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A narrative of how I improved my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance parents' relationships with their children.

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Date: 18th September 2019

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Abstract

Restorative Practice is a philosophy and a set of skills focused on building, maintaining and repairing relationships and managing conflict in a respectful, inclusive manner. The aim of this study was twofold, firstly to determine if and how I can improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice for parents and secondly if effectively teaching the course content and facilitating parents' development of Restorative Practice skills, would enhance parents' relationships with their children. Specifically, the research question for this project is "How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance parents' relationships with their children?"

The chosen methodology was action research. Full ethical approval was sought and was granted by Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education Masters of Education in NUI Maynooth. In order to encourage a common restorative approach between home and school, together with a colleague, I co-facilitated two Restorative Practice courses for two groups of parents. The courses formed the basis of this action research project. In order to build a credible source of evidence, practical knowledge from my reflective journal, parents' daily diaries, correspondence from critical friends and notes from validation group meetings was used as data. The Restorative Practice courses taught the parents the values, skills and processes of Restorative Practice .

The key findings were, my claim that I have improved my facilitation of Restorative Practice , I have become critically reflective in my teaching and I have noticed that this critical mindset has now become a way of negotiation in my daily life. The parents were given the opportunity to reflect on their own behaviour, analyse their values and appraise themselves. According to their diaries they experienced a measure of personal growth and a deepening self-awareness. Their relationships with their children were enhanced. The evidence indicated that participation in the Restorative Practice course resulted in the parents replacing social control in the home with social engagement.

Throughout this action research I have become more aware of my own core values, I have found that they have influenced a change in my practice and that they have been the standards by which I judge my effectiveness in facilitating Restorative Practice . I have noted the following improvements in my practice: I have become a better listener and I have become more conscious of the parents' individual needs and more adaptive to the needs of the group. I have learned how to facilitate Restorative Practice using both a managed narrative and an inclusive dialogical approach.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In order to inform this research question: "How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance the parents' relationships with their children?", I investigated the literature pertaining to this question with a focus on a number of areas such as Froebelian Education, Andragogy, Care, Restorative Practice , Reflection and Critical Thinking. The aim of this study was firstly, to determine how I could improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice and secondly to establish if the effective teaching of the course content of Restorative Practice skills to a group of parents would enhance their relationships with their children. I have witnessed the positive impact of Restorative Practice on relationships in the school. One of my goals was that the parents would experience this positive effect in their own relationships with their children. I believe that the ideal scenario is that the children experience the restorative relational approach at school and at home, when dealing with relational issues.

A Community Committed to Restorative Practice

I have spent the past nine years of my professional life working in a school community committed to Restorative Practice . According to Hopkins (2014) Restorative Practice is a relational pedagogy. Put simply, Restorative Practice is a philosophy and a set of skills focused on building, maintaining and repairing relationships and managing conflict in a respectful, inclusive manner (Childhood Development Initiative, 2014:8). Children have experienced at first hand, teachers and school staff who devote their time and energy to building and developing relationships. The children learned that we use our restorative skills to repair and rebuild relationships when they breakdown or become damaged.

Harmony between Home and School

Friedrich Froebel, the renowned German educationalist, believed that there should be harmony between the child's life at home, in the school and in the community, i.e. there should be a commonality of approaches, values and expectations in all three areas (Bruce, 2012). Therefore, the ideal situation is that the child experiences the restorative approach both at school and at home. I am aware through my experience of interacting with parents in this school over the past twenty-two years that some children may experience a different approach at home, a traditional punitive approach, which contrasts with the approach experienced by the child in school. In the restorative school the teacher regards a child's misbehaviour as a teachable moment (Hopkins, 2014). The child is given time to reflect, to tell their story, to assume responsibility and accept accountability for their own actions. It is preferable that the home and school work in tandem with the same relational, restorative approach.

In order to encourage a common restorative approach between school and home, together with a colleague, I co-facilitated two Restorative Practice courses for parents. The courses formed the basis of this action research project as part of my Master's Degree. My main objective in this research was to explore ways to improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance parents' relationships with their children. As a primary school principal, with thirty-eight years experience in education, I have witnessed the transformational effects of Restorative Practice in supporting and managing children's behaviour in primary school.

Action Research

The methodology I chose was action research as it is a logical method of studying my pedagogy and researching my own practice. In my study the action occurred when I brought about a change in my facilitation of Restorative Practice and effected a change in the practice of the parents with whom I was working. As action research is person-centred, I wanted to focus on myself with the aim of improving my practice. Piggot-Irvine et al. (2015:548) define action research as "a collaborative transformative approach with joint focus on rigorous data collection, knowledge generation, reflection and distinctive action/change elements that pursue practical solutions". I implemented research with the parents so that I could improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice. It was crucial that I focus on my own practice as a teacher, learn from it and improve my practice as a result of critical reflection. McNiff (2013:1) having looked at action researchers' work globally, concludes that while doing action research we are all asking three questions: –"What are we doing? ", "Why are we doing it? " and "What do we hope to achieve from our research?" Sullivan et al. (2016:25) suggest that in action research each researcher is informed by their own values, norms and assumptions.

School Context

I work in a large co-educational primary school in south Dublin. I first became aware of Restorative Practice in 2010 during an introductory course in our school, run by the C.D.I. in Tallaght. Over the past ten years we have all been on a Restorative Practice journey. The majority of the staff have been trained to use Restorative Practice in the school, which places an emphasis on developing and maintaining good relationships. Over time, Restorative Practice has become embedded into our practice, "It is how we do things in our school" (Dix, 2017). We regard ourselves as a community committed

to Restorative Practice. We have high expectations of each other and as a community we provide a strong network of support in order to be the best we can be. Our aim is to cultivate a positive, warm, welcoming atmosphere in the school and to create an environment conducive to learning for children, staff and parents.

Educational Context:

A number of educational policies promote Restorative Practice as a strategy for relationship building and conflict resolution. The Action Plan on bullying (Government of Ireland, 2013:87) recognises that "Restorative approaches have been recommended in many studies as a means of dealing with bullying". According to this action plan, schools' procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying must now be consistent with a number of guidelines, the first of which is that the primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying, is to resolve any issues and restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved rather than to apportion blame.

In the Action Plan for Education (Government of Ireland, 2017:12), its first goal is "To improve the learning experience and the success of learners". In Action 13 of this goal the following sub-actions mention Restorative Practice for primary and post primary schools: "13.1 Continue to roll out training on Intervention Strategies and Restorative Practice for teachers at post-primary level. 13.2 Commence training on Intervention Strategies and Restorative Practice for teachers at primary level" (Government of Ireland, 2017:17).

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) carried out a pilot project in Restorative Practice with twenty-five schools from both the primary and secondary

sector in the academic year 2018-2019. The pilot programme ran for six months, from October 2018 to March 2019. The following are a number of conclusions from this project: “There was an overwhelming positive outcome for the vast majority of the participants’ comments reflected the value and importance of human relationships and the power of connection between people within the school and wider community” (PDST, 2019:46).

My Core Values

I believe that living my core values of respect, care, trust, integrity and fairness has helped me to foster strong healthy relationships in my school community. Respect is imperative for effective communication, relationship building, leadership and underpins effective education. As an educator, one of my primary roles is to care for all of the children equally. I value honesty by showing integrity in my interactions with all members of the school community. As a leader of learning it is essential for me to model this behaviour. I believe that trust is a vital ingredient for all effective relationships. According to Thorsborne and Blood (2013) strong relationships are central to learning and pedagogical practice. All of my relationships both at a personal level and in school are based on trust. The parents trust me to educate their children and to keep them safe and support them to develop healthy relationships. Fairness is another value I cherish. From my perspective fair process is central to all of my interactions with people. Hopkins (2004) suggests that when we are developing school policy, relationships must be the bedrock of those policies. Herein lies the source of my belief in and commitment to Restorative Practice , thus we have constructed our school philosophy with care and relationships as its foundation.

Content and Structure

In chapter two I will discuss my literature foundation. I will discuss Froebelian Education, Andragogy, Care, Restorative Practice , Teacher Reflection and Critical Reflection. In the third chapter I will discuss and explain the research methods and methodology used in this research. Chapter four will describe and analyse my data and findings. Finally I will concluded in Chapter five with an explanation of my own personal development, the parents' learning, learning in the wider community and recommendations from my findings.

Chapter 2

A Review of Literature

Introduction

I will begin by briefly discussing Froebelian Education in relation to my research project. Given that parents are central to my action research I will then detail the concept of Andragogy - the process of educating adults. The next section will pertain to the concept of Care and its pivotal role in the implementation of Restorative Practice. I will give an introduction to Reflections on Teaching before Restorative Practice, Origins of Restorative Practice, Restorative Practice in School, Relationships and Restorative Practice, Choosing our Responses, Restorative Practice in Ireland, Implementing Restorative Practice and its uses particularly in the school community. Finally, to conclude this literature review I explored the concept and process of critical reflection, as this is a central component of my research question.

Froebelian Education and Restorative Practice

Friedrich Froebel encouraged the child to respect and to cultivate their own ideas thereby making learning more experiential in contrast to the traditional rote learning where the child is passive (Liebschner, 1991).

Froebel believed that there should be a closeness, a unity between the child's life at home, in the kindergarten and in the community, i.e. there should be a commonality of approaches, values and expectations in all three environs. The outdoors and play have a central role in Froebelian education, for example, it would be confusing for the child if the school encouraged adventurous outdoor play while the parents ruled it out. It was seen that consistency is crucial for the child, as it prevents the child receiving mixed

messages. It is proposed that this harmony facilitates the child's learning and supports development in a secure space (Gill, 2007). With regard to misbehavior and conflict resolution children may experience a different approach at home, a traditional punitive approach, which may contrast with the approach experienced by the child in school. In a restorative school the teacher regards a child's misbehaviour as a teachable moment (Hopkins, 2014). The child will be given time to reflect and will also be given an opportunity to tell their story. The child is being held to account and the child is being encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. The emphasis is on repairing and rebuilding a damaged relationship. It is preferable that both the home and school work in tandem with the same relational, restorative approach.

Froebel espoused the individuality of every child, each being a valued member of a family, community and finally the universe (Bruce, 2012). This concept blends well with the philosophy of Restorative Practice as we acknowledge the unique importance of each person as a relational human being (Vaandering, 2014). Froebelian tradition has a very respectful regard for the individual child being conscious of his/her value in the community (Liebschner, 1991). Some of the Restorative Practice approaches are quite similar to the Froebelian philosophy in that they focus on the individual, who is valued, respected and listened to with an open heart and mind (Hopkins, 2014).

The following statement is attributed to Froebel: "Begin where the learner is, not where the learner ought to be", cited in Bruce (2011:30). According to Osgood (2006, 2010) schools that are following these principles today can experience a tension between the statutory pressures on the school via an overloaded curriculum, a didactic teaching approach that is driven by national assessment testing and the Froebelian desire to put

the child at the centre of their own learning. Teachers are hugely challenged to uphold these ideals. Schools implementing Restorative Practice also experience that tension between building, maintaining and repairing relationships and the traditional practice of behaviour control and compliance (Vaandering, 2011).

What is Andragogy?

As a principal teacher of a primary school I engage in the child focused teaching approach of pedagogy. In this body of research however, my teaching approach is that of andragogy, an approach focused on adults. As my research project is working with and teaching parents, it is essential that the concept of andragogy is discussed. Alexander Kapp (1800–1869), a German gymnasium teacher, was supposedly the first known user of the concept of andragogy (Loeng, 2017:630). However, it was E.C. Lindeman who first introduced andragogy to the USA in 1926 (Henschke, 2015). He originally asserted that learning in adulthood must be about understanding the significance of our life experiences. In the 1970's the American educator, Malcolm Knowles (1980) popularised the term andragogy in the English speaking world. It was Knowles (2012), who characterised andragogy as "A set of core adult learning principles that apply to all adult learning situations". However to date, the world of adult education is divided on what andragogy really is. It has been portrayed as a set of guidelines (Merriam, 1993), a philosophy (Pratt, 1993), a set of assumptions (Brookfield, 1986) and a theory (Knowles, 1989b).

Andragogy in the Context of Action Research

Since I was conducting this action research project with parents, it was my intention to engage from an andragogical perspective. Additionally, it was imperative to maintain an awareness of Knowles viewpoint of andragogy, which according to Merriam,

Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) hinges on six principles: (1) Learners' need to know (2) Use of experience in learning, (3) Self-directed learning, (4) Readiness to learn, (5) Orientation to learning, and (6) Internal motivation. While teaching two four week programmes on 'Restorative Practice ' in January, February and March 2019, Knowles' aforementioned assumptions were incorporated into the programmes. Participants played an active role in the classroom, the majority of the work was conducted using education circles, rather than didactically in a classroom setting. In addition role-play was implemented regularly in each session, thus facilitating participants own reflection on past experiences, with the aim of incorporating these into the learning process. A number of sample "Conflict Storylines" were introduced to the class and students were urged to delve into their own well of experience to resolve the issues (Birzer, 2003).

Dialogical Approach

By using the dialogical approach, I modelled my core values of respect, inclusion and integrity as I encouraged the parents to speak, listen and participate in the lessons. According to Kim and Wilkinson (2019) dialogical teaching is an approach that focuses on the potential of talk to further develop students thinking, learning and problem-solving capabilities. Using a dialogical approach in my facilitation of the Restorative Practice courses, I created the space for my students to talk, reflect and learn (Alexander, 2004). This dialogical approach resonates with the restorative approach to relationship building as it gives each student an opportunity to speak and listen in a respectful manner. Dialogue facilitates the growth and development of relationships in the classroom and it also draws our attention to relationships beyond the classroom in the wider community (Shor & Freire, 1987).

Andragogy and Restorative Practice

As a teacher of Restorative Practice using an andragogical approach, there was a need for flexibility. It was essential in this context to be ready to modify the class to include issues or experiences the students deemed relevant or important. The parents on the Restorative Practice courses were attending as they wished to learn about Restorative Practice and how it may have an impact on their relationships. It could be assumed that these parents would adopt a solution focused mindset at the outset of these courses, thus I was teaching the skills, values and processes of Restorative Practice using subjects and situations taken from everyday family life (Forrest and Peterson, 2006).

Care

As a parent I have spent the past twenty five years caring for my four children's needs. As a professional I work as a teacher in a caring career and in a school that places particular emphasis on relationships. My core values of care, trust and respect permeate my daily life as a father and as a principal teacher. As principal teacher I believe it is my role to care for the needs of the children and staff of my school. Thus care is a value I consciously live each day. Cavanagh et al. (2012) put forward the view that schools wishing to develop a culture of care need to continually concentrate on building trust, supporting student wellbeing and developing respectful relationships. With my staff, I work to create a caring school environment that allows both the children and staff to reach their full potential and to be the best version of themselves that they can be. According to Fickel et al. (2017) schools that wish to transform their culture through the use of Restorative Practice and the concept of care, place a particular emphasis on learning experiences that promote relationships. They describe Restorative Practice as a "value based philosophy", with priority given to building, maintaining and repairing

relationships. Within the caring environment of the school the students are given the freedom to learn how to care for themselves and for others (Cavanagh et al. 2012).

Pedagogy of Care

Alexander (2009:5) defines pedagogy as "the observable act of teaching together with its attendant discourse of educational theories, values, evidence and justifications. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted". According to Sidorkin (2000) a pedagogy of care has at its core the concept of "relationships". In addition, the cultivation of a student's ability to care and live in harmony with fellow students and teachers is one of the prime objectives of a pedagogy of care (Fickle et al., 2017). Hopkins (2014) regards Restorative Practice in schools as a relational, restorative pedagogy. This involves knowing both ourselves and our students; being aware of their needs and abilities and finally promoting a high standard of behaviour. In education today, Noddings (2005) observes that we associate a caring teacher as one who is a hard worker, with good discipline and who wants the best for his or her students. Sometimes students may acknowledge that their teacher is 'caring', however they state that they do not experience being cared for. Thus we can conclude that relationships are inherent in both a pedagogy of care and a restorative pedagogy.

Relational Caring

When we regard caring as a virtue, then all attention is focused on the one who is doing the caring. However, if we are to think of caring as a relational construct, it is imperative that focus be attributed to both parties in the relationship. We show children how to care by demonstrating caring relationships with them. The concept of "caring for", requires the establishment of relationships. "Care theory", according to Noddings

is a relational theory, which requires at least two people for it to function effectively. If the “cared for”, doesn’t recognise the attempt of the other person to care for them, then there is no “caring relation” (Noddings, 2000).

Noddings (2000), believes that the time we spend on caring and how we treat one another is fundamental. Noddings (1995), suggests the importance of showing genuine care for our children and explicitly teaching children how to care. How we treat children will have a significant impact on how they relate to both teachers and other children in their school interactions. Children won’t necessarily remember exactly what we taught them, however, they will certainly remember how they felt when we cared for them (Noddings,1984). By building care and trust, students will be more receptive to interactions with their teachers in the classroom. As we develop a relationship with our students we learn about their interests, worries, talents and needs. We learn there is much more to teaching than delivering the national curriculum, thus we are motivated to improve our own knowledge in this field (Noddings, 1999).

Modelling Caring Relationships in School

Education in its broadest sense is defined by Noddings (2002:283), as “a constellation of encounters, both planned and unplanned, that promote growth through acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding and appreciation”. She views the home as the principal educator, which she argues should have an impact on the development of social policy. This has a number of implications for social policy, primarily that every child lives in a loving home that cares for their material needs. Secondly, schools should teach “education for home life in their curriculum” (Noddings 2002:289). Thirdly, that the methodologies used by teachers to educate in the schools should mirror

those established in the more effective families. As parents we want to do the best for our children, we want to care for them to the best of our ability. We endeavor to build caring relationship with them, but we are unable to teach them what they need to know, we have a deficit in the required knowledge (Noddings, 2005). This research project endeavoured, to bridge the gap in this knowledge by teaching the values, skills and processes of Restorative Practice and highlighting the central role of care in enhancing the relationships between parents and children.

Reflections on Teaching before Restorative Practice

On joining the teaching profession in 1981, I entered a teaching culture where the classroom door was closed behind you and you got on with the job of teaching thirty-eight boys and girls. There was very little, if any, collaborative work between teaching colleagues. Teachers were required to cope with and adapt to a very fluid, changeable class environment. On the occasion when issues of discipline arose, you were expected to deal with them or if they became too challenging you would bring the matter to the attention of the principal. It was a very traditional, retributive approach to discipline in the classroom. When children did something inappropriate or failed to behave according to the school or class rules there were consequences and they were punished. Questions such as; “What rule was broken?”, “Who did it?”, “What punishment should be handed out?” were asked. The focus was on apportioning blame and imposing punishment to deter or prevent further issues. (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Punishments available to teachers were; transcribing lines or paragraphs of text, extra homework, removal from class, isolation in class, removal of privileges to mention but a few. This approach to discipline was combined with praise and rewards for good behaviour, in the form of a positive comment being written in the school journal,

reward stickers and certificates of achievement awarded to children on a Friday. Unfortunately these actions did not always have the desired effect, in fact in many cases they built fear, unhappiness, resentment and usually more of the same behaviour.

Currently many schools manage inappropriate behaviour by implementing a regime of sanctions. The literature and research shows that the punitive, sanctions based approach to supporting and managing children's behaviour is ineffective (McCluskey et al., 2008). The children are not given an opportunity to explain themselves, to take responsibility for their own actions and to be accountable for how this behaviour impacts themselves and the other children in the class. When we are operating from a retributive mindset, issues of negative behaviour or harm caused by students are managed in a reactive manner and in many cases do not allow for the best outcomes for the students and teachers involved (Hendry, 2009). As a direct result of engaging in Restorative Practice over the last nine years, I would now find it impossible to work in a school in which such a mindset prevails. I could not work in this environment today as it would be totally contradictory to my values of respect, care, trust, integrity and fairness. In my school, children are valued, they have a voice and are listened to in a respectful manner. They learn the meaning of these values as they witness the adults in their lives demonstrating such values towards other members of the school community. From what I know now about Restorative Practice if I was teaching in such a punitive setting I would be a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989).

Origins of Restorative Practice

Restorative Practice offers an alternative approach. Restorative Practice has its origin in restorative justice (Zehr, 2002). Initially the focus of restorative justice was switching from the punitive focus on "lawbreaking, guilt and punishment" towards a more restorative emphasis on "harms, needs and obligations" (Zehr, 2008:3). The phenomenon can be traced back to ancient practices in indigenous cultures around the world e.g. Native American, First Nations Canada, Maori, Aboriginal and Celts. Zehr (2008) suggests that the foundation of Restorative Practice is relationships. We are all connected because we belong to a community and when a misbehaviour or an offence occurs it affects the person, the relationship and the community. According to George Washington Carver all learning is "understanding relationships" (McMurry,1981:97).

Restorative Practice in Schools

Restorative Practice in education encompasses the school community in its entirety – staff, children and parents. Using the Restorative Practice lens in our schools can have a tremendous impact on how we teach social justice and resolve conflict (McCluskey et al., 2008). Various terms are used for Restorative Practice which is carried out in schools around the world, such as restorative justice and restorative approaches. For the purposes of clarity I will be using the term Restorative Practice in this document.

Examples of these practices are: one to one conversations, group meetings, circles and conferences (Morrison et al., 2005). As reported by Drewery (2016), schools that have used Restorative Practice as a way of dealing with discipline matters, have implemented it on a whole school basis, as they have recognised the positive benefits to the whole school culture. These schools have moved away from a punitive approach to a more

relational practice. Their focus is on the relationships in the classroom, school, home and community (McGarrigle, 2015).

Restorative Practice and Relationships

Hopkins (2014) reports that many schools are now becoming aware of the importance of relationships in the school community. As a consequence, they are less fixated on upholding rules and are concentrating on building, repairing and maintaining relationships. In addition Vaandering (2014:510) notices how many schools are now supplanting "social control with social engagement". This gives us the space and opportunity to work with children to develop their social and emotional abilities. If we concentrate on social and emotional teaching and learning, we will create the environment that facilitates the growth of social and human capital in our schools.

Unfortunately some schools committed to Restorative Practice today still focus on using the approach to deal with discipline problems or conflict in a reactive way. Therein lies a danger – that Restorative Practice will only be associated with resolving discipline issues and coping with conflict or that it will be seen as another programme or addition to the teachers' toolkit of strategies for dealing with conflict and behavioural issues in the classroom. We need to guard against these tendencies.

When we are taking a "Restorative Approach", according to Vaandering (2014), we use a continuum of activities. These are often illustrated by the use of a triangle (Figure 2.1).

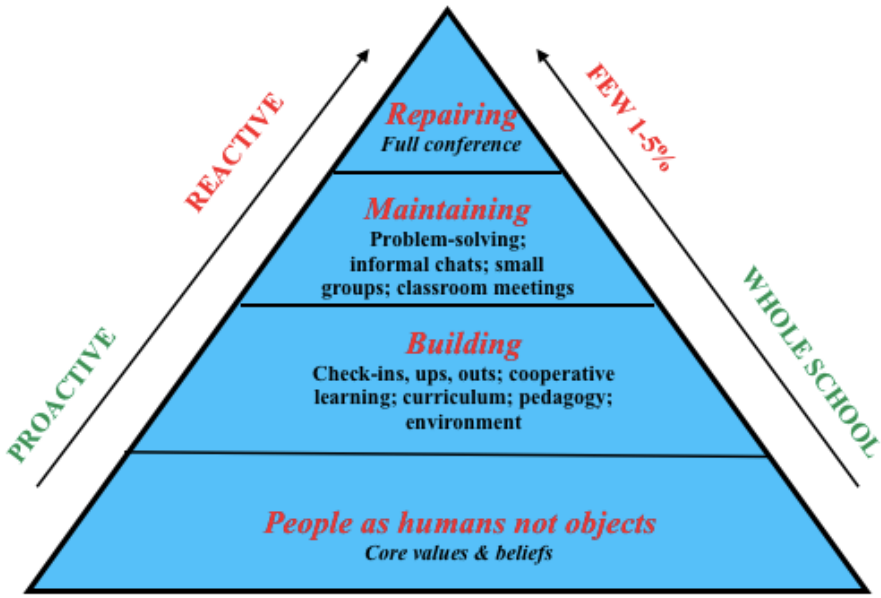

Figure 2.1 Relationship Triangle (adapted from Morrison [2007] and Hopkins [2014]).

This triangle presents us with an array of intervention supports. The basis or foundation of all these supports is that we are all entitled to be treated as relational human beings. This includes relationships between students and fellow students, students and staff but also inter-staff relations throughout the school community – "The way we do things around this school" (Dix, 2017). This approach reflects my own core values of respect, fairness, inclusivity, justice and care and those of Restorative Practice . Referring to Figure 2.1 we note that the vast majority of interactions are taken up with making, developing and maintaining relationships with the people with whom we live and work. Ninety-five per cent of the triangle is based on proactive activities such as; daily check ins, co-operative learning, restorative chats, informal meetings and problem solving

circles. By teaching students the values, skills and processes of Restorative Practice we are enabling them to maintain relationships. When minor conflicts arise the skills of mediation and conflict resolution learned in the classroom are utilised by all involved. Hopkins (2014), refers to Restorative Practice as a pedagogy of relationships. She suggests that a teacher's role is to model these behaviours. I modelled those behaviour for both the children in my school and for the parents on the R.P courses. In modelling I was fulfilling my value of care. This approach to building relationships requires consistent effort on the part of teachers and staff. This is the paradigm shift that Zehr (2015) is referring to when teachers use a new lens to focus on the students and their needs rather than the rules or expectations of the school or system.

Choice and Choosing our Responses

I included choice in this literature review because I always believed that choice was important as it showed respect, inclusion and care for students. We learn from Viktor Frankl that "everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (Frankl, 2004:7). He believes that we will always have an opportunity to choose, between stimulus and response there is a white space, it may be only a second or two, but this space provides us with the opportunity to choose our response. Likewise, when we are dealing with relationships, people do not make us behave in a certain manner. No matter what happened to us we always have a choice on how we respond. Thus, when we are working restoratively, we highlight this choice option. We are responsible for the choices we make. As teachers or parents working with children, we must create an awareness of this ability to choose. We are working with the child to take ownership and responsibility for their own behaviour.

Restorative Practice in Ireland

In Ireland, the Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) defines Restorative Practice as "both a philosophy and a set of skills that have the core aim of building strong relationships and resolving conflict in a simple and emotionally healthy manner" (CDI, 2014:8). Therefore a school committed to Restorative Practice is on a daily journey attempting to transform the school to a community that values the humanity of each person, acknowledges individual needs and the desire to relate and build connections (Pranis, 2005). According to O'Dwyer (2014) Restorative Practice is grounded on a series of core values. These values are honesty, respect, engagement, restoration, healing, fairness, personal accountability, inclusiveness, empowerment, collaboration and problem solving (Restorative Justice Consortium, 2004). The majority of the Restorative Practice values resonate with my own core values of respect, care, trust, integrity and fairness. In restorative justice there is an emphasis on the values of respect, personal accountability and responsibility, diversity, individuality and interconnectedness (Zehr, 2002; Umbreit 2001).

We are social beings who thrive when we are in an environment that values relationships above rules and regulations. Our focus is on caring for our students and meeting their needs. According to Hopkins (2014) we should regard any challenging situation or behavioural issue in class as a teachable moment. Thus we regard these scenarios as opportunities for learning, personal development and relationship building. Of note, Noddings (1984:193) believes that the aim of education is "to reveal an attainable image of self that is lovelier than that manifested in his or her present acts". Restorative practitioners in schools should be devoting time and energy to building and

developing relationships. When those relationships breakdown or are damaged they should endeavour to repair or rebuild them (Hopkins, 2014).

Implementing Restorative Practice

There has been relatively little research into Restorative Practice and parents in the Irish context. Therefore, I concentrated on reviewing the literature on the current use of Restorative Practice in schools. The implementation of Restorative Practice in schools requires a transformation in the culture of the school. Relationships are the focal point of this change. This cultural change is led by the adults, teachers, administration staff and special needs assistants who work with the children to build and develop relationships throughout the whole school. There is a constant emphasis on the preventative approach, being vigilant and not allowing issues to develop to the stage where they become problems. It is solution focused. Disputes will arise and when they do, the adults will be ready to work with the child, teacher and parents to find a resolution. We are not searching for someone to blame, to find whose fault is it. We all own the issue, therefore we have a vested interest in resolving it. To be effective in its implementation we need to view Restorative Practice as our philosophy or "the way we do things around here" (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013:12).

The traditional approach to discipline is centuries old, it reverts back to the era of Thomas Hobbes and the Norman Conquest. Therefore schools wishing to implement Restorative Practice into their learning communities will require "a paradigm shift" (Zehr, 2002), from a retributive, punishment based response to a restorative way of dealing with discipline issues or conflict (Braithwaite, 2002). This means that the staff, students and parents will need to view behavioural issues in a new light. The focus will be on the issue or problem and its resolution, not on identifying a person to blame. This

cultural change will be manifest when respectful relational conversations are taking place with everyone working collectively in response to an issue (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005).

A restorative approach is a form of enquiry that focuses on repairing harm and building relationships. Therefore when an issue arises in the classroom / school, that causes a relationship to breakdown, the teacher works with the students to enable them to take responsibility for their behaviour, to be accountable for their actions, to identify what happened and to support them in resolving the matter in a manner that caters for everyone's needs. In the restorative classroom there are high expectations for every child, together with high levels of support. There is clarity around behaviour and the teacher works with the students to solve problems. The restorative questions are used on a regular basis (Wachtel, 2012).

All members of staff and parents were given a "Restorative Questions" card (Figure 2.2).

The following are the restorative questions:

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who has been affected and in what way?
5. How could things have been done differently?
6. What do you think needs to happened next?

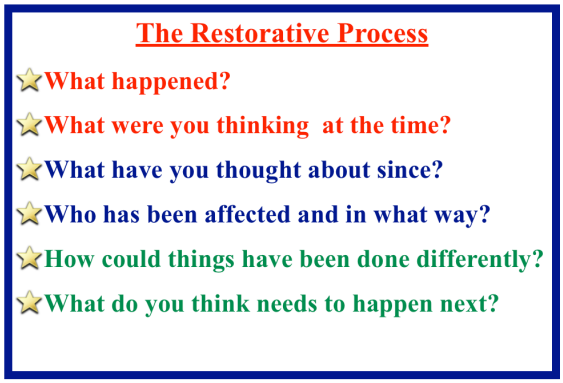

Figure 2.2 Restorative Questions Card (adapted from C.D.I [2018]).

The most important questions are the first and last. It is imperative that they are always used in the restorative conversation. The question, “What happened?” , is open-ended, non- threatening. It gives the student an opportunity to be heard. There is an emphasis on supporting everybody being heard and having a voice, being responsible and accountable for their actions and playing a role in finding a solution. The restorative questions are feelings based and solution focused. It is imperative that we incorporate the teaching of emotional language in our pedagogy (Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2014).

Building Community

When we are restorative in our practices we are constantly endeavouring to prevent issues occurring and when they do occur, we try to react in an appropriate, measured manner. As mentioned previously for Restorative Practice to be effective in schools it must be a whole school approach. All members of the school community should be invested in the process of building a community founded on strong healthy relationships. Schools are places where children may grow and develop. We all have a the human need to belong, to relate, to be members of the community. When schools focus on working with the students to build strong interdependent relationships, the result is a strong bond of friendship and positive relationships in the community

(Rodman, 2007). Children who feel they belong in the school community and have built good relationships with their peers and teachers are likely to have good learning experiences. Wearmouth and Berryman (2012: 257) claim that "the sense of belonging or marginalisation also affects the students' behaviour and self-perception".

Under section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Boards of Management of all schools in Ireland are mandated to have a written code of behaviour for their pupils. This behaviour policy must be written in line with the Guidelines sent to all schools by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). This code of behaviour must be made available to the teachers and parents. In many cases before a child is enrolled into a school the parents will sign up to the code of behaviour, indicating in writing that they will support their child to uphold the code (NEWB, 2008:2).

These guidelines inform us that each code should be written in accordance with the schools mission statement, values statement and school's vision. We are instructed that the code should support the orderly running of the school and should highlight the standards of behaviour required by the school. There is a focus on promoting the school ethos and relationships.

Some schools have integrated the restorative philosophy, principles and practices into their school's code of behaviour. These schools are in a position to work with both the "harmed student" and "harm doer" to help them resolve the conflict. These children are given an opportunity to express their own narrative. The child causing the harm is supported in being accountable and taking responsibility for his/her own actions and working with the "harmed" student to find a mutual resolution. The school places emphasis on the child accepting personal responsibility, supporting each child through

the process, repairing the relationship and maintaining both children in the school community (Wearmouth and Berryman, 2012 :261). When schools are punitive and resort to suspending a child as a result of behavioural issues, that child's learning ceases. The child is out of the school's learning environment and the school has no idea how the child is spending his/her time. This exclusion impedes the child's academic progress. Children who experience suspensions are more likely to drop out of school (Flannery, 2015).

What the Research into Restorative Practice says:

Substantial research on the impact of Restorative Practice has been carried out in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Scotland and Ireland. I wish to focus on the following research from Scotland, Australia and Ireland.

Firstly McCluskey et al.(2008) refer to a pilot project carried out in Scotland in 2004. The following are some of the findings:

a. Strong evidence of cultural change, restorative language being used by the pupils and staff
b. The atmosphere in schools became calmer
c. Pupils stated they felt they had a voice and a more positive school experience.
d. Pupils described the experience as being fair, all sides being listened to
e. Evidence of children developing conflict resolution skills
f. Pupils reported that Restorative Practice resulted in teachers "listening to both sides", "not shouting" and "making everyone feel equal" (Mc Cluskey et al., 2008).

In Australia Kehoe et al. (2018) carried out research seeking to understand the direct impact Restorative Practice may have on changing students behaviour. The study indicated that Restorative Practice had improved pupils social skills and behaviour. Five key themes were identified: Harmony, Empathy, Awareness and accountability of one's own actions, Respectful relationships and Thinking in a reflective way.

Finally I wish to focus on some Irish research carried out by Fives et al., (2013), from the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway, which carried out research on the Restorative Practice Programme in Tallaght West, Dublin 24. The findings of this independent evaluation of the Tallaght West Programme are:

1. Using the Restorative Practice approach led to a 43% reduction in overall disputes in homes, schools and families
2. 87% of those who took part in Restorative Practice training reported being better able to deal with conflict
3. 82% of participants reported being better able to manage problems within their work places or families as a result of Restorative Practice training

Challenges to Embedding Restorative Practice

The literature shows that there are numerous challenges to embedding Restorative Practice in schools today. Consistency of approach in Restorative Practice right across the whole school can be quite difficult. In order to have the same approach in all areas of the school from the classroom to the staffroom, it is imperative that all staff are trained in Restorative Practice . This training will enable the school staff to carry out a whole school approach. Retaining staff and staff turnover is an ongoing challenge. Thus

it would be very beneficial that ongoing upskilling and training would be available to all staff. An additional challenge is that carrying out a restorative conversation can be quite time consuming. The various levels of maturity in a classroom of children can be a barrier to promoting Restorative Practice . Some children cannot express their feelings or emotions while others are well able to articulate their point of view. As there is much outside pressure on schools from constantly changing school policies and the national curriculum, the lack of time can at times seem a real challenge to implementing Restorative Practice in the classroom. Despite all of the aforementioned issues Blood and Thorsborne (2005) state that the schools that have worked long term to embed restorative approaches and processes into the school culture, will be able to overcome curriculum pressures, policy issues and the other difficulties stated previously.

Comer (2001) declared that if serious learning is to happen in our schools it is essential that significant relationships are developed between all the relevant parties. As previously mentioned in its most basic form, Restorative Practice is an approach we use in our schools to manage conflict and resolve problems that arise from time to time. On the other hand Hopkins (2014) argues that Restorative Practice is a relational pedagogy. It is a value based philosophy that permeates all we do in our schools, in particular how we teach. The emphasises in Restorative Practice is on building and maintaining strong relationships between all members of the school community (Morrison et al., 2005). Restorative Practice gives people time and space to think in a reflective manner. Students are given an opportunity to hear both sides of the story, to consider others feelings, to develop awareness of how their actions affect others (Kehoe et al., 2018). Finally, the effective implementation of Restorative Practice in the school setting will only occur when it is a whole school approach, when it includes students, teachers, other school staff and parents.

My Reflections

Over the past 10 years, despite giving much thought to my practice as a principal, I did not follow any systematic framework or approach to my reflections. Each evening I spent some time thinking back over the day in school. Noting the positives, challenges and learning what I could bring forward to the next day's experience. From the outset of this Masters programme I have been keeping a reflective journal on a daily basis as recommended in my self study action research approach. Each of these journal entries was shared with my critical friend, the dialogue this process has prompted has been enlightening. This journal provided me with evidence of my learning journey. Larrivee (2000) encourages teachers to be curious, constantly accruing knowledge. She asserts that if we are critically reflective in our teaching then we will develop this mindset as a way of being in our daily lives. We will develop into reflective teachers both professionally and personally. Similarly, Sullivan et al. (2016) states that reflection is an action and that it is an integral component of the learning process.

John Dewey and Reflective Practice

John Dewey is often alluded to as the architect of reflective practice. Reflective thinking is "turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious consideration" (Dewey, 1933:3). In his opinion when we reflect, our actions transform from the reflective to the deliberate and we are thereby enabled to plan our actions purposefully (Dewey, 1933). In his text, "How We Think" (1933) he suggests the following three characteristics to be essential for the reflective practitioner; Wholeheartedness – which implies a feeling of sincerity and enthusiasm, Open-mindedness – which suggests a willingness to listen to others' ideas and Intellectual Responsibility – referring to the fact that we are responsible and accountable for our thoughts and actions.

Teaching Reflection

Green (1984) questions the amount of time teachers spend on reflection especially when they can get caught up on what Dadds (2001:49-53) refers to as the "hurry-along curriculum" – in this instance referring to the didactic, teacher centred approach which focuses on the delivery of the curriculum and the transmission of information. However in support of reflection, Singh (2008) reported that teachers who reflect on their practice are better equipped to identify the needs of their students and are thereby enabled to formulate a plan to support them. Singh also claims that if students are to develop critical thinking they would also benefit from practising reflection. While Green (1984:55) accepts that generally we can get 'caught up' in the business of life, she proposed that it is crucial for us to pause and reflect on issues and events in our practice, in order to gain deeper understanding, in order to make adjustments to improve our future praxis. She encourages us to set aside time, so that we can study ourselves and our relations and interactions in our schools. Green also believes that the teacher should invest time in helping the child to reflect with a critical eye on the world, thus enabling them to make sense of their experiences and facilitating them to be change agents in their own lives.

The Narrative Disclosure Approach

There is a general consensus among writers in the field of critical reflection, that learning is the end product of reflection. Learning to think critically is the primary purpose or goal of education as claimed by Brookfield (Johanson and Brookfield, 2010). Teaching is a very complex operation, we use words and actions to engage our students but we can never be certain the impact that these interactions are having on the learning. For example, using Brookfield's narrative disclosure approach in teaching can

be a very effective way of engaging with students. The narrative disclosure approach is where the teacher uses examples from his/her life to teach a concept. By implementing this method, the teacher is making connections using his/her own personal story or life experiences. According to Brookfield (2017:2) some students find this teaching approach appealing and helpful to their learning, however it is possible that others may perceive it as self-important. Thus, it is imperative for teachers to use critical reflection to unearth, analyse and evaluate these challenges in the teaching process. We need to be constantly monitoring and assessing our assumptions that inform our actions as teacher, if we want to become critically reflective in our practice (Brookfield, 2017:5).

Individuality in Reflection

When we study reflection and its impact on our own learning or knowledge creation, we need to be cognisant of our educational values. These values will influence how we make sense of the world around us. They define our experience and impact on our teaching and learning (Sullivan et al, 2016). In evidence of this, it can be acknowledged that the epistemological background of various authors has greatly influenced how they characterise reflective practice. According to Mc Niff (2014), this "background" refers to a theory of knowledge, how we gain knowledge and how we can ascertain that this knowledge is legitimate and can stand up to investigation. Dewey's (1933) perspective on reflection is one of problem solving. While Freire (1972:99), proposed that "Critical reflection is also action", he postulated that critical reflection deals with real people and their relationship with the world. According to Freire teaching provides an opportunity for people to come together and through discussion create knowledge. Bolton (2014:33) describes reflection as "Taking ownership of our own learning". For the purpose of my

own reflective work I drew from Brookfield's (2017) four lenses which I will now discuss.

Framework for a Critically Reflective Teacher

Brookfield (2017) has developed a framework of four specific lenses that can be used as an aid to becoming a critically reflective teacher. The first lens, the teacher's own experience proposes the question, "What has been learned from personal experience?" This lens seeks to glean information from our own lived experiences, as Michael Polanyi (1967:4) wrote in The Tacit Dimension, "we can know more than we can tell". He dubbed this phenomenon "tacit knowledge" - intuition or gut feeling. The second lens is the "Students Own Eyes", it is important that our students are heard, their perception of the learning experience can be contrary to that of the teacher. In the democratic classroom giving them a voice to express their learning, opinions and ideas can have a profound impact on the teachers' thinking, facilitating critical reflection. The third lens of Brookfield's framework is that of the "Colleague's Perceptions". It is the opinion of Sullivan et al., (2016) that this lens can help the teacher analyse the assumptions they make about their daily work practices. They believe it can be really helpful to have another teacher visit the classroom. They are in a vital position to provide a different perspective on how the children are learning and on the teacher's own interactions with their class. The fourth and final lens is that of "Theory and Research". Literature and theory can provide us with the knowledge to support us to comprehend our practice. They can empower us with new ways of reasoning and thinking about issues or questions that arise daily. Using these four lenses as a framework for critical reflective thinking can be very helpful as it provides various viewpoints to facilitate a more complete understanding of situations, it also adds to the validity and rigour of my research

Chapter 3

Research Methodology of The Study

What is Research?

Research, according to Bassey (1992:4) is "systematic critical enquiry". Cohen et al (2018:3) suggest that educational research "is a deliberate, complex, subtle, challenging, thoughtful activity and often a messier process than researchers would like it to be". Bassey (2002) identifies the three paradigms of educational research: positivist research paradigm, interpretive research paradigm and action research paradigm. "Paradigms are ways of looking at the world, different assumptions about what the world is like and how we can understand and know about it" (Hammersley, 2013:15). In this chapter I will briefly discuss each of the aforementioned paradigms and outline some of the differences and similarities between them and their suitability or otherwise for my research.

The Positivist Research Paradigm

The 19th Century French philosopher, Auguste Comte is regarded as the first person to use the term positivism from a philosophical perspective (Beck, 1979). In Comte's positivism his way of understanding behaviour was to focus on investigation and logic. The positivist research paradigm deals with issues in the world outside of the researcher (Bassey, 2002). This researcher sees the world as logical, it has meaning for him and following adequate research he will comprehend it fully (Bassey, 2002). According to Cohen et al (2018:10), "Positivism claims that science provides us with the clearest possible ideal of knowledge". The "I" word or "me" is never used in reports compiled by positivist researchers as they do not form part of the research process. This approach

is useful for scientific research, numerical data is mainly collected using the quantitative methodology. This form of research was not suitable for my research, as the researcher working in the positivist field, is looking in from outside whereas I was researching my own practice and that of those working with me from the inside (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011:47).

The Interpretive Research Paradigm

The interpretive research paradigm accepts that there can be different interpretations of reality. Reality is defined by the interpretation placed on it by the observer or researcher. The researcher's endeavour is to see the world through the lens of the participants (Bassey, 2002). The interpretive paradigm is defined by its focus on or interest in the person (Douglas, 1973). In this paradigm there is an undertaking to understand the person from within, to get inside the subject of the research. The interpretive approach is action based, it can be viewed as "behaviour-with-meaning", it is future orientated (Cohen et al, 2018:19).

The interpretive researcher commences with a focus on individuals and develops their work in an effort to comprehend the meaning of the subject's world. The nature of this research is to understand the interactions, behaviours and attitudes of the participants themselves. This research approach is very effective in the fields of history and anthropology. I did not choose this research paradigm because I wanted to be part of the research. I was researching my class of parents so that I could improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice . I wished to focus on my own practice as a teacher, learn from it and improve this practice as a result of critical reflection. I, as a teacher, am a researcher, of my own practice (Lassonde et al., 2009)

The Action Research Paradigm

In 1946 in the United States, Kurt Lewin, social psychologist researcher, announced the concepts of action research and social change in an article entitled "Action Research and Minority Problems" (Bargal, 2006). Lewin is regarded in the literature as the father of action research. (Coughlan and Jacobs, 2005). In 1953 Corey debates the advantages of action research in the field of education, where the teacher is engaged within the process.

According to Bargal (2006), new epistemological constructs have been formulated as a direct result of Lewin's understanding of the difference between knowledge emanating from positivist research and the knowledge generated through action research. Lewis' action research model acted as a stimulus for Donald Schön's (1983:ix) "reflection-in-action" and Chris Argyris's (1996:392) "actionable knowledge".

Action research is subjective and value based whereas positivism or scientific research is value-free and objective. (Bargal, 2006:386)

The action research paradigm is about effecting improvement in practice. Action research is a methodology whose purpose is action and research. The action occurs when we bring about a change in our practice and the practice of those with whom we are working. The research refers to the creating or establishing of a new understanding or theory on the part of the researcher. This research model was ideal for me as a teacher as it involved studying phenomena for the stated purpose of self-improvement or transformation. According to Reason and Bradbury (2001:1). "Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview". It was

suitable for me as my research involved working with parents, I was willing to share my ideas and create a collaborative working environment in the classroom (Lassonde et al., 2009).

Action Research – Self-Study Action Research

Action research is where the teacher is researching one's own practice, primarily to improve the practice and generate new theory (McNiff and Whitehead, 2005). Furthermore McNiff (2014) states that action research is about transformation, participation, teamwork and democratic practices. Even though there are various action research traditions around the world, there is general consensus regarding the main objectives of action research.

According to Herr and Anderson (2005:54) some of these include:

- Generating new knowledge
- The achievement of action-orientated outcomes
- The education of both the researcher and participants
- Results that are relevant to the local setting
- A sound and appropriate research methodology.

Reason and Bradbury's (2008:1) propounds the view that action research begins from "within the self", with the desire to transform oneself. As the action research process involves working with others, "a practice of participation", they acknowledged that this action may ultimately result in also changing others we are working with, within the research.

The Reflective Nature of Action Research

In chapter 2 I referred to Dewey's understanding of reflective practice. Elliott (1978) puts forward the claim that as teachers involved in action research we need to be self-reflective in our everyday practice. Similarly, Sullivan et al. (2016:27) argue that educational research involves developing a broader cognition of education. Therefore action research can be perceived as a mechanism for studying our own specific area of the broader educational context through reflection and action.

The Teacher as a Researcher

It was Stenhouse (1981:104) who said, "It is the teacher, who in the end will change the world of the school by understanding it". In 1975, he introduced the concept of the teacher as a researcher. He proposed that the teacher, as the professional practitioner in the classroom should take charge of examining and researching his/her own pedagogy rather that leaving it to any outside agencies. He proposed that a teacher researching one's own practice, becomes an 'extended professional'. In this instance, the term extended professional refers to ongoing study and critique of one's own practice and the willingness to investigate and analyse theory in practice (Stenhouse, 1975).

Before we can begin any form of research, we should start by reflecting on our practice by asking the questions, "What we are doing?" and "Why we are doing what we are doing?" (Sullivan et al., 2016:1). As teachers, in order to give ourselves an opportunity to reflect, it would be helpful to take time out, to step back from the situation or take the balcony view (Ury, 2008).

Challenges with Critical Reflection

Schön (1983) developed his theory of reflection by proposing two concepts, "Reflection-in -Action" and "Reflection-on-Action". Reflection in Action, is frequently referred to as "thinking on our feet" (Smith, 2001, 2011). This can be quite difficult in the frenetic environment of the classroom. For example, while teaching a Science lesson and dealing with a behavioural issue that arises with a child, the teacher will need to reflect and make quick decisions on how to resolve the issue. In the opinion of Eraut, "When time is extremely short, decisions have to be rapid and the scope for reflection is extremely limited" (1994:145). Time pressures and an overloaded curriculum may impact on the quality of reflection and its value to the teacher. As previously noted, Schön's second concept of his theory of reflective practice is Reflection on Action. This concept proposed that reflection is completed after the lesson, event or activity has taken place. Namely, the science teacher in the latter example, would sit down after class and reflect, possibly asking him/herself the following questions. "What went well?", "What could have been done better?", "How will I change things next time?" In this example, the cyclical nature of reflection on practice can be appreciated. By scrutinising our actions, that is, "What we do?" and "Why we do it?", we begin to make sense of our actions and behaviour thus enabling us to adapt our methodology for the next lesson or event.

I used action research as my methodology for researching my question. I implemented self-study, by studying my own practice with the support and help of my colleagues and the parents working with me in the research process. As a teacher and action researcher by using action research I was a knowledge generator rather than implementing learning by a researcher with no connection to the school (Elliott, 1994). In this Self-

Study Action Research, I undertook research on my own educational practice. My main objective in undertaking this research was to enhance my own practice. “How can I improve what I am doing?” (Whitehead, 2008). My research question is “How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance parents’ relationships with their children?” The focus of this research is on my own practice, that is the facilitation of Restorative Practice and working with parents to support them to build effective relationships with their children.

Validation and Rigour

The Self-Study Action Research methodology I am using is based on the concepts of validation and rigour. According to McNiff and Whitehead (2005) the practical knowledge acquired by the action researcher is a valid instrument for aiding them to make professional judgements. I intend to draw on Habermas’ (1976) work on social validity by referring to his four criteria of social validity to enhance the rigour and validity of my explanation. My validation group (which I will discuss later) and my critical friends will also ensure rigour in my research. The criteria developed by Habermas for judging social validity are:

- Comprehensibility: I must speak comprehensibly so that people can understand what I am communicating and understand my message.
- Authenticity: I must speak authentically, talking about the values that I hold as an action researcher and I must explain how these values are upheld during my research – epistemological validity (Sullivan et al: 2016:103).
- Truthfulness: I must speak truthfully by subjecting my findings to critique and producing reasonable evidence and in this way it is hoped that people will believe that my research claims are justified.

- Appropriateness: I must speak appropriately by studying academic journals and research articles, I will acquire the language of academia and the language of action research and critical reflection.

The members of my validation group which I describe below, can challenge the validity of my research claims through dialogue using the aforementioned four criteria.

Critical Friends

The term "critical friend" or "critical colleague" was first suggested by Stenhouse (1975) as a colleague who could advise and work with the teacher researcher in the action research. According to Bassey (2002) the critical friend is a person who accepts an invitation from the action researcher to devote some of their time, energy and endeavour into critiquing the action researcher's findings. In the opinion of Elliott (1985) the critical friend should be helping the teachers to research and to improve their critical reflection skills. This helps to sort out their feedback, can assist in progressing ideas, could discover errors in writing and identify defects or weaknesses in arguments. The identification of flaws can be an indication that the validity of the claim to new knowledge had not been properly tested. Through deep listening and reflecting the researcher can use this opportunity to return to the research and rewrite the claim with a new perspective (McNiff, 2014).

Validation Group

My validation group consisted of teachers, special needs assistants and administration staff, all of whom work in the school where I conducted this research project. These are people whose opinions I valued. From the commencement of the four-week programme with parents I met this group each Tuesday for thirty minutes, from 12.10 pm to 12.40

pm during our lunch break in school. At the beginning of each session I informed the group of my progress. McNiff and Whitehead (2005:16) advise that it is important to have regular validation meetings. These are formal, purposeful meetings, where I, the researcher displayed the evidence and the validation group had an opportunity to offer their opinions on its quality. They also listened to my provisional claims to knowledge. The role of this group was to provide me with feedback, to indicate direction and possibly to propose that I may need to revisit or rethink my claims to knowledge and to provide more compelling evidence. My expectation was that my validation group would provide strong and rigorous critique of my research. When I generated my evidence I presented it to my validation group for them to judge whether or not my claim to knowledge was justified. The purpose of the validation group was to subject my claim to knowledge to public critique. (McNiff and Whitehead, 2005).

METHODS

I will detail the techniques and procedures I implemented in the process of data collection for this project.

Design

As researcher, my motivation for compiling the programme in Restorative Practice for parents was derived from the fact that the children were familiar with Restorative Practice in their school lives. They experienced a restorative relational approach during the school day but in many instances the children encourntered a retributive, punitive approach once they returned home.

I have reviewed my current practice and have concluded that the success of Restorative Practice in our school community is attributable to our awareness of the importance of relationships. Consequently in school, we focus on building, repairing and maintaining relationships rather than concentrating on upholding rules. With this knowledge I developed a four-week Restorative Practice Programme for parents. The aim of this program was to teach the core values, skills and processes of Restorative Practice to the parents, I organised two Restorative Practice Programmes each of four weeks duration.

I co-taught this programme with one of my critical friends. The programme was facilitated using a mixture of lectures, narrative, discussion and circle work with an emphasis on listening and responding.

The following are some of the topics covered in the programme:

- Respect and Relationships
- Parenting Styles: Working with the children
- The Values of Restorative Practice

- The Restorative Practice Skills
- The Culture of Blame
- The Restorative Practice Questions.
- Fairness, Fair Process
- Using Restorative Language
- Living on the "Green Platform" (Coyne, 2016)
- Six Things That May Improve My Life.
- Implementation of Restorative Practice through Role Plays: e.g. one to one conversations, group meetings and circles.

Recruitment and Participation

In order to recruit participants for this study, I attended the Annual General Meeting of the Parent Teacher Association. It was explained to the parents in attendance that I was participating on the Masters of Education Programme, at Maynooth University. I informed them that the focus of my research was based on teaching the values, skills and processes of Restorative Practice to parents and to exploring how these skills could empower the parents to relate to their children in a restorative way. I explained that I was seeking a group of parents who would participate in a Restorative Practice training programme. The parents who expressed an interest in the programme were given an Information Brochure, a Letter of Invitation to Participate, an Information Sheet for Parents and Guardians and a Study Participant Consent Form (See Appendix, A,B,Cand D).

In total, twenty six parents expressed an interest in participating in the programme, on the night of the A.G.M. The first programme ran from Wednesday 16th January to

Wednesday 6th February 2019 and consisted of eleven participants. Twelve parents agreed to participate in the second programme which took place from Wednesday 20th February to 13th March 2019. On the first night of the second programme nine parents attended and three parents withdrew from the course.

One week prior to the start of the Restorative Practice Programme for Parents I sent each participant a welcome email and confirmed the location, the dates and the times of the course.

I designated two "critical friends" from amongst my teaching colleagues, both of whom I worked closely with on a daily basis. They were also members of my "validation group".

Participants

Following the distribution of an information sheet (see Appendix A – [Information Brochure]) a convenient sample of twenty six parents were chosen, as they expressed interest in participating. There were no specific exclusion criteria, however all participants were parents of children attending the school and all had a good command of the English language.

Demographic information

Restorative Practice Course Participant Profile – Cycle 1

The first cycle of my research was carried out between Wednesday 16th January 2019 and Wednesday 6th February 2019. Eleven parents attended the first night of the Restorative Practice Course. Each parent completed a questionnaire at the beginning of the course (See Appendix E). The demographic information for cycle one was derived from the pre-course questionnaire and is presented in Table 3.1 below.

The course sample was not balanced for gender and comprised nine females and two males. The majority of course attendees (54.5%) were in the 41-50 age group. The majority of the parents (72.7%) were born in Ireland with the other three hailing from India, Mauritius and Nepal.

Of this sample, 63.6% had attended third level education, while for 9.1% the highest level of educational attainment was primary school. Seven parents had a two child family, while two parents had four children. Their children ranged in age from 5 - 21 years.

(See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Participants Demographics – Cycle 1 (N= 11)

	N	%
Gender		
Male	2	18.2
Female	9	81.8
Age		
31-40	4	36.4
41-50	6	54.5
51-60	1	9.1
Country of Birth		
Ireland	8	72.7
India	1	9.1
Mauritius	1	9.1
Nepal	1	9.1
Educational Attainment		
Primary	1	9.1
Secondary	3	27.3
Third Level	7	63.6
Number of Children		
One	0	0
Two	7	63.6
Three	0	0
Four	4	36.4

Attrition Rate

During Cycle 1, three parents left the course, one parent to have a baby and two because of work schedule changes.

Restorative Practice Course Participant Profile – Cycle 2

The second cycle of my research was implemented over a four week period from Wednesday 20th February 2019 to Wednesday 13th March 2019. A new group of parents attended this course. The demographic information for the participants of Cycle 2 is detailed in Table 3.2 below.

In total nine parents attended various weeks of the course, six parents attended all four nights. All parents in the second cycle of my research were female. The majority of the mothers ranged in age between 31 and 50 (88.8%). Seven of the parents were born in Ireland, one was born in Czech Republic and one was born in Nigeria.

The majority of the sample had attended third level education (66.7%). The majority of the sample had either one or two children (See Table 3.2). Their children ranged in age from 4 - 22 years old.

Table 3.2: Participants Demographics – Cycle 2 (N= 9)

	N	%
Gender		
Male	0	0
Female	9	100
Age		
31-40	4	44.4
41-50	4	44.4
51-60	1	11.1
Country of Birth		
Ireland	7	77.8
Nigeria	1	11.1
Czech Republic	1	11.1
Educational Attainment		
Primary	0	0
Secondary	3	33.3
Third Level	6	66.7
Number of Children		
One	3	33.3
Two	3	33.3
Three	2	22.2
Four	1	11.1

Attrition Rates:

During cycle two, three parents left the course, one two take up new employment and two parents had childminding issues.

Ethical Considerations

Full ethical approval was sought for the action research study and was granted by Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education Masters of Education in NUI Maynooth. Restorative Practice is about building, maintaining and repairing relationships.

There were no major ethical concerns in this study, however it was noted that sensitive themes and subject matter could be discussed. The parents were made aware that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time and that anything discussed during the course would be confidential. All parents were given a list of support services such as Tusla, Mental Health Services, Pieta House, etc.

I was conscious as a leader of my school community, of the possible or likely asymmetries of power and I took the following steps to address the ethical issues this raised: I focused on parents as agents in their own learning and I worked with parents as active participants in the research. In order to reduce the power differentials with critical friends and within validation group meetings, I worked to establish rapport and trust between us.

Data Collection

I facilitated two, four-week training programmes in Restorative Practice . Throughout this implementation stage of my research, I carefully gathered information regarding my own learning and actions and about the thinking and the learning of the parents with whom I was working.

The following are the data collection tools I implemented during my action research.

Paper based Questionnaire:

The quantitative characteristic of this study involved the design of a questionnaire in order to gather data from the parent participants on the programme (See Appendix E). Information collected in the introductory demographic questionnaire included:

- Personal Background Information
- Knowledge of Restorative Practice
- Overview of Family Relationships

Pilot Study

Prior to the commencement of the programme in early January, I piloted the questionnaire with four parents who did not participate in the programme. These parents gave constructive advice on the format of the questionnaire, the clarity of the questions and the ease of usage. I made revisions to the questionnaire as a result of the feedback I received from theses parents. They informed me that it took them between five and ten minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to all participating parents on the first night of each course.

Observations

The main purpose of classroom observation was to document comments, experiences and challenges expressed by the parents. It allowed me to gather "live data from naturally occurring social situations" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018:396).

Daily Diary of Participants

On the first night of the programme the parents were given a hard copy of a "Daily Diary" (See appendix F). The parents kept the diary in which they recorded their opinions, thoughts and reflections on what they learned in the weekly class.

1. At the end of each two hours session they were asked to record:
    - Their thoughts on the session.
    - Something they were going to try after the session.
    - Something they would like to know more about.
    - Their experience of the session.

2. The parents were given two concepts to practice at home in their relationships for the week ahead. They were asked to reflect on their week using the following prompts.
    - What happened?
    - What actions did I take or do?
    - How did it work out?
    - My thoughts or feelings on this.
    - What do I need to do next?

Researcher's Reflective Journal

Throughout this process I also kept a reflective journal on my own thoughts and reflections. According to Sullivan et al (2016) ongoing reflection during the research process is a feature of action research. My reflective journal helped me to document my learning, made me especially aware of how I lived my values in a reflective, restorative manner in my interactions with the parents both inside and outside of the school.

I used my reflective journal to study both my practice and thinking while constantly evaluating my progress. I documented and monitored how my own thinking altered during the research process and I was able to illustrate how this primed me to change my practice with the parent participants. During feedback circles in each research session I documented the parents' thinking and how it informed their practice both in the family home and in the outside world of work and friendships (McNiff, 2014).

After each lesson with the parents I had a thirty to forty minutes meeting with my co-facilitator who is also one of my critical friends. I found these meetings very helpful and productive as we interrogated the following questions: “What went well?”. “What changes do I need to make for the next session?” and “What was my learning from this session?” This was the third lens of Brookfield’s (2017) framework my “Colleague’s Perceptions”. This lens helped me to analyse the assumptions I was making about my practice and facilitation during the sessions (Sullivan et al, 2016). After this meeting I documented these findings, discussions and conclusions in my Reflective Journal.

Evaluation Form

At the end of each four-week programme all participants were requested to complete a paper based evaluation form (See Appendix G).

Data Management

All data was anonymised i.e. no participant was identified. Data was stored on an external hard drive, which was encrypted. The data will be disposed of in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy.

Research Aims and Question

My personal aim was to improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance parents’ relationships with their children. I wanted to help parents learn and understand the values, processes and skills of Restorative Practice in order to enhance their relationships with their children. In order to address the aforementioned aims the following research question was devised:

How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance parents’ relationships with their children?

Summary:

This chapter illustrates the research method utilised in this action research study, which explored how to improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice and aimed to determine whether Restorative Practice helped parents to build effective relationships with their children. The next chapter will detail the results gleaned from this study.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion of Data

Introduction

While reviewing the data yielded from this study my focus was on my facilitation of the Restorative Practice (R.P.) courses and whether or not the parents' relationships with their children have been enhanced during the two cycles of this research. I reviewed my work with the parents and appraised my actions during the R.P. course. I identified occasions that illustrated the implementation of my values in the teaching and learning of the Restorative Practice courses (McDonagh et al. 2012). McGarrigle (2015) reports that schools that have moved away from a punitive approach to a more relational practice, tend to focus on the relationships in the classroom, school, home and community. This shows the use of Restorative Practice has the potential to help build, maintain and repair relationships.

Thematic Analysis of:

- Reflective Journals Cycle 1 and Cycle 2
- Parents' Daily Diaries
- Questionnaires
- Course Evaluation Forms

Qualitative Analysis

I transcribed and collated the parents' daily diaries from Cycle 1, (nine diaries) and Cycle 2, (six diaries) into two specific documents. This process helped me to become familiar with the data. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology for thematic

analysis, I read and re-read my own personal reflective journals, parents' diaries, questionnaires and evaluations and I systematically created primary codes for all parts of each data item. I read and marked sections of each parent's diary, my own reflective journal, questionnaires and evaluations. Two hundred and fifty one codes were initially developed and the corresponding data items were collated in line with each code. Themes were further refined in collaboration with my critical friends. My core values influenced my grouping of the themes in the coding framework into one of two topics, namely, the themes relating to my facilitation of Restorative Practice and those relating to the enhancement of the relationship between the parents and their children (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1*:* Summary of Main Topics and Themes

Topics	**Themes**
Factors affecting my facilitation of Restorative Practice	Teaching Skills Restorative Practice Processes Shared Learning
Factors affecting the enhancement of parents' relationships with their children	Communication Self Awareness Relationships

Topic 1: How can I Improve my Facilitation of Restorative Practice ?

Introduction:

In order to address this research question, data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for thematic analysis. The themes, which were generated in conjunction with my critical friends, provided evidence of adaption in my methods of facilitating the Restorative Practice Courses. The three main themes, which emerged from the data, were: Teaching Skills, Restorative Practice Processes and Shared Learning. Each of these themes can be further broken down into sub-themes (see Table 4.2**).** These themes will be discussed in relation to how they address my research question, using excerpts from the data to illustrate each sub-theme.

Table 4.2: Themes and sub-themes addressing the question of "How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice ?"	
Themes	**Sub-Themes**
Teaching Skills	1. Experience 2. Listening 3. Talking
Restorative Practice Processes	1. Role Plays 2. Relationships 3. Circles
Shared Learning	1. Choices 2. Values 3. Fairness

See also Appendix H

Theme 1 Teaching Skills:

I identified the concept of teaching skills while working with the parents as a strong theme in all sources of data. This was particularly evident in thematic analysis of my own reflective journals. Analysis of subthemes that emerged from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 data illustrates some of the mechanisms by which I improved my facilitation of Restorative Practice . I was conscious of the Froebelian approach that encourages the student to respect and to cultivate their own ideas, making learning more experiential rather than rote learning where the student is passive (Liebschner, 1991).

Table 4.3 Presents an overview of the findings relating to Topic 1 and evidence to support my claim that I have improved my facilitation of Restorative Practice .

Within the theme of Teaching Skills there were three subthemes:

1. ***Experience***
2. ***Listening***
3. ***Talking***

1. Experience: I was aware that all of the participants of the Restorative Practice Courses, were attending with their own stories and life experiences. I followed

Froebel's advice which is "to begin where the learner is, not where the learner ought to be" (Bruce 2011:30). As a facilitator I learned that I needed to create opportunities for the parents to learn from these life experiences, to reflect on them and to share them with each other. I will use some data from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 1,week 2:8) to illustrate this point. In this example "Parent 2 recognised the need for everyone to be on the same page. She felt she was working restoratively but her partner was insisting on blaming and knowing who was at fault. She felt that she will have a lot of work to do with her partner, otherwise the children will be getting mixed messages and this will cause confusion". This parent's input lead to a very effective group discussion on the necessity for a consistent approach at home when working restoratively. E.C. Lindeman in his book The Meaning of Adult Education asserts that learning in adulthood must be about understanding the significance of our life experiences (Henschke, 2015). I was conscious of drawing on the parents' own life experiences during my facilitation of the Restorative Practice lessons.

2. Listening: Taking the time to listen was challenging for me because I had a sense that there was a substantial amount of course content to teach over a very short period of time. Each cycle was held over four nights and consisted of eight hours in total. I planned to deliver the best course possible to these parents. I was being true to my core values of respect, care, trust, integrity and fairness. When I offered this course to the parents, on reflection, I believed that I was implying there would be some value in it for them. There would be learning for the parents, it would be worth their while giving up their spare time. I felt a tension throughout Cycle 1 between delivering the course in full and meeting the parents' needs. I was conscious of listening to the parents, in particular in the Opening Circles of each session as this reflected my values of respect,

trust and fairness. As a facilitator I was present in the lessons, listening to the parents, reflecting in action (Schön, 1983), I became aware of their needs. A data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 1,week 3: 12), illustrates how careful listening by the facilitator can effect change in the lesson content: "I have learned that even though we planned the content for the lessons, the lesson has changed. Due to comments and questions brought forward by the parents the lesson changed." I was flexible and aware of the needs of the group (Chan, 2010). I continuously reminded myself how vital it was that I remain flexible with my plans regarding content but more importantly that the needs of the group took precedence over content.

3. Talking: According to William Glasser "we can teach a lot of things, but if the teacher can't relate by talking to a group of friendly students, he'll never be a competent teacher" (Nelson, 2002:96). I have found that I, as the teacher, can do too much talking during the lesson. For example on Wednesday 30th January 2019 during a reflective meeting, with my Critical Friend (N.F.) I acknowledged that I was doing too much of the talking during the lessons. I was using a didactic, teacher centred approach, it was similar to the "banking model" of education (Freire, 1968:62). I was not living towards my values of respect, care, trust, integrity and fairness. I was not valuing the parents, I was ignoring and disrespecting their prior knowledge. I was being a living contradiction (Whitehead,1989). In Cycle 2, I changed my form of discourse from a didactic, "I tell you" to dialogical, "We learn together". "I have learned from the first Cycle to speak less but when I speak it needs to be relevant, instructional and interesting. I believe in most instances tonight I achieved all three qualities". A data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 2,week 1:1). Thus using a dialogical approach, I was allowing all voices to participate, this was in fulfilment of my

epistemological values around participation. I was now creating the space for the parents to talk, reflect and learn (Alexander, 2004). This change in my facilitation approach resulted in more engagement from the parents and potentially greater learning.

Theme 2 Restorative Practice Processes:

When Restorative Practice is primarily used to deal with indiscipline or misbehaviour adults regularly revert back to the familiar punitive approach. In line with McGarrigle (2015) when the Restorative Practice processes are focused on the importance of transforming or changing relationships in the home, school or community, when relationships become central, they experience a transformation that persists in that particular environment as it is now the accepted way of doing things by everybody.

Within the theme of Restorative Practice Processes there were three sub-themes:

1. ***Role Plays***
2. ***Relationships***
3. ***Circles***

1. Role Plays: As a Restorative Practice facilitator in an andragogical setting, there was a need for flexibility in my facilitation (Forrrest and Peterson, 2006). It was essential in this context to be ready to modify the class to include issues or experiences the parents deemed relevant or important. During an opening circle a number of parents mentioned the challenges they were having dealing with their children's use of social media. I responded to the parents' needs and created a role play involving the inappropriate use of social media by children. This provided an opportunity for the parents to use the

restorative questions and processes in a relevant and useful context. The parents were urged to delve into their own well of experience to resolve the issues (Birzer, 2003). A data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle1,week 2: 6) illustrated that "Most parents seemed comfortable with the role plays and I would attribute that confidence to the fact that they had the structure of the Restorative Practice questions". I have learned that I can improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice by incorporating role plays in every lesson.

2. Relationships: The facilitation of a Restorative Practice Course for parents was a new experience for me. I felt very vulnerable and exposed. The pre-existing relationship I had with these participating parents was a professional one and I needed to address the issue of power. I spoke about the professional relationship that existed between us, me as the principal and school leader. I focused on the fact that we were all parents and a democratic learning environment needed to be created. I was acknowledging this power relationship which existed but focused instead on us all being parents in order to reduce any negative implications of power

relationships. I was the facilitator working with each parent so as to enhance their relationships with their children. A data extract, refers to my conversation with the parents about our relationship for this course, "Tonight in this room I am here in my capacity as Richie Walsh to facilitate this course for you parents" (Reflective Journal, Cycle 1,week 1: 4). "The notion of respect which is the basis of Restorative Practice can be described as an equitable, and inclusive, power relationship" (Drewery, 2016:194). Building an open, respectful, trusting relationship with the parents on both courses improved my facilitation as I was able to connect with the parents and they were happy to share their experiences, both positive and negative with me and my co-facilitator.

3. Circles: Pranis (2005) highlights the power of circles in building relationships in a class group. I used circles as part of my facilitation with the class of parents. All participants became familiar with the operation of the circle and the use of the "talking piece". All lessons started with an Opening Circle. At the end of Lesson 3 in Cycle 1, I decided to end the lesson with a Closing Circle as a method of improving my learning. The following data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 1,week 4:15) explains this action "For the first time during these interventions I used a Closing Circle to complete the course. I used the prompts, 'Energy Level. One thing you will take away with you from tonight'". A data extract from Daily Diary (Cycle 1,parent 2:7) indicates the importance of the closing circle in particular. "I was very moved when one of the ladies was openly so emotional, it was very powerful, the benefits she got from Restorative Practice teaching. I will never forget it". This indicated the importance of the circle to the participants. These circles gave the parents a sense of safety and security. There was an atmosphere of respect, inclusiveness and trust, thus my core values were evident in the circles. In Cycle 2, I ended each lesson with a Closing Circle due to the enormous value I could see that it added to my facilitation. Ending each lesson with a Closing Circle created both time and space for the parents to reflect on their own learning and issues. It also gave them the opportunity to listen to other people's successes and challenges.

Theme 3 Shared Learning:

As previously mentioned, during my facilitation of the Restorative Practice Courses my form of discourse changed from the didactic to the dialogical so that we learned with and from each other. We shared our life experiences and we learned from each other in an active learning environment using circles.

Within the theme of Shared Learning there were three sub-themes:

1. ***Choices***
2. ***Values***
3. ***Fairness***

1. Choices: I chose to use Brookfield's (2017) Narrative Disclosure approach in my facilitation of the Restorative Practice Course. Over the duration of the two courses I found it to be a very effective method of engaging with the parents. I used examples from my own life as a teacher and as a parent to build a connection with the parents, to bring the content to life, to humanise it and to show how the Restorative Practice theory was relevant in our lives. For example when we were discussing how we might deal with conflict between our children I informed the group how I try to behave. "Like any home, issues of conflict arise between my children. In these situations I am aware I need to stay calm, it's not easy, I really want to jump in and sort the problem. I can be a bit impulsive. I have learned that when I jump in I make things worse. I have learned that it is best to leave them alone, give them time, to resolve the issue. I might take a walk into the kitchen or upstairs for a few minutes, monitoring the interactions from a distance. Of course I must ensure they are safe and in no danger. On my best day when I do not get involved, I avoid being pulled one way or the other by returning to curiosity, I ask the question; 'What happened?' It creates space

and time for the children to reflect" (Reflective Journal, Cycle 2,week 2:8). I made connections with the parents using my personal story and my life experiences. According to Brookfield (2017:2) some students find this teaching approach appealing and helpful to their learning, however he also states that some others may perceive it as self-important. I was cognisant therefore that a balance must be struck within this narrative approach.

2. Values: I have identified a number of core values, such as respect, care, trust, integrity and fairness. A data extract from Parent 7's evaluation form, shows how my values were manifest in my facilitation; "The facilitator was very clear and explained every aspect clearly, as any questions arose throughout each evening, ample time was given to discuss and explore without us feeling rushed". According to Thorsborne and Blood (2013) central to learning and pedagogical practice are strong relationships. I believe that living these core values has helped me to foster strong healthy relationships in my school community. Here is an example from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 1,week1:4) "The value of respect permeated all my interactions during the night. I listened attentively, I didn't interrupt, I acknowledged everybody's comments and during my own interventions I was conscious of referring to previous statements made by parents". In my facilitation of the Restorative Practice Course, I was conscious of striving to have these values permeate the dialogical teaching method that I used to build inclusive group connections. The following data extract from Cycle 2, Parent 5's evaluation form illustrates this point: "The facilitators explained everything to us, we needed and engaged with us and allowed us to speak. Encouraged participation, made me feel extremely comfortable, almost a part of team or friends".

3. Fairness: In all relational situations it is important to be mindful of the concept of fairness. When we are being restorative, we endeavour to be actively fair in our relationships with others. The value of fairness means we need to develop the skill of being fair. According to Kim and Mauborgne (2003) fair process responds to a basic human need. All of us, whatever our role in life or family, want to be valued as human beings. They describe three specific criteria; engagement, explanation and expectation clarity that lead to judgements of fair process. Here is an extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 2, week 3:12) which I used to illustrate fair process when dealing with children. "Example Xbox : Most of us have Xboxes at home and their use can be a source of conflict with our children. If I inform my child, he can only have 30 minutes on the Xbox, chances are there will be a problem. Whereas if I take the time to discuss with my child a suitable amount of time. I may believe 30 minutes on the Xbox is adequate, whereas the child may want 2 hours. By working with each other we can come to a decision that will meet both our needs, probably involving compromise on both sides. I am still being the parent, but I am treating my child in a fair manner. My child is experiencing fair process." In my facilitation of the Restorative Practice Course I have found that it is very important to highlight fair process to parents, as it is a value by which they can judge the effectiveness of their relating with their children, especially when dealing with conflict.

Summary of Topic 1:

All of the themes and sub-themes discussed previously, helped me to describe and explain the overall experience of facilitating these Restorative Practice courses with the parents. The style and method of my facilitation changed from one of leader of learning to that of facilitator of shared learning. To realise my epistemological values I learned to step back and allow all voices participating in the course equal opportunity to participate. I learned that an essential element of successful facilitation was finding a balance during circles, encouraging participation, supporting the reticent parent and trying to curb the enthusiasm of the more vociferous parent. I claim that I have improved my facilitation of Restorative Practice by being aware of the parents' needs, being a better listener and being adaptive to group needs using a managed narrative and an inclusive dialogical approach.

Topic 1. How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice?

Table 4.3*:* Summary of Evidence to support the Main Themes and Sub-Themes.

Theme Teaching Skills	**Evidence**
Listening	"I was explicit in my listening, I was conscious of listening to each participant's contribution. I found this a good way of connecting with parents and acknowledging their contribution to our learning." Reflective Journal Cycle 1 Week 1 Page 3.
Experience	"I was viewing things from the proactive approach we use in the school setting. These are people's own children. They have the depth of relationships at home. They live 24/7 with their own children. We have to work with the parent from where they are on the relational continuum. They are all at different places regarding family relationships." Reflective Journal Cycle 1 Week 3 Page 5.
Talking	"I am doing too much talking, my co-facilitator N.F. agrees. A little too much talking. I need to allow the parents express their ideas more freely." Reflective Journal Cycle 1 Week 3 Page 2.
Theme Restorative Practice Processes	**Evidence**
Role Play	"The role play – reminds me how hard things can be when peer pressure is put onto us and how small reactions can create a huge argument and how questions are important in certain situations" Parents Diary Cycle 1, Week 3, Page 7.
Relationships	"A big challenge for me is that parents are bringing up complex family issues some of which are deeply rooted in family history". Reflective Journal Cycle 1, Week3, Page3.
Circles	"I was impressed how parents answered each-others questions or queries in the go-around circles. When a parent asked how one would use the R.P. language with teenagers another parent said this is not just for primary kids. She stated that she used the R.P. language with 18 and 19 year old young adults." Reflective Journal Cycle 1, Week31, Page 10.
Theme Shared Learning	**Evidence**
Choices	"Reflecting on the week, one concept keeps coming up from the Wednesday night lesson and that is 'Choice' We all have the space or opportunity to make choices" Reflective Journal Cycle 1, Week 1, Page 5.
Values	"I have noticed that when I am responding to the parents' questions, I keep going back to my core values of respect, care, trust, integrity and fairness. This allows me to support parents to interrogate what they are saying based on their values." Reflective Journal Cycle 1, Week 3, Page 11.
Fairness	"Fairness, everyone has a voice, everyone should be listened to, everyone counts, their imput matters" Parents 4 Diary Cycle 1, Week 3, Page 5.

Topic 2: How can Parents' Relationships with their children be enhanced?

In order to address this question, I analysed data using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework of thematic analysis. For the purpose of this research, I chose to focus on three themes to answer this question. The themes are: Communication, Self-Awareness and Relationships. Each of these themes can be further broken down into sub-themes (see Table 4.4**).** These themes will be discussed in relation to how they address my research question, using excerpts from the data to illustrate each sub-theme.

Table 4.4: Themes and sub-themes addressing the question of "How can parents' relationships with their children be enhanced?"

Themes	**Sub-Themes**
Communication	1. Language 2. Listening
Self- Awareness	1. Self - Improvement 2. Reflect / Time Out 3. Choice
Relationships	1. Blame 2. Fairness 3. Learning

See also Appendix I

The majority of the parents attending each course were not familiar with Restorative Practice. In total 45.5% of the parents attending the first course were familiar with Restorative Practice and 33.3% of the parents attending the second course had some knowledge of Restorative Practice.

I took cognisance of the high expectations the parents had for this Restorative Practice course. According to an entry in my Reflective Journal (Cycle 2,week1:1and 4) "The opening circle was a little scary, based on their expectations of the course. I was struck with the thought that these parents have huge expectations from this course. They are looking for an awful lot from the course. Parents want us to fix things for them."

Theme 1 Communication:

Communication emerged as a solid theme in all sources of data during the Restorative Practice course with the parents. Hopkins (2014) argues that Restorative Practice is a relational pedagogy. We are all entitled to be treated as relational human beings (Vaandering, 2014). As parents are the primary educators, they have the opportunity to communicate and model the restorative values and skills to their families. This theme was particularly evident in the Daily Diaries of parents and my own Reflective Journals.

Table 4.5 Indicates an overview of the findings in relation to Topic 2 and evidence to support my claim that parents' relationships with their children have been enhanced following engagement in the Restorative Practice Course.

Within the theme of Communication there were two sub-themes:

1. ***Language***
2. ***Listening***

1. Language: When we are communicating with our children it is crucial that we use language that is clearly understood by them. I will use an extract from My Reflective Journal (Cycle 1,week 3:12) to illustrate this learning for one parent. "Take the example of a mother in the group, she said that when she was talking to her child, he did not understand what she was expecting of him. She told us that he did not understand the language or words she was using. She told him "Don't be cheeky", her child did not understand what this term meant. This mother said she used this term because her own mother used to say it to her when she was a child. It was only now on reflection she observed and noted that the language we use with our children is critical. Unless they understand what it is we want them to do, then no change in behaviour is possible". The

parents have learned that if they are to enhance their relationships with their children, they will need to communicate clearly and effectively with them. They need to be aware of the importance of the language they use in conversations with their children, in order to achieve the primary goals of resolving conflict and restoring relationships (Morrison, 2002).

2. Listening: Parents indicated on numerous occasions the importance of listening when they are interacting with their children, as this will allow them to hear the facts but also to be aware of the emotions and facial expressions (see Table 4.7). Some parents found it challenging to listen. Here is a data extract from a Daily Diary (Cycle 1, parent 2,week 2:1) "Listening I find it hard. I tune out half the time as the story is always very long winded". Whereas a data extract from Daily Diary (Cycle 2, parent 4 ,week 2 : 4) informs us that "the more you listen and that the children can see you listening, the less conflict there is in the home. Listening and being calm is the best way to keep yourself together". By listening to our children we are developing our relationship with them, we learn about their interests, worries, talents and needs (Noddings, 1999).

Theme 2 Self Awareness:

The following is a data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 1,week 1:4) "At the end of lesson one, a parent came up to me to tell me that she really enjoyed the lesson. She told me that she was worried the restorative approach would not work in her culture, or her community. She pointed out that if she tried to be restorative, she could be perceived as being weak but she did say she would try it at home with her family". This was new learning for me. As the course progressed this parent embraced the

Restorative Practice processes which she indicated had a very positive effect on her family relationships. The following is a data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 2,week 3: 13), which is an example of feedback from a critical friend (N.F.) "People are really becoming aware of the restorative way of doing things. They have become more self-aware, for example, these are some of the parents' comments: Parent 1 "I watch myself …." Parent 2 "I was listening to what I was saying … and I stopped myself …". Self-awareness enhances parents' relationships with their children.

Within the theme of Self Awareness there were three sub-themes:

1. ***Self-Improvement***
2. ***Reflect / Time Out***
3. ***Choice***

1. Self - Improvement: As parents we want to do the best for our children. We want to care for them to the best of our ability**.** I have chosen a data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 2,week 3:10) to illustrate how one parent on the course explains how the Restorative Practice skills she has learned helped her to change and enhance her relationships with her children**: "**When there are issues at home with my children, I now take time out to think before I act. I also talk to my child, I ask them what they think or feel or what they should do about it. I support my child. I help my child to solve her own issues. I am conscious of having my child solving her issues with her own ideas. Before I began this R.P. Course I wanted to be on top of the situation, I wanted to be the boss. It was always do what I say. I wouldn't listen to her to see what she thinks. Since I have begun the course there is less shouting I encourage my children to talk. They have more of a voice in the home. This has helped me on how to manage stress in the home." Noddings (2000), believes that the time we spend on caring and

how we treat one another is fundamental to all relationships. She highlights the importance of showing genuine care for our children and explicitly teaching our children how to care (Noddings, 1995).

2. Reflect / Time Out: Some parents find it very difficult to reflect or step back when dealing with an issue with their child in the home. Maxine Green (1984:55) acknowledges that we can get caught up in the business of life. She believes that it is crucial that we take time out to pause and reflect on issues and events in our life in order to gain deeper understanding and as such, make adjustments to improve our future praxis. This data extract from Daily Diary (Cycle1,parent 8:1) illustrates this point: "It will be a personal challenge to always try to stop myself from reacting to things without taking a moment to ground myself". Dewey (1933) believes that when we reflect, our actions transform from the reflective to the deliberate and we are thereby enabled to plan our actions purposefully. Other parents have embraced the idea of reflecting before acting, as exemplified by a data extract from Daily Diary (Cycle 2, Parent 3), "To show my children that there are different ways to respond to situations and to try and take a breath and think before responding". The following data from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 2,week 3: 11) reveals the importance of reflection for the parent: "I am now conscious of whatever is happening at home. I think before I react, I am conscious of relating to my child, I am working with my child". This is what Ury (2008) is referring to when he talks about stepping back from the situation or taking the balcony view.

3. Choice: "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances" (Frankl, 2004:7). A data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 1,week 1:5) "No matter what happens to us we always have a choice in how we respond. It is very important that we work with our children at home to highlight that in every situation we have a choice to make. Nobody makes me do things". This is an example from Daily Diary (Cycle 2, parent 2:2) demonstrating how a parent used the concept of choice to enhance her relationship with her child: "I chose not to scream and shout. I talked calmly, but I said that I was upset and told him. He now had a choice to make! I was happy that I got that space, so I didn't react badly. I need to be more aware of giving myself that space to think of my reactions to things". As parents the choices we make will have an enhancing effect on our relationships with our children. "That I have a choice to be positive or negative in all situations" Daily Diary (Cycle1,parent 5:7).

Theme 3 Relationships:

Fickel et al (2017) describe Restorative Practice as a "value-based philosophy" with priority given to building, maintaining and repairing relationships. The aim of these Restorative Practice Courses was to teach the parents the values, skills and processes of Restorative Practice in order to enhance their relationships with their families. Hopkins (2014) recommends that when our relationships breakdown or become damaged, we should endeavour to repair or rebuild them. Parents have found that the course has had a positive impact on their family relationships. This data extract from a Daily Diary (Cycle 2,parent 4:8) confirms this statement: "I need to keep up the Restorative Practice as much as possible in order to have a better relationship with my family. I have seen the benefit already over the last few weeks**".**

Within the theme of Relationships there were three sub-themes:

1. ***Blame***
2. ***Fairness***
3. ***Learning***

1. Blame: According to a data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 1,week 1:2) "There was some discussion about blame. We are all very attached to the blame idea". From Page 4 of the same Reflective Journal I noted that "One parent mentioned how corrosive blaming is. She actually stated that it doesn't lead to healthy relationships or good outcomes". As I reflected on her comments, I was reminded that one of the underlying ideas of Restorative Practice is to help people to take responsibility for their behaviour and to be accountable or answerable for their actions. A data extract from my Reflective Journal (Cycle 1,week 2:6) portrays how another Parent 4, had a shift in thinking about blame: "Previously I would always be looking for someone to blame. Now when something happens at home, I know that blame is not positive I need to look at this differently. I need to see this as an opportunity for me to teach the people at home". This comment shows how Parent 4 is developing an awareness of how to positively deal with conflict at home. She sees conflict as a teachable moment (Hopkins, 2014). The main principles of Restorative Practice espoused by Zehr (2002) encourages us to focus on building, maintaining or restoring respectful relationships rather than establishing who is to blame and handing down punishments. He notes however that punishment is not excluded from the restorative process.

2. Fairness: One of my core values which informed all of my work with the parents, was fairness. I treated them in an equitable and fair manner. I will refer to a data extract from my Reflective Journal, (Cycle 1,week 3:1) to indicate the importance of fair

process: “When you are dealing with a conflict situation or emotional issues it is a good idea to embed fairness into the way you are dealing with the issue. We should be aware of the three E’s; Engagement, Explanation and Expectation Clarity, then and only then will you experience a fair process” (Kim and Mauborgne, 2003). In the following data entries from the Parents’ Daily Diaries indicate the parents’ recognition of the importance of fair process in relationships. The following are some examples of how parents demonstrated fairness: (1) “To talk about fairness in my home and to get my children’s views on it when a problem pops up” Daily Diary (Cycle 2,parent 5:5), (2) “Being fair with people and even my children by guiding the way I act in all my dealings within my family and in my community” Daily Diary (Cycle 2, parent 1:5).

3. Learning: According to George Washington Carver all learning is “understanding relationships” (McMurry, 1981:97). The parents’ diaries have provided data that illustrated various forms of learning regarding their relationships with their children during the Restorative Practice Courses. Some parents learned during the course that the relational challenges they are experiencing at home are common to many parents. “I think it is interesting to see, how many of the parents are facing similar problems and worries about their children” (Daily Diary Cycle 2,parent 4:1). Other examples of learning by parents: “Being in control of my emotions before addressing the behaviour of others” (Daily Diary Cycle1,parent 4,week 2:3), “It has been wonderful, it has changed the way I deal with issues within my family and community” (Daily Diary Cycle 2,parent 1,week:7).

Summary of Topic 2:

The parents who attended the Restorative Practice Course learned about building relationships and managing conflict. I believe there was some personal learning for the parents during the course. As evidenced by a data extract from an email (Friday 3rd May 2019) from one of my Critical Friend (C.W.) "They were exposed to immensely more than relationship building while participating in the course! The course encouraged the participating parents to reflect firstly on themselves as a person, to analyse their values and to appraise themselves as people. Their self- awareness deepened and thus this resulted in a measure of personal growth for each participant". The following is a data extract from a Daily Diary of a Parent which illustrates this new learning: "I learned a lot about myself as a parent and the way I was thinking. There is no shouting at home, no losing the head." This indicates that parents' relationships with their children have been enhanced. Just like the parents, I learned a lot about myself such as how critical reflection on my practice and on my values, has helped me to become a better person and a better facilitator.

Topic 2. **How can Parents' Relationships with their children be enhanced?**

Table 4.5: Summary of Evidence to support the Main Themes and Sub-Themes.

Theme Communication	**Evidence**
Language	"Expressing ourselves restoratively, changing the language instead of using 'don't' say 'you can try' and the effect this has on a person and their responses". Daily Diary Parent 6, Week 4, Page 7.
Listening	"I am going to try to listen effectively. Too often when I am having a conversation with my husband or children I'm thinking about things I'm going to say or do next. I'm preparing a rebuttal which means I'm not listening properly or picking up on the facts and emotions they may be conveying to me. Daily Diary C1 Parent 8, Week 2, Page 3.
Theme Self Awareness	**Evidence**
Self Improvement	"I really enjoyed the session, sad to say it's over. Group was lovely to work with I've learned so much more that I thought I would. It's made me a stronger person, in more ways that I thought it would. Just wish I'd grown up with this practice in school". Daily Diary C1 Parent 4, Week 4, Page 7.
Reflect / Time Out	"Take a step back and think before I approach something that has happened". Daily Diary C2 Parent 6, Week 1, Page 1.
Choice	"I really thought about the choices we make they are ours and that we forget that we can choose our response." Daily Diary C2 Parent 3, Week 4, Page 7.
Theme Relationships	**Evidence**
Blame	"The use of positive language and no blame encouraged my child to talk more about what happened, he told me the story." Daily Diary Parent 6, Week 4, Page 8.
Fairness	"Fairness, everyone has a voice, everyone should be listened to and everyone counts, their imput matters". Daily Diary C1 Parent 4, Week 3, Page 5.
Learning	"I learned that Restorative Practice is not just to resolve conflict it is an approach to life and the way we as people can respond to situations". Daily Diary C 1Parent 6, Week 2, Page 3.

Validity and Credibility

I believe the conclusions I present in this research are valid and legitimate. I wish to show validity which is establishing credibility within my claim to knowledge. My claim is that I have improved my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance parents relationships with their children. In this action research project the parents and I participated in a democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, namely to learn the skills, values and processes of Restorative Practice and thereby create a learning environment that would enhance parents' relationships, with their children (Reason & Bradbury, 2001:1).

Practical Knowledge

In order to build a credible source of evidence (McNiff &Whitehead, 2011), I used the practical knowledge acquired from my reflective journal, correspondence from my critical friends, notes from validation group meetings and parents' daily diaries, as valid instruments to aid me in making professional judgements, making a claim to new knowledge and showing significant learning.

Habermas Four Criteria of Social Validity

I used Habermas' (1976) work on social validity to enhance the rigour and validity of my explanation. The social validation I refer to, took place in my meetings with my critical friends and my validation group in the school. They critiqued my research in a challenging, respectful manner. Constructive feedback was provided which assisted me to develop my ideas and discover errors or weaknesses in my research. For example my initial research question was: "How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice and help parents build effective relationships with their children". After a meeting on 12th February 2019 with my critical friends, I realised that I was making the

false assumption that these parents did not have effective relationships with their children. I could not help parents build effective relationships purely by delivering the Restorative Practice Course. Therefore I focused on improving my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance the parents' relationships with their children. I changed my question to; "How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice in order to enhance parents' relationships with their children?"

I used Habermas's four criteria of social validity to show that my conclusions were sincere, honest and accurate.

Comprehensibility: I avoided jargon, used ordinary language and I explained words, expressions and concepts. I ensured that parents understood what I meant by giving them opportunities to ask questions. A data entry from my journal illustrates this learning, "In Cycle 2, I was conscious of listening more, less talking, providing the space for parents to talk, reflect and learn".

Authenticity: I highlighted my core values of respect, care, trust, integrity and fairness and stated how I upheld these during this research. I was sincere in wanting the parents to have the best possible learning experience. As one parent stated in a diary; "The facilitator was very clear and explained every aspect clearly, as any question arose throughout each evening , ample time was given to discuss and explore without us feeling rushed".

Truthfulness: I spoke truthfully with my critical friends and validation group. I subjected my findings to critique by the aforementioned and produced evidence from the various sources to support my findings.

Appropriateness: I immersed myself in the literature so as to learn and understand the language of academia and thus the language of action research and critical reflection.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

My own Personal Development

I commenced this research project convinced of the efficacy of my facilitation of Restorative Practice as a means of building relationships and of repairing conflict or harm should it arise in a school context. Having concluded my research, I claim that I have improved my facilitation of Restorative Practice and I have provided evidence of this in my findings. I assert with complete confidence, having presented my evidence that a power and vigor has developed in my facilitation of Restorative Practice . My passion and love for Restorative Practice has grown over the last ten years but this past year has energised my utilization of Restorative Practice to a greater degree in various ways. The benefit of becoming more reflective about my values and the degree to which I have grown more critically reflective about my teaching and facilitation has become life changing. My critical reflection has "now become a way of negotiating my daily life" (Larivee, 2000).

The style and method of my facilitation changed from one of "leader of learning" to that of facilitator of shared learning. In realising my epistemological values I learned to step back and allow all voices in the course equal opportunity to participate.

I learned that an essential element of facilitation, was to find a balance in educational circles when there was engagement. The balance is to be found in the circle when every participant has the courage and confidence to believe that their voice matters. In my facilitation, this has involved developing awareness and providing the necessary support in order for the reticent parent to engage confidently and the need to gently curb the more vociferous parent. I have learned how to facilitate using a managed narrative and an inclusive dialogical approach.

Parents' Learning

While participating in the Restorative Practice course the parents were exposed to more than solely relationship building. As my co-facilitator observed, "The course encouraged the participating parents to reflect firstly on themselves, to analyse their values and to appraise themselves as people. Their self-awareness deepened and this resulted in a measure of personal growth for each participant". A parent commented, "I learned a lot about myself as a parent and the way I was thinking. There is no shouting at home, no losing the head." The parents indicated that the atmosphere became calmer, everybody had a voice and they described the whole experience as being fair, all sides being listened to as per the findings of McCluskey et al, *(*2008*)*. Participation in the course resulted in the parents substituting social control in the home with social engagement (Vaandering, 2014:510).

In my research I found that parents stated that they were better able to manage problems with their families, which Fives et al., (2013) also concluded in their study of Restorative Practice . By using a restorative relational approach in both school and at home we are creating the space and opportunity to work with children and parents to develop their social and emotional abilities. It is my hope that this will have a knock on effect on their children's experience of education. By concentrating on social and emotional teaching and learning, we create the environment that facilitates the growth of social and human capital in our schools and homes (Vaandering, 2014:510).

Learning in the Wider Community

I claim that my research will have significance for educational policy. PDST are rolling out Restorative Practice training at both primary and secondary level during this academic year. I strongly recommend that PDST include training for parents in their training programmes. I also propose that the Department of Education and Skills advise schools to review and revise their Code of Behaviour Policies using the Restorative Practice lens.

Some of the parents expressed an interest in further training in Restorative Practice . My courses have paved the way for their involvement in the community with Restorative Practice Ireland. These parents who now have the Restorative Practice training can work with the teaching staff of the school to enhance relationships with the school, home and wider community. Of note some of the parents attending the Restorative Practice courses are involved in local clubs, I would hope that they will use their Restorative Practice skills in their interactions with other club members. In this way I would envisage that their awareness and knowledge of Restorative Practice would have a positive impact on how they build relationships and deal with conflict in the wider community.

Recommendations:

There are many recommendations to present as I conclude this research project. I recommend to any school wishing to introduce Restorative Practice to incorporate an element of teaching the skills, values and processes of Restorative Practice to their parent body. I claim that my research has proved beyond doubt, that parents who engage in a Restorative Practice course benefit enormously. Since completion of facilitating the two cycles of Restorative Practice courses for parents, I am reminded on a weekly basis by my participating parents, of how useful and highly valuable they found the course with regard to the interactions and the relationships they now have with their children. I am very proud of this fact and take joy in every affirmation I receive. They express their continued enthusiasm for Restorative Practice and try to convince their friends of the advantages of engaging in such a course.

My other recommendations relate to the actual Restorative Practice Course offered to parents. I consider the following points to be of immense importance and they are modifications which I will apply to my next Restorative Practice Course for parents.

- I consider the ideal course to be of six sessions in length rather than four. This would afford the facilitator additional time to create more learning opportunities for all participants.

- Role plays are also an essential ingredient in a successful Restorative Practice course. I would include a greater number of role-plays into each lesson. Their impact should not be underestimated. They are of paramount importance and my research shows that the parents thoroughly enjoyed them. Not only do they

provide the group with an element of fun but the extent to which they teach and reinforce Restorative Practice skills cannot be overestimated.

- A further recommendation I would make relates to the inclusion of Opening and Closing Circles. My research has shown that the parents regarded these circles as a mode by which they experienced a sense of safety and security, where they felt free to speak and voice their opinions. Thereby creating a classroom environment facilitating shared learning. The closing circle in particular is a remarkable tool to employ, in order that the participants reflect on their own learning. Circles are a powerful and compelling tool.

- I further recommend that the Parents' "Weekly Diaries" be used by the facilitators during the course to inform their teaching and learning, rather than using them solely as a source of data at the end of the course.

Over the past year, this research journey has been incredible, at times intimidating and often humbling. From my first engagement with the parents I was both surprised and delighted by their enthusiasm to take on board the Restorative Practice philosophy. I was challenged by their high expectations for Restorative Practice to help them cope with the challenges of family relationships. These expectations put a lot of pressure and responsibility on me as facilitator to deliver the very best course possible.

At times during the year I found the academic journey quite demanding. To say that I found the process of academic writing challenging would be an understatement. The joy of learning through academic reading often gave way to the frustrations of synthesising

and presenting what I had learned. With the help of expert advice, I have mastered the knowledge, strategies and skills required to both complete and present this research project.

I was humbled by the trust the parents placed in me as evidenced by their honest engagement during the Restorative Practice courses. On occasion some of them were moved to tears as they shared their life stories. For me, to witness the positive effects of Restorative Practice on their relationships, was an affirmation of the impact my facilitation had on them, a life enhancing experience for all involved. For me this master's programme has been an incredible journey of self-discovery and learning. I am now convinced of the powerful efficacy of Restorative Practice to enhance parents' relationships with their children, families and the wider community.

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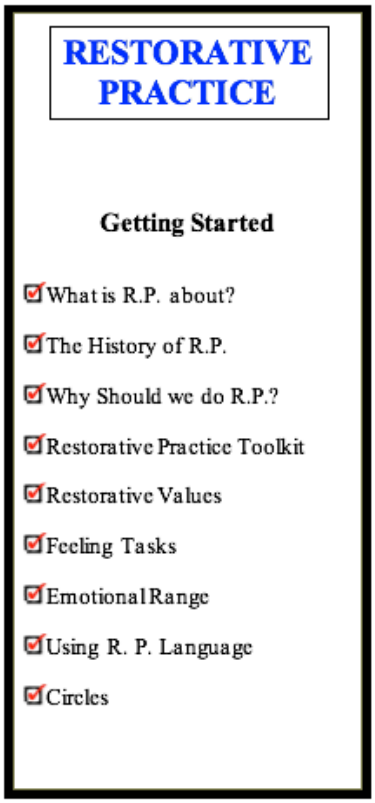
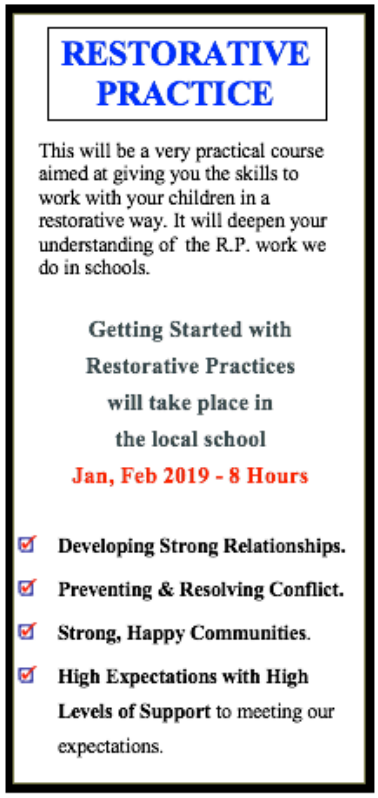
Appendices

Appendix A Information Brochure





Appendix B Letter of Invitation to Participate

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 currently a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of this masters I am doing a research project. The focus of my research is based on teaching the values and skills of Restorative Practice s (RP) and whether this can provide parents with the skills to work with children in a restorative way and to deepen understanding of the RP work we do in the school.

Restorative Practice s is a way of learning how to build, repair and maintain relationships between people and communities. This in turn helps us to build and keep strong and happy communities by actively developing good relationships, preventing the escalation of conflict and handling and resolving conflict in a creative and healthy manner when it arises.

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the school by teaching a four week Restorative Practice s programme to parents. I intend to hold two courses, one in January and February 2019 and the second in February and March 2019.

During the two courses I will collect data, with consent from the parents. Data will include the use of observations, questionnaires, parents reflective diaries, interviews and my own daily diary. Parents will be asked their opinions through discussing how they have used the Restorative Practice s and processes in their daily lives and will be asked to record their discussions in reflective diaries.
The parent'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. You will have the right to withdraw from the research process at any stage without negative consequences.

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 approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I would like to invite you 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 richard.walsh.2016@mumail.ie
Yours faithfully,

Richard Walsh

Appendix C Information Sheet for Parents or Guardians

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

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

Information Sheet

Parents or Guardians

Who is this information sheet for?
This information sheet is for parents or guardians who decide to participate in the research.

What is this Action Research Project about?
This project is about Restorative Practice and how it can be effectively implemented with parents in order to build and improve relationships with their children.

What is the research question?
How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice s programmes and help parents build effective relationships with their children?

What sorts of methods will be used?

- Observations
- I will ask you for feedback using Questionnaires
- Parents will be asked to keep a diary in which they will record their opinions and thoughts on what they have learned in class.
- I will interview two parents (one per course).
- I will also be keeping a diary of my own reflections.
- Parents will be asked their opinions through discussing how they have used the Restorative Practice s and processes in their daily lives.

Who else will be involved?
The study will be carried out by me, Richard Walsh, 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 invited to come to the school and take part in a four week course, "that aims to teach parents", the skills of Restorative Practice s. You will need to attend for four nights, two hours per night (See brochure for more details). You will be taught the values, skills and processes of Restorative Practice s. This course will deepen your understanding of the Restorative Practice s we use in schools. You will then be asked for your feedback and this will provide the data for my research.

The course will be provided by myself and Ms. Niamh Fowler entirely free of charge. It is hoped that the course will teach you skills in order to ….

- have better relationships with your children
- be able to deal with conflict effectively
- facilitate open conversations with your children

The data that I will collect 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.

How do I register my interest?
Please complete the application form in the Restorative Practice s brochure and complete the **Study Participant Consent Form**.

What happens if I want to quit?
It is hoped that parents would commit to taking part in the four weeks course. However, if for whatever reason you wish or need to withdraw from the course, there is no problem with this and you are free to do so.

Contact details: Student: Richard Walsh **E:** richard.walsh.2016@mumail.ie

Appendix D Study Participant Consent Form

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

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

STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

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

Parent / Guardian Name: _____

Parent / Guardian Signature_____

Date: _____

Appendix E Restorative Practice Questionnaire for Parents

Please complete all questions to the best of your ability. All questions are required to be answered. Please rate your ability to deal with conflict as requested below.

Section 1: Background Information

1. Are you ? Female□ Male □

2. What is your age? 20-30 □ 31-40 □ 41-50 □ 51-60 □

3. What is the country of your birth? _____

4. What is your level of education?

Primary school □ Secondary school. □ Third level □

5. How many children are in your family? _____

6. What ages are your children? _____

Section 2: Restorative Practice

1. How familiar are you with Restorative Practice ?

Not familiar □ *Familiar* □ *Very Familiar* □

2. What are your reasons for doing this Restorative Practice Course for Parents?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3.What are you hoping to learn from this course?

_____

_____

_____

Section 3: Relationships

1. Pick the top three values you believe are important to you as a parent.

_____

2. I have a good relationship with my children.

Rarely □ Sometimes □ Often □ Always □

3. I have confidence in dealing with emotional issues in my home.

Rarely □ Sometimes □ Often □ Always □

4. I feel confident dealing with conflict between myself and my children in the home.

Rarely □ Sometimes □ Often □ Always □

5. I feel confident dealing with conflict between my children in the home.

Rarely □ Sometimes □ Often □ Always □

6. I spend some time talking positively with my child.

Rarely □ Sometimes □ Often □ Always □

7. We spend quality time together as a family.

Rarely □ Sometimes □ Often □ Always □

8. We sit down together sharing a family meal.

Rarely □ Sometimes □ Often □ Always □

9. I use words of praise and encouragement in our home.

Rarely □ Sometimes □ Often □ Always □

Appendix F Daily Diary for Participants

Restorative Practice for Parents Week 1

Week 1.

My Thoughts on Tonight
What I found interesting in the session tonight and reasons:

My Takeaway
Something I am going to try after tonight's session:

Tell Me More
Something discussed tonight about which I would like to know more:

My Experience of the session
How I felt about the session, for example: Things I enjoyed; Challenges; Surprises:

Week 1.

The following ideas were discussed at this week's R.P. session:

- Being conscious of Blame.
- R.P. Questions.

During the coming week try to practise the above concepts at home in your relationships. Please write your comments below.

What happened?

What actions did I take? or What did I do?

How did it work out?

My thoughts or feelings on this:

What do I need to do next?

Restorative Practice for Parents Week 2

Week 2.

My Thoughts on Tonight
What I found interesting in the session tonight and reasons:

My Takeaway
Something I am going to try after tonight's session:

Tell Me More
Something discussed tonight about which I would like to know more:

My Experience of the session
How I felt about the session, for example: Things I enjoyed; Challenges; Surprises:

Week 2.

The following ideas were discussed at this week's R.P. session:

- Restorative Skills (Listening, Conflict Management…..)
- Parenting Styles – 'Working With ……'

During the coming week try to practise the above concepts at home in your relationships. Please write your comments below.

What happened?

What actions did I take? or What did I do?

How did it work out?

My thoughts or feelings on this:

What do I need to do next?

Restorative Practice for Parents Week 3

Week 3.

My Thoughts on Tonight
What I found interesting in the session tonight and reasons:

My Takeaway
Something I am going to try after tonight's session:

Tell Me More
Something discussed tonight about which I would like to know more:

My Experience of the session
How I felt about the session, for example: Things I enjoyed; Challenges; Surprises:

Week 3.

The following ideas were discussed at this week's R.P. session:

- Fairness, Fair Process
- Using Restorative Language

During the coming week try to practise the above concepts at home in your relationships. Please write your comments below.

What happened?

What actions did I take? or What did I do?

How did it work out?

My thoughts or feelings on this:

What do I need to do next?

Restorative Practice for Parents Week 4

Week 4.

My Thoughts on Tonight
What I found interesting in the session tonight and reasons:

My Takeaway
Something I am going to try after tonight's session:

Tell Me More
Something discussed tonight about which I would like to know more:

My Experience of the session
How I felt about the session, for example: Things I enjoyed; Challenges; Surprises:

Week 4.

The following ideas were discussed at this week's R.P. session:

- Living on the "Green Platform" – Declan Coyne
- Six Things that might improve my life.

During the coming week try to practise the above concepts at home in your relationships. Please write your comments below.

What happened?

What actions did I take? or What did I do?

How did it work out?

My thoughts or feelings on this:

What do I need to do next?

Appendix G Restorative Practice for Parents. Evaluation Form

Please complete this evaluation form.
Please **tick** the response option that best reflects your evaluation of the Restorative Practice (R.P.) programme for parents provided.

1. *The content of this Restorative Practice Course will be helpful in my parenting.*
   Agree □ *Strongly Agree* □ *Neutral* □ *Disagree* □

2. *The practical Restorative Practice exercises were effective in developing R.P. skills:*

   Agree □ *Strongly Agree* □ *Neutral* □ *Disagree* □

3. *I found that the narrative process (facilitator's own stories) helped my understanding of the Restorative Practice Skills:*

   Agree □ *Strongly Agree* □ *Neutral* □ *Disagree* □

4. *The facilitator effectively directed and stimulated discussion.*

   Agree □ *Strongly Agree* □ *Neutral* □ *Disagree* □

5. *The facilitator effectively encouraged students to ask questions and give answers.*

   Agree □ *Strongly Agree* □ *Neutral* □ *Disagree* □

6. *I found the role plays an effective way of learning the R.P. skills and processes.*

   Agree □ *Strongly Agree* □ *Neutral* □ *Disagree* □

7. *The daily diary was very effective in helping me reflect on my learning during the course.*

   Agree □ Strongly Agree □ Neutral □ Disagree □

8. *I would recommend this R.P. course to other parents.*

   Agree □ *Strongly Agree* □ *Neutral* □ *Disagree* □

9. *I would recommend this facilitator to others?*

   Agree □ Strongly Agree □ Neutral □ Disagree □

10. *I believe my relationship with my child / children benefited as a result of me taking part in the Restorative Practice course for Parents.*

    Agree □ Strongly Agree □ Neutral □ Disagree □

11. *Did you find any particular aspect of the course helpful?*

_____

_____

12. *Are there any changes to the course that you would?*

_____

_____

13. *Would you be interested in doing some further training in Restorative Practice ?*

_____

_____

Other comments or feedback:

_____

_____

_____

_____

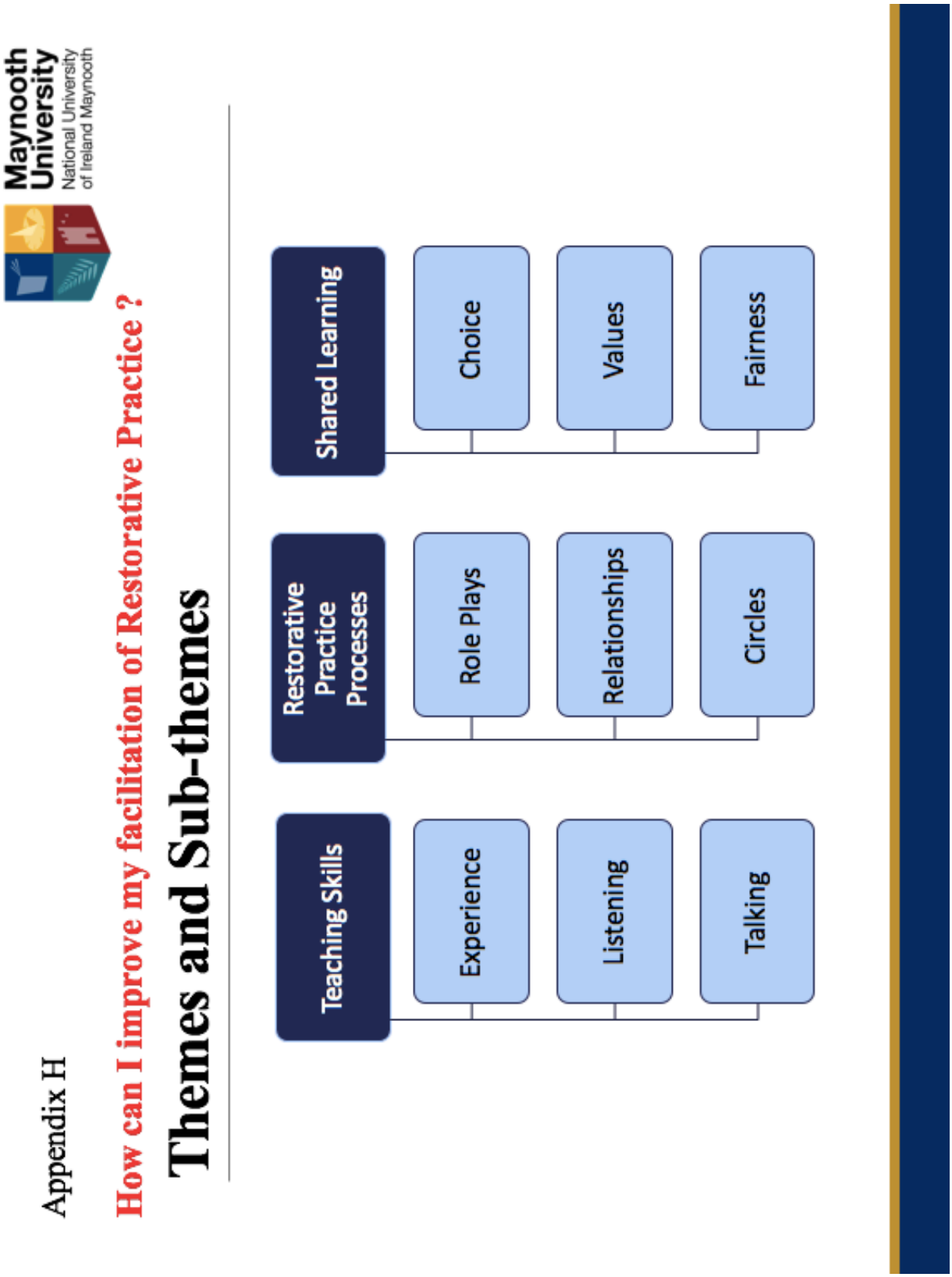
_____

_____

Thank You

Facilitator: Richie Walsh

Appendix H
Topic 1: How can I improve my facilitation of Restorative Practice ?
Themes (3) Sub-Themes (9)



Appendix I
Topic 2: How can Parents' Relationships with their children be enhanced? Themes (3) Sub-Themes (9)