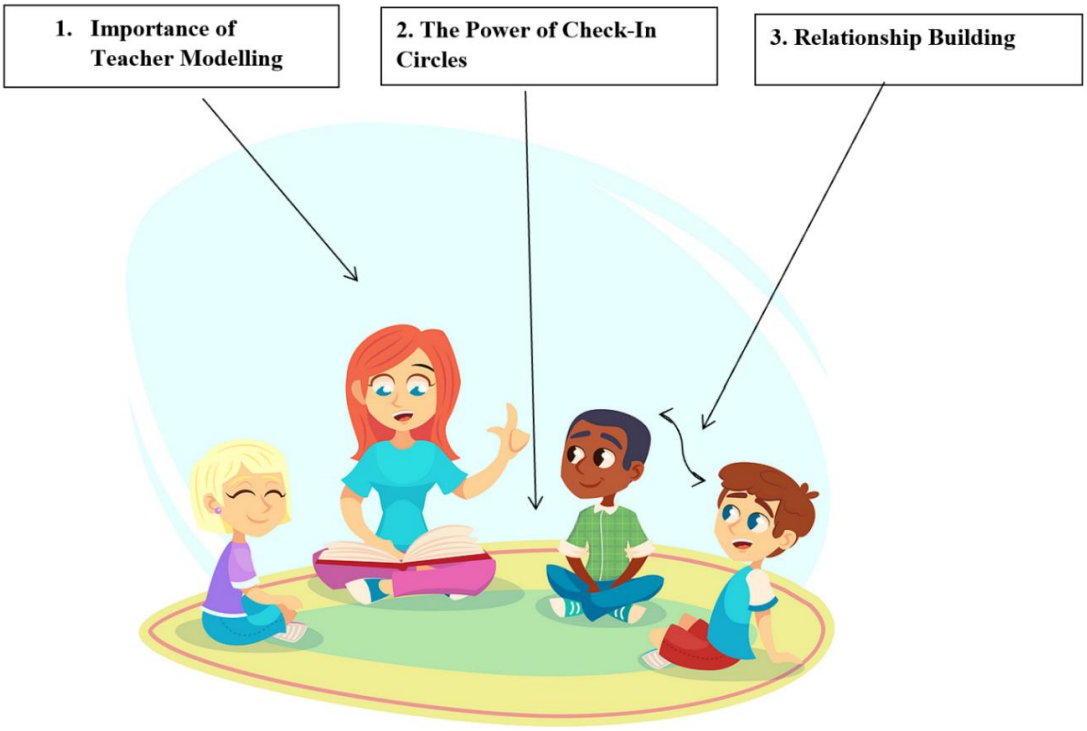

Figure 5. 1: Research Findings

5.3 The Emergence of Vulnerability

As emphasised during the discussion of the findings in this research, being a teacher is far more than effectively applying curriculum knowledge and skills. The identity or 'self' of the teacher is inevitably at stake in these professional actions. When one's identity as a teacher or one's professional self-esteem are threatened in the professional context, self-interest emerges. These self-interests always concern the protection of "one's professional integrity or identity as a teacher" (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002: 110). After having completed this research project, I found that I resonated with Palmer's belief that teaching is a "daily exercise in vulnerability" (1998: 17). Managing vulnerability is a large part of learning to teach and being effective as a teacher. While vulnerability is part of teaching, teachers manage it differently and "these

differences have profound importance for teachers and their development, students and their learning" (Bullough, 2005: 23). As highlighted by Bullough (2005), some teachers make themselves invulnerable for fear of failure or uncertainty, while others enjoy risking 'self'. I have now discovered that before carrying out this research, I was a teacher who was invulnerable in practice. This was due to my fear of uncertainty and my fear of being viewed as weak by my students.

When I reflect back on the pivotal moment that brought about this realisation and emergence of vulnerability in my practice, I can now say that it was the driving force behind the reshaping of my teacher identity, practice and the green light to "risking the self" (Bullough, 2005). As Bullough implies, "the burden of vulnerability, when too heavy, may crush one's hopes and dreams or, in some forms, it may spur a reshaping then a realization of them" (2005: 25). This reflective journal entry captures this reshaping or change in my practice:

"I have never felt so uncomfortable as a teacher. Today a student checked in on me because I looked sad and stressed. I told the student that I was fine and thanked her for checking in on me. I felt a sense of guilt and discomfort. I knew I had to be honest and explain to the class that I was feeling sad because my granny was unwell in hospital". (Moloney, Teacher Reflective Journal: 7/03/2022).

In this 'aha' moment, I learned that when my vulnerability emerged in front of the class, I was actively yet subconsciously modelling and practicing more meaningful SEL. Vulnerability emerged and subsequently inspired the children to practice openness and empathy with others. For example, in response to the above interaction, Student 9 responded:

"Ms Moloney, I understand how you feel, my granny has dementia and she was taken into hospital recently and it made me really scared and sad, I think we should say a prayer for your granny, it will make you feel better". (Student 9, 7/03/2022).

This implies that "vulnerability in any form cannot be sought but it simply comes with the teacher's territory" (Bullough, 2005: 25). Bullough goes further to say, "teachers push boundaries, and in doing so, confront their vulnerability" (2005: 11) and this is essentially what occurred over the course of this research. This emergence of vulnerability in my practice allowed for more meaningful teaching of SEL and encouraged the children to show vulnerability, which in effect enhanced their SEL language and skills. The emergence of openness in my practice was crucial to this study. This is supported by Sullivan et al., who maintained that values are the 'kernel' of action research and provide the criteria for assessing the success of the research (2016: 3). Not only have my values emerged in my practice, but they have also reshaped my teaching identity and practice. More importantly, the findings indicate that I can now make a claim to new knowledge and move towards being the teacher I want to be, a teacher that lives in line with her values.

5.4 Limitations

A limitation that evidently arose in the research was the pressure of covering other curriculum content. Since my research falls into the subject area of SPHE and since SPHE is allocated 30 mins of teaching weekly, I found myself losing time in other curricular subjects. Since my class had no previous experience of restorative circles or circle time, it took more time than expected to teach them how they work. For example, at the beginning of the research, our restorative

circles sometimes lasted nearly an hour. Since our check-in circles were timetabled to take place every morning, other subjects were sometimes delayed. As such, I was worried about this and sometimes felt I had to rush the restorative circles in order to abide by the SPHE time allocation of half an hour. I think I would have felt more at ease if I had the freedom of more time allocation. This tension in my practice was notable in my reflective journal and by a colleague of mine:

"I am abit concerned, our check-in circles are taking an hour to complete but I don't want to rush the children because I am witnessing valuable SEL. I feel so restricted by the curriculum's time allocation. 30 mins is not enough time for SPHE, more time needs to be allocated to this subject". (Moloney, Teacher Reflective Journal: 16/02/2022).

"Orla, can I ask, how do you have time to cover other curriculum content with the research you are doing? You must be doing excess SPHE every week.

(Colleague, 13/04/2022).

Before carrying out this research, I now understand that this tension of having to cover curriculum content and abide by time allocation set aside by the curriculum has perhaps played a part in restricting my values in practice. As outlined earlier, relationships are the core values underpinning this research project. Prioritising relationship building and SEL in the classroom was at the forefront of this study. If I did not engage in this action research, I would not have had the freedom to live to my values and place relationships at the 'kernel' of my practice.

More importantly, I would not have witnessed the wonderful impact this research had on the students' SEL. This positive impact was also reinforced by a parent (See Figure 5.2 below).

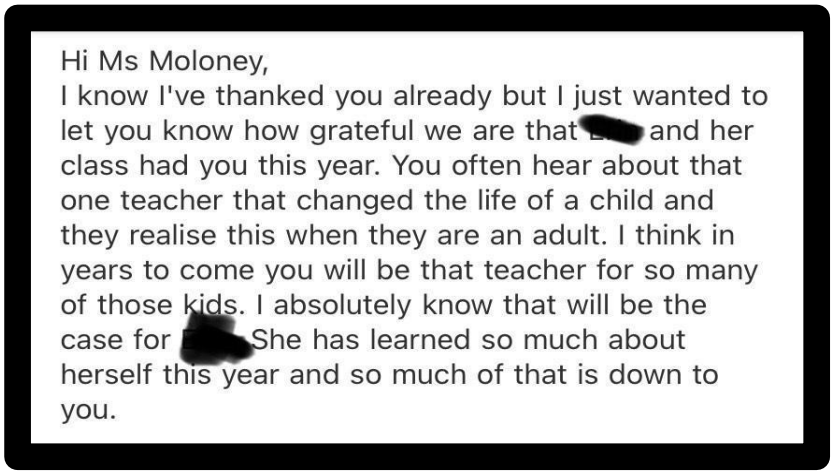
Hi Ms Moloney,
I know I've thanked you already but I just wanted to let you know how grateful we are that [redacted] and her class had you this year. You often hear about that one teacher that changed the life of a child and they realise this when they are an adult. I think in years to come you will be that teacher for so many of those kids. I absolutely know that will be the case for [redacted] She has learned so much about herself this year and so much of that is down to you.

Figure 5. 2: Feedback from Parent (29/06/2022)

5.5 Looking ahead

Restorative practice is going to have a significant role in the new SPHE curriculum (NCCA, 1999a), the PLC (NCCA, 2015) and in the Wellbeing Practice and Framework (2018). The data gathered in the research shows it is not enough to simply hope SEL happens as an aim or by-product of our teaching of the SPHE curriculum or SEL programmes. Children need to be provided with ample opportunities and time in school to proactively develop their SEL in a restorative classroom, a classroom that promotes relationship building. The findings discussed earlier, proved that restorative practice is the missing ingredient or practice in schools in Ireland, a practice that can develop the lifelong SEL skills that are essential for learning and adulthood.

5.6 Embedding Social-Emotional Learning and Restorative Practice in Teacher Training Colleges

Explicitly promoting SEL and RP in teacher education is a key step. In America, teacher training programs have started incorporating theory, research, and practical application of SEL into teacher training education. For example, San Jose State University's Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child is committed to embedding the social-emotional dimension of teaching and learning into the university's teacher preparation program. They don't just learn about SEL research and theory in their coursework, they also learn how to implement evidence based SEL programmes and practices in the classroom. Student teachers are taught active learning approaches that help to create safe, caring classroom and school environments. Going forward, teacher training colleges must recognize and promote SEL as a crucial part of teacher training.

5.7 Reflection

Demand for social-emotional learning is at an all-time high. Teachers recognize the importance of it. Employers are requiring it. Parents value it. Communities are being transformed by it. Most importantly, millions of students are benefitting from it. Identifying innovations that can develop children's SEL needs to be a priority in schools. School is the most influential environment in a child's life. Schools can create an environment that facilitates time and opportunities for children to develop their SEL. Just as physical education promotes healthy lifestyle choices with long term health benefits, SEL helps students build foundational skills to navigate life, such as self-awareness, empathy and communication skills. As educators, we must provide children with the opportunities and the appropriate environment for these skills to develop and flourish. The past two years living in a pandemic made it clear that social-

emotional competencies are crucial as they can support mental health and well-being and are important contributors to student success. School closures illustrated the extent to which students rely on schools to support their SEL and access trusted relationships with adults and peers. Yet for the most part, schools have not been given the resources or training to provide a more extensive continuum of support. In this research, restorative practice has proven to be this missing, universal SEL continuum of support in schools.

In my original values statement at the beginning of this research project, I identified relationships as my overarching value with care and openness being two core values of my teacher identity. As a graduate of the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University, many of my values and philosophies of education are rooted in Froebelian principles. A Froebel teacher is recognisable for getting the best from their students by nurturing the whole child through the value of care. This Froebelian principle is evident throughout this research, as the children's social-emotional development was nurtured.

The role of the educator is a key characteristic of the Froebelian approach. It is the adult who shapes the ethos and expectations of the setting, fosters the relationships, and enables children's learning (Tovey, 2020). Froebel emphasised the complexity of the adult role. Creating a happy, harmonious learning environment in which the child can holistically develop and grow, requires Froebel teachers to be sensitive, open and approachable. While my Froebelian philosophy of attending to the social-emotional needs of the child is evident in this research, my assumption that I was already an open teacher was challenged. Even though RP was an effective pedagogical practice that enhanced student's SEL, I now understand that the delivery of an intervention or programme is not sufficient on its own. Instead, teacher vulnerability

needs to be seen as the key to developing students' social-emotional learning in schools. The emergence of vulnerability in my practice proved that teachers need to model and practice the value of openness with students to empower more authentic SEL. For me, restorative practice supports a new epistemology for social-emotional learning, a way of being as a teacher. It is a significant step forward in making schools more 'whole' for both teachers and students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Form

Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education
Master of Education (Research in practice) (MEd)

Ethics Approval for Master of Education (Research in Practice)
(*Please read the notes in the course handbook before completing this form)*

Student name:	Orla Moloney
Student Number:	15388786
Supervisor:	Dr Suzanne O'Keeffe
Programme:	Research in Practice Master of Education
Thesis title:	Enhancing children's social-emotional literacy in a 4th class mainstream setting.
Research Question(s):	● How can I enhance student's social-emotional literacy in school? ● What are the barriers and enablers to social-emotional literacy? ● Can developing social-emotional language and literacy skills improve emotional intelligence in students? ● Is drama-based experiential learning an effective method for transferring learned skills to real life?
Intended start date of data collection:	January 2022
Professional Ethical Codes or Guidelines used:	● Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education Ethics policy ● Maynooth University Ethics Policy ● Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 ● Data Protection Act 2018 ● UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

1(a) Research Participants: Who will be involved in this research?

Participants/group (*tick all that apply*)

Early years / pre-school	
Primary school students	√
Secondary school students	
Young people (aged 16 – 18 years)	
Adults	√

Provide a brief description of the individuals and their proposed role in your research below [Max 50 words]:

1. **A class of students aged 9/10 years old:** Participants in the research.
2. **Parents:** Provide feedback via zoom calls/surveys.
3. **Colleagues:** Offer advice and observe research from another lens.
4. **Critical friends:** Share feedback and interpretations of the research.
5. **Restorative practice committee:** Provide support for students if required.

1(b) Recruitment and Participation/sampling approach: *How will these participants become involved in your research? What type of sampling is involved? Please describe the formal and informal recruitment processes? Please describe the type of participation and level of engagement of participants? Are there gatekeepers and what is their part of sampling process? [Max 100 words]*

- I first intend to write a letter of consent to the board of management to request their formal approval.
- I intend to use purposive sampling because it is a feature of qualitative research which is best suited to this research design (Cohen et al., 2011). Purposive sampling is chosen for a specific purpose. Since my research topic is aimed at social emotional development, I chose a class of 30 4th class students as my ontological assumption is that children particularly need social emotional development at this age. I intend to distribute letters of consent, information sheets and have informal conversations using child friendly language to seek children's assent. The children will attend lessons relating to social and emotional literacy. Activities will require feedback through written, oral responses and surveys. Lessons will last 1 hour taking place twice a week for twelve weeks.
- I intend to distribute letters of consent to thirty parents (15 male and 15 female). Six of these parents will be of an Indian ethnicity, translated consent forms will be distributed to these parents if required. I intend to organise a zoom call to receive feedback from parents.
- Informal conversations will be held with eight 4th class stream colleagues (female) to request their involvement in the research. The research project will be discussed at weekly meetings. Weekly meetings with the restorative practice committee (1 male principal, 7 teachers (2 male & 5 female) will be held to discuss research.

2. Summary of Planned Research (*please indicate anonymised location type, purpose and aims of research, research questions and design, methods to be used and time frame, process of analysis) [250 words]*

This research will be conducted in a class of thirty 4th class pupils in an English medium, senior co-educational primary school under the Catholic patronage catering for boys and girls from 3rd-6th class with a population of 600 pupils.

Purpose and aims:

- Produce a literacy framework for the teaching and learning of social-emotional literacy.
- Develop the social-emotional literacy of a whole school community.
- Use a literacy framework to enhance my teaching and learning of SPHE and language.
- Support colleagues' teaching of social-emotional literacy by sharing research through workshops, conferences, staff meetings and networking events (T-REX).

Research Questions:

- How can I enhance student's social-emotional literacy?
- What are the barriers and enablers to social-emotional literacy?
- Can developing social-emotional literacy enhance emotional intelligence in students?

This research adopts a qualitative approach as it focuses on experiences and interpretations of social action which is relevant to this study (Sandelowski, 2001). The methodology being used is self-study action research as it answers my research questions and fits the project's practice-based design- planning, implementing, reviewing, and evaluating. Critical reflection will be used for the purpose of studying my actions, enhancing my practice and understanding the effects of these actions on students. The following qualitative methods will be employed to collect data: interview; audio recording; work samples; surveys and questionnaires; interviews; student and teacher reflective journal.

This research will be carried out over a 12-week period in two phases (Phase 1 and Phase 2).

Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic coding strategy will be used in this research.

3. Ethical Issues: Please outline the main ethical issues which may arise while undertaking this research. *Outline the nature of consent and assent about participants. (You should discuss these concerns and outline the responses/supports you will provide in the boxes below)*

- **Informed consent and assent:** At the initiation stage, ethical consent and approval will be requested from Maynooth University's ethics committee and the university's guidelines will be followed(https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/EthicalReviewandResearchIntegrityGeneralPolicyStatement.pdf). A letter will be written to request consent from the school principal and the board of management and all school's policies will be adhered to. To obtain informed consent, information sheets will be distributed to the children in December and their role in the project will be explicitly explained using child friend language. Since participants will be children legally under-age, children's assent and parental consent will be obtained by distributing consent letters. Information sheets will be distributed to parents using accessible language that will address any language barriers. Participants will be informed of their right to opt out of the research at any stage of the project. The children and parents will be given 3 weeks in December to return consent forms in advance of the research in January.
- **Privacy and Anonymity:** To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of all research participants, Participants and guardians will be assured that any personal or identifying information will be kept confidential and anonymous in line with school policy and Data Protection Guidelines. Regarding data collection, anonymity will be ensured by using pseudonyms to code participant's names. In the event of publishing my work following the completion of this project, permission to do this will be approved by Maynooth University and my supervisor.
- Research data will be kept strictly confidential with hard documents being secured in a filing cabinet in the classroom which I will only have access to before being typed up and stored on a password encrypted USB stick.

Vulnerability *(minimising risk, discomfort, coping with unforeseen outcomes, can any aspect of the research give rise to any form of harm to participants, including the researcher)?) [Max 100 words]*

This project acknowledges the position of the children as vulnerable. To mitigate the risks, they will be informed of their right to opt-out at any stage. Should children choose to opt-out, they will partake in lessons as usual, and no data will be collected from these children. Should a conversation arise in which a participant feels uncomfortable, I will conference with the child in the classroom to understand their feelings/concerns. I will document the incident and contact guardians if necessary. Members of the restorative practice committee will be appointed as additional support contacts in the event of sensitive feelings or topics arising. As I am a mandated person, any disclosures or concerns will be reported to the designated liaison person in line with the Children First Guidance and Legislation. In the event of speaking to a participant alone I will ensure that it is in an open location to minimize risk to the researcher and to ensure I am abiding by the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Safety of Children (2017).

Outline the potential for increased risk to participants considering changing circumstances in the school environment because of immediate closure or threat to privacy or anonymity. Consider implications for a change or changes in methodological tools (virtual formats). [Max 50 words]

Due to the current COVID-19 landscape, the school's COVID-19 policy regulations will be adhered to so that all participants are provided with a safe environment to continue the research. In the event of school closures and online learning, methodologies and research tools will be virtually adapted to continue the research.

Power dynamics *(between researcher-participants, amongst participants, insider-research, reflexivity, gatekeepers, working with your colleagues, working with students, etc): [Max 100 words]*

I will regularly remind the children of their role as coparticipants and that the aim of this study is to help me to improve as a teacher. To avoid issues of powerlessness, participants will be made aware that their participation is voluntary and that they may decline participation without fear of consequence. Participants will be reminded that they are 'helpers' to ensure that they can reclaim their power at any stage. I hope to establish a safe, non-judgemental environment where participant contribution is valued and respected. Given that English is not the first language of some parents/guardians, consent forms will be made available in their home language if necessary. I will meet frequently with my critical friends to share findings and observations to maintain triangulation and eliminate subjective bias.

Informed consent and assent *(for participants - and guardians where appropriate. Please also note any other approvals that may be required from other bodies (i.e. Board of Management.): [Max 100 words]*

I intend to seek the approval of the principal and Board of Management to commence this research. As the co-participants are under the age of 18, I will seek the consent of their parents/guardians for their participation in this project. I will also seek the assent of the participants themselves and ask for their permission to use work samples, audio recording and conversations as part of the study. I will continue to seek consent as research progresses to ensure the children are informed participants at each stage and to remind them that I am the subject of this study. The participants and guardians will be made aware that they may cease participation at any time in the research process.

Consider if consent of participants may need to include a list of any new scenarios/situations that may be required for data collection activity in light of school closures or short-term illness of school members (teachers/SNA) and how this may impact the research. Outline below; [max 50 words]

In the event of short-term closures, participants required to stay home due to COVID-19 regulations or in the event of personal absence due to unforeseen circumstances, the research will continue online. To do so, the project plan and data collection tools will be virtually adapted or altered. Any participant with no access to a laptop will be provided with a school laptop or iPad in line with school protocol.

Sensitivity *(topics that may be potentially sensitive, intrusive or stressful, have you considered what to do in relation to dealing with the aftermath of a sensitive disclosure? how do you intend to deal with unexpected outcomes?) [Max 100 words]*

Due to the sensitive nature of this project (social-emotional topics), participants will be provided with a safe research environment and members of the school management team and restorative practice committee will be appointed as additional support in the event of sensitive feelings or issues arising. Due to my role as a mandated person, any disclosures or concerns will be reported to the designated liaison person in line with the Children First Guidance and Legislation.

Data storage *(where will the findings be stored; will they be potentially published in future? And by whom?) [Max 100 words]*

Data will be kept strictly confidential with hard documents being secured in a filing cabinet in the classroom which I will only have access to, before being typed up and stored on a password encrypted USB stick. Regarding data collection, anonymity will be ensured by using pseudonyms to code the participant's names. In the event of publishing my work following the completion of this project, permission to do this will be approved by Maynooth University and my supervisor Dr Suzanne O' Keefe. All data will be destroyed following period outlined by the university requirements of 10 years.

Attachments
Please attach, where available and applicable, information letters, consent forms and other materials that will be used to inform potential participants about this research.

Declaration *(Please sign and date)*

Orla Moloney 22/11/2021

'I confirm that to the best of my knowledge this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of undertaking this research.' If any of the conditions of this proposed research change, I confirm that I will re-negotiate ethical clearance with my supervisor.

Signed:_____

Supervisor use only:

Date Considered: _____

Approved	
Approved with recommendations (see below)	
Referred to applicant	
Referred to Department Research and Ethics Committee	

(*Tick as appropriate*)

Recommendations:

Signature of supervisor: Dr. Suzanne O'Keeffe

Department use only: *(only where applicable)*

Date Considered: 22/11/2021 (Review #2 - SOK)

Approved by Froebel Department Research and Ethics committee	√√
Approved with recommendations (see below)	√√
Referred to applicant (changes to be approved by supervisor)	
Referred to Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Subcommittee	

(*Tick as appropriate*)

Recommendations:

Orla, this application is suitable for approval once the following two minor issues are addressed.

1. 1b. Zoom call with parents – please provide more information here. Will this be as a group or individual online meetings? If hosting in group format, how will you ensure confidentiality? If hosting as individual meetings, please indicate that you will hold these meetings in a private space with headphones on to protect confidentiality.
2. Q3. Please insert year after December and January.

Once these amendments have been made, I am happy for you to proceed. It is alright in this instance if you go over the word count in these sections in order to clarify these two points. Suzanne (22/11/2021)

Signature of Dept. Ethics Committee Chair: _____

Approved by Froebel Department Research and Ethics committee	
Referred to applicant (changes to be approved by supervisor)	

(*Tick that apply)*

Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Subcommittee use only *(only where applicable)*

Date Considered: _____

Signed:

_____
FSS Research Ethics Committee nominee

Page Break

Checklist for students

Please complete the checklist below to confirm you have considered all ethical aspects of your research. (Note that the consent form/s, assent form/s and information sheet/s that must accompany this application will be scrutinised and any omission or inadequacy in detail will result in a request for amendments).	**Please tick**
I have attached (an) proper consent form/s, assent form/s and/or information sheet/s	
Each form and sheet is presented to a high standard, as suitable work carried out under the auspices of Maynooth University	
Each consent form has full contact details to enable prospective participants to make follow-up inquiries	
Each consent form has full details, in plain non-technical language, of the purpose of the research and the proposed role of the person being invited to participate	
Each consent form has full details of the purposes to which the data (in all their forms: text, oral, video, imagery etc) will be put, including for research dissemination purposes	

Each consent form explains how the privacy of the participants and their data will be protected, including the storage and ultimate destruction of the data as appropriate	
Each consent form gives assurances that the data collection (questionnaires, interviews, tests etc) will be carried out in a sensitive and non-stressful manner, that the participant has the right to cease participation at any time and without the need to supply a reason	
Please include here any other comments you wish to make about the consent form(s) and/or information sheet/s.	

Appendix B: Children's Consent Form

Child's name …….

I am trying to find out how children learn their English spellings in primary school. I would like to find out more about this. I would like to watch you and listen to you when you are in school and to write down some notes about you.

Would you be ok with that? Pick a box

Yes

No

I have asked your Mum or Dad or Guardian to talk to you about this. If you have any questions I would be happy to answer them. If you are happy with that could you sign the form that I have sent home?

If you change your mind after we start, that's ok too.

Appendix C: Children's Assent Form

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Child's assent to participate

My parent/guardian has read the information sheet with me and I agree to take part in this research.

Name of child (in block capitals):

_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Parental Information and Consent Forms

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree, I am doing a research project. The focus of my research is based on social-emotional learning and restorative practice. The overall aim of the research is to find out if restorative practice such as restorative check-in circles and the use of a shared social-emotional language can support and expand the children's social-emotional learning and development in school.

To do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by implementing a restorative practice social-emotional learning programme and provide the children with a social-emotional language tool that they can use to develop their social-emotional language and skills. I intend to use circle time in the form of daily check-in and check out circles and to facilitate this learning and to foster relationship building.

The data will be collected using observations, student's work, voice recordings, reflective journals and surveys. The children will be asked to give their opinions during and after research activities, for example when they are expressing their feelings, when they are communicating with others and when engaging in restorative circles.

The child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. Your child will be allowed to withdraw from the research process at any stage. All information will be confidential and information will be destroyed in a stated time frame in accordance with the University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I would like to invite you and your child to give permission for him/her to take part in this project.

If you have any queries on any part of this research project, feel free to contact me by email at:

Yours faithfully,

Orla Moloney

Appendix E: Information Sheet for Parents and Guardians

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Information Sheet

Parents and Guardians

Who is this information sheet for?

This information sheet is for parents and guardians.

What is this Action Research Project about?

Teachers undergoing the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood, Maynooth University are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observation, reflective notes, voice recordings, pupils' work and questionnaires. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What are the research questions?

- How can I enhance my teaching of social-emotional learning in the classroom?
- What methodologies or practices can I adopt to support and expand children's social emotional learning and development in school?

What sorts of methods will be used?

- Observation
- Reflective journals
- Questionnaires
- Students' work

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by me, Orla Moloney, as part of the Master of Education course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. The external examiners will also access the final thesis.

What are you being asked to do?

You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with your child as a participant of the research in the class. In all cases, the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with university guidelines.

Contact details: X

Appendix F: Parental Consent Form

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to the participation of my child in this study. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Parent / Guardian Signature_____

Parent / Guardian Signature_____

Date: _____

Name of Child _____

Child's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Declaration by Researcher

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Declaration by Researcher

This declaration must be signed by the applicant(s)

I acknowledge(s) and agree that:

a) It is my sole responsibility and obligation to comply with all Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.

b) I will comply with Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.

c) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Ethics Policy.

d) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy.

e) That the research will not commence until ethical approval has been granted by the Research and Ethics committee in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

Signature of Student:

Date:

Appendix H: Board of Management Permission Letter

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

14/11/2021

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Principal and Board of Management,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study in my Junior Infant class here. I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University, and am in the process of writing my Master's thesis. The study is entitled *"*

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by teaching my Irish lessons using a storytelling technique as my primary methodology and the research will be carried out during their designated daily Irish slot. The data will be collected using observations, a daily teacher journal, voice recordings and the pupils test scores.

The child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. The participants will be allowed withdraw from the research process at any stage. All information will be confidential, and information will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with the University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until ethical approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. If you have any queries on any part of this research project, feel free to contact me by email at

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form.

Yours faithfully,

Approved by:

_____ _____ _____

Print your name and title here Signature Date

Appendix I: Pre-Cycle 1 Student Social-Emotional Survey

Social-Emotional Learning Survey

Name: Date:

1. What do you think social-emotional learning means?	
2. Wrote down as many feelings and emotion words that you know	
3. Do you find it easy or difficult to talk about your feelings?	
4. Do you find it easy of difficult to talk about your feelings with other people?	
5. What do you do when you are angry or upset?	
6. How do you know if someone is angry or upset?	
7. Do find it easy or difficult to make friends?	
8. Do you think you are a good listener?	
9. Do you find it easy or difficult to talk to your friend after you have had a disagreement?	
10. Do you listen and try to understand your friend's point of view when you are in a disagreement about something?	
11. Can you control your emotions?	
12. Do you ever lose your temper? If so, when does it happen?	
13. Are you able to resolve an argument or disagreement you had with someone? If so, how?	
14. Are you able to resolve a disagreement you had with your friend?	
15. I think a good friend is….	

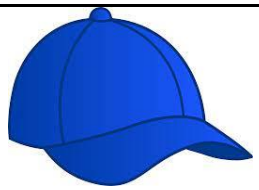
Appendix J: Post-Cycle 2 Student Social-Emotional Survey

Social-Emotional Learning Survey

Name: Date:

1. Wrote down as many feelings and emotion words that you know	
2. Do you find it easy or difficult to talk about your feelings?	
3. Do you find it easy of difficult to talk about your feelings with other people?	
4. What do you do when you are angry or upset?	
5. How do you know if someone is angry or upset?	
6. Do find it easy or difficult to make friends?	
7. Do you think you are a good listener?	
8. Do you find it easy or difficult to talk to your friend after you have had a disagreement?	
9. Do you listen and try to understand your friend's point of view when you are in a disagreement about something?	
10. Can you control your emotions?	
11. Do you ever lose your temper? If so, when does it happen?	
12. Are you able to resolve an argument or disagreement you had with someone? If so, how?	
13. Are you able to resolve a disagreement you had with your friend?	
14. I think a good friend is someone who	
15. Write down your own thoughts, opinions, feelings and reflections on the research this year	

Appendix K: Description of De Bono's Six Thinking Hats (1999)

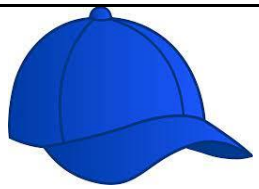
Coloured Hat	Description
	**Blue Hat** The blue hat is about process control. It is used for thinking about thinking. The blue hat invites people to form decisions and conclusions.
	**White Hat (Facts)** The white hate facilitates neutral and objective thinking, concerned with data, facts and information.
	**Black Hat (Judgement)** The black hat relates to caution. It is used for critical thinking and exploring why something is not working.
	**Red Hats (Emotion)** The red hat is associated with feelings, intuition and emotion. The red allows people to express feelings without justification or judgement.
	**Green Hat (Creativity)** The green hat is used for creative thinking and generating new ideas. This is your creative thinking hat.
	**Yellow Hat (Benefit)** The yellow hat is used for positive thinking. It looks for benefits in a situation. This hat encourages people to be optimistic.

Appendix L: Students' Restorative Thinking Hats Reflective Questions

Restorative Practice Thinking Hats

	**Friendship Keeper** • What thinking is needed?
	**Information & Facts** • What happened? • Who is involved? • Who has been affected and in what way?
	**Difficulties & Dangers** • What went wrong? • What are we finding difficult? • Who is hurt?
	**Emotions and Feelings** • How do you feel right now? • Name the emotion/s you are feeling now • How do you feel now after having our restorative chat?
	**Creative solutions** • What can we do to resolve this? • How could we do this differently? • What can we work on?
	**Positives and Plus Points** • What are the good points? • What went well? • What have you learned?

Appendix M: Observation Event Sample Template using De Bono's Six Thinking Hats (1999)

Coloured Hat	Children used intended social-emotional language of thinking hat
	
	
	
	
	
	

Appendix N: Restorative Affective Questions and Statements used during Restorative Circles

Affective Questions	Affective Statements
1. In what way are you a good friend to others? 2. How others a good friend to you? 3. What things can you sometimes give yourself a hard time over? 4. Who in your life is good at understanding how you feel? 5. How can you show respect to people? 6. How can we show empathy when our friend is sad/angry/disappointed? 7. How can we practice empathy in our class/yard? 8. How would your best friend describe you? 9. How do you behave when you feel happy, sad/ angry/anxious/ upset/disappointed. 10. How can you show good listening?	1. My favourite part of school is… 2. One of my goals this year is… 3. Something I can't do but want to be able to do by the end of the year is… 4. I am grateful for… 5. I am thankful for… 6. One thing that makes me feel happy is… 7. One thing that makes me feel angry/sad is… 8. One thing that makes me feel worried is… 9. I am so proud of …. because …. 10. On a scale of 1-10 I feel ….

Appendix O: Lessons and Structure of Restorative Practice Friendship Keeper Programme for Students

Restorative Practice Lessons for Students: Friendship Keeper Programme	
Lesson 1	Restorative Practice and Friendship Keepers
Lesson 2	The 5:1 Love Bomb
Lesson 3	Fair
Lesson 4	Respect
Lesson 5	Inclusive
Lesson 6	Empathy
Lesson 7	Nurture
Lesson 8	Did you Giraffe?
Lesson 9	Safe
Lesson 10	Light it Up- Love Bomb Quest

Structure of Friendship Keeper Programme Lessons
Connect In- We think about what we know already.
Connect Deeper- We unpack each week's theme/value/lesson a little more
Connect Out-We reflect on what we have learned/will take away
Connect Quest- Invites us to apply new learning into our own life