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**Sunhine After Showers:
Creating a Classroom Climate for Resilient Learners**

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A Research Dissertation submitted to the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Research in Practice)

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Karen Duffy

12-Sep-2025

Abstract

My research question is, ‘How Can I, as a Classroom Teacher, Enhance the Wellbeing of the Children in my Classroom to Support Resilient Learners? Essentially, how can I ensure there is sunshine after the showers within my classroom?’

Through the implementation of Educational Action Research (EAR) and a variety of carefully crafted and designed interventions, I entered my classroom last September with a genuine compulsion to enhance children’s wellbeing and support their resilience.

To begin, I reflected on and considered research already available on the area of wellbeing and resilience. I contemplated and analysed Piagetian, Erikson and Vygotskian theories on psychological, sociocultural and developmental ideas on critical milestones in the development of the child. Furthermore, the current SPHE Curriculum (1999) served as a beneficial tool in enabling me to identify current practice in terms of Wellbeing and the proposed draft specifications (2023) on Wellbeing enlightened me further.

Following on from this, I set about gathering data from my classroom. This was achieved through the specific and intentional use of a myriad of interventions including circle time, daily check-ins, the Weaving Wellbeing Programme, Writers Theatre, art activities and self-reflection through the use of a reflective journal.

Relevant themes were generated and the findings illustrated that my values and their enactment were of critical importance.

Looking to the future, the findings illustrate that it is crucial for teachers and the educational community in general to consider and utilise child-friendly, relational and values-based approaches in order to enhance wellbeing and resilience.

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Glossary of Terms

ANTs - Automatic Negative Thoughts

APA - American Psychological Association

CAPP - Child Abuse Prevention Programme

CASEL – Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning

DES - Department of Education and Skills

DLP - Designated Liaison Person

DoH - Department of Health

EAR - Educational Action Research

ESRI - Economic and Social Research Institute

GIRFEC - Get It Right For Every Child

NCCA - National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

PCF - Primary Curriculum Framework

PE - Physical Education

PERMA - Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishments

RTA - Reflexive Thematic Analysis

SDT - Self Determination Theory

SET - Special Educational Teacher

SHANARRI – Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included

SEL – Social and Emotional Learning

SNA – Special Needs Assistant

SPHE - Social, Physical, Health Education

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF - United Nations Children’s Fund

WALT - What Are we Learning To

WHO - World Health Organisation

WILF - What I Am Looking For

Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and describes the rationale for this research project. It establishes reasons for the chosen research topic from a contextual viewpoint and provides a background to reasons why this topic was of particular significance to me on both a personal and professional level. It also offers an in depth and meaningful reflection of my own core values, the presence of them throughout and the transformation that took place in the process. Consequently, it provides a brief outline of the various chapters contained within this study.

1.2 Contextual Background: The Influence of Wellbeing on Child Development

In our fast paced, modern society, the concept of wellbeing has become an international headline with Governments around the world seeking to make radical changes within it: in terms of education, health, justice and a myriad of other sectors (Fisher, 2019; Fisher, 2021; Angresius et al., 2022; Kickbusch et al., 2023).

In relation to education, the issue of wellbeing has never been more relevant with rapid social and digital changes (DES, 2022) and an increase in mental health challenges emanating from the Covid 19 pandemic (deFigueiredo et al., 2021).

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2019: 1) highlights the importance of schools during this time of change and asserts that schools;

play a vital role in the promotion of wellbeing through a range of activities and approaches to support the academic, physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development of all children and young people.

This being the case, it is important to address the very real need for schools to facilitate this in meaningful and informative ways in order to engender wellbeing in future generations.

1.3 Focus and Aim of my Research

The current international narrative pertaining to wellbeing and its relevance to education was the initial inspiration for this research topic.

The research topic I explored as a result was ‘How can I, as a Classroom Teacher, enhance Wellbeing, in order to Support Resilient Learners?’

Having been a primary school teacher over the last sixteen years, I contemplated changes I had seen in this period of time and whether or not my professional practices had changed to mirror this. I quickly realised that despite the fact that society has been impacted by the Covid 19 crisis and the issue of usage and proliferation of digital technologies, the curriculum in schools had not (Woods et al., 2024). By default, I realised that my practices had remained static. In order to address this issue, I needed to reflect carefully on my core values and make necessary changes in order to support children within my classroom for the promotion of their wellbeing.

The primary aims of this research project were as follows;

- Identify ways in which my core values could be enhanced
- Recognise that these values share a symbiotic relationship with the learning of the children within my class

- Evaluate current literature in order to ascertain best practice in the area of wellbeing
- Systematically analyse ways in which I could use this knowledge to facilitate more effective learning in the area of wellbeing within my classroom
- Generate a new living theory based on the above

1.3.1 Values Statement

The notion of values was certainly an area that forced me to pause and reflect on values that were apparent in my own personal life as well as my professional one. In the initial stages of the course, it became apparent that care, compassion and respect were values that took precedence for me. However, it was not long before inherent problems began to emerge.



Figure 1.1: My Core Values

Firstly, on the recommencement of school in September 2024, I began to realise that these values were not always evident in my practice. The children were not aware of many of them and I contemplated – why was this the case? It became clear that there was a disparity between my values

and practice and because of this, I had become guilty of becoming, what Whitehead (2000: 93) termed a 'living contradiction'.

If I was to conduct this research study in an effective way, it required that I reconnected with these values and reapply them to my practice in my attempts to enhance the wellbeing of the children in my class and promote resilient learners. In order to do this, I analysed the various literature concerning core values and their application to classroom practice. Additionally, I researched the literature on the topic of wellbeing and as part of this, I concentrated on wellbeing in an Irish context as well as an international one in order to better understand and inform decisions I would make as part of the action research element of this study.

1.4 Research Background, Context and Intervention

1.4.1 Background of the Researcher

At the beginning of this Masters programme, I contemplated various aspects of teaching within a primary school in a modern-day era. I mused over changes that have taken place within the education system in recent years and their impact on how teaching and learning have changed because of this. The Covid 19 pandemic struck me as the most significant societal shift that had changed the complexion of education and children's ability to cope with the various demands of the modern-day classroom (Sawyer et al, 2023). On return, I witnessed their worry, fear and anxiety over simple tasks that they had handled before. Emails and meetings ensued with worried parents who felt that their children were suffering from anxiety because of homework activities and tests. It was not until I started this course that I began to recognise the real issue. Despite the fact that children's lives had been irrevocably altered because of the crisis, I, as their teacher, had not made necessary changes to my classroom practices in order to cater for their emotional needs after the pandemic.

In addition to this, I pondered why the issue of resilience was such an inherent cause of concern for me. After much contemplation and self-reflection, I considered that the reason behind this might be a personal one as well as a professional one.

When I was eleven my father was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Thankfully he survived and thirty years later, is stronger than ever.



Figure 1.2: Family photographs during my father's sickness

However, during this time, my family and I had to demonstrate great resilience in order to cope with the prospect of losing him. At the time, I was eleven, the exact age of the children I currently teach and when I really reflected on why I chose this topic for my research project, it struck me that my own personal experience of resilience was an intrinsic element of it. Without utilising the skills and strategies of resilience, I would not have coped with my father's life-threatening illness and I worried that if the children I teach cannot demonstrate these skills and strategies within school when it comes to things like homework and testing, how will they cope when life showers them with adversity? I needed to advocate on their behalfs, I needed to show them, through my core values, that they too could bring sunshine after showers. Therefore, I had to make positive steps within my own practice to illustrate the values of care, compassion and respect in order to better equip the children in my

class with the knowledge and skillset to be able to become resilient learners within the context of the classroom. They needed to understand that, through care, compassion and respect, they too could overcome adversity and be resilient, not merely within the classroom, but in life.

1.4.2 Research Site

The research for this thesis was conducted in a rural, mixed school setting. The school itself operates under the patronage of the Catholic Church. There are ten staff members including and two Special Educational Teachers (SETs) one of whom is a teaching principal and two Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). The school shares strong links with the local community and this was of instrumental importance to this research project as parents not only supported the process but offered advice and assistance at various times throughout.

1.4.3 Research Participants

The research participants for this study encompassed twenty-two children within the researchers' class, ranging from ten to twelve years of age during the course of the data collection.

1.4.4 Ethical Considerations

I applied for and was granted ethical approval by Maynooth University in the early stages of this research project. Consent was also sought and granted by the Principal of the school and the Board of Management. Following on from this, parents were issued with consent and assent letters which were completed and returned. All parents agreed to take part in the research study and all children

were made aware that they were free to withdraw at any time. As part of the data collection, children were anonymised by giving them a pseudonym 'A-V'.

1.4.5 Methodology

The chosen paradigm for this research study was self-reflective action research. This methodology was preferable to others as it allowed this researcher to reflect on the impact their own values had on the data gathering and the findings thereafter. In addition to this, qualitative data was used in order to gain insights into the nature of the findings.

1.5 Potential Contribution of the Study

The creation of engaging and informative lessons is an aspect that has proven very effective in this study. In addition to this, the research project highlights the necessity for child-friendly, relational and values-based approaches to be utilised in classrooms. Through the use of these types of approaches children's learning in the area of wellbeing and resilience was greatly enhanced.

1.6 Chapter Outline

Chapter One has outlined the rationale for this research project through a specific focus on the issues pertaining to wellbeing in global and national contexts, with specific focus on the education system. In addition to this, this chapter has explored the various values that led this researcher to the decision to choose this research topic and reasons underpinning it, with intentional links to a range of core values pertaining to it.

Chapter Two analyses and evaluates literature pertaining to wellbeing and resilience in a number of ways. It addresses the ideals of a plethora of educational psychologists and learning theorists and explores reasons why wellbeing is not only relevant but pertinent in our fast paced, dynamic society. In terms of education, it examines the significance of wellbeing in an international context as well as an Irish one. It also looks forward to the implementation of the new wellbeing curriculum, due to be launched in September 2025 in all primary schools in Ireland.

Following on from this, *Chapter Three* addresses the rationale for this particular research study by outlining specific details of it. It delves into the methodology itself and the use of action research as the chosen paradigm for the purposes of completing this research project. It highlights means in which the study was conducted and explanations for why they were necessary.

Here after, *Chapter Four* considers the specific data derived from the research cycles conducted and through the use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), the generation of explicit codes that produced evidence of strategies that enhanced resilience within the participant group.

Finally, *Chapter Five*, concludes with an emphasis on the specific limitations that were inherent within the data as well as thoughts and discussion about further implications for it. It also reflects on this researcher's personal journey and the learning derived therein.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss, evaluate and analyse a myriad of academic research pertaining to this particular research topic ‘How Can I, as a Classroom Teacher, Enhance the Wellbeing of the Children in my Classroom to Support Resilient Learners?’

This will be achieved through a specific and intentional reflection and evaluation of various definitions of wellbeing. An informative and thought-provoking focus on various wellbeing and learning theorists will also be considered. It also emphasises the idea of wellbeing in current educational settings both nationally and internationally. In doing so, it will evaluate and critique their relevance in a contemporary context as well as specifically to this research project.

Following on from this, the literature review reflects upon and analyses the idea of resilience in terms of wellbeing. Finally, the literature review highlights the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic as a contributor to changes in wellbeing and resilience that have negatively impacted children’s mental health, according to various researchers.

At this juncture, it is crucial to consider and evaluate the term wellbeing itself through the lenses of the various notaries in the field.

2.2 Definitions of Wellbeing

Currently, there is no unified definition of wellbeing, nationally or internationally. Spectators have widely acknowledged this point and often assert that while wellbeing is a growing area of concern, its exact meaning lacks clarity (Fitzgerald, 2016; Soutter, 2011; Cassidy, 2018).

In light of this, it is crucial to focus on a variety of beliefs about the concept for the purposes of this action research.

O'Brien and O'Shea (2016) believe that when considering wellbeing, we must look at it in all of its' various guises and that any definition used must reflect its multi-dimensional nature. Therefore, any potential definition must encapsulate the psychological, sociological and philosophical components of it. In contrast, Barry and Friedli (2008) assert that wellbeing has a physical and spiritual component. Cassidy (2018) continues to add her own commentary to the issue by saying that wellbeing cannot exist or flourish without the presence of community. This is a sentiment that is absent from the work of Barry and Friedli (2008). However, for the purposes of this research project, the aforementioned attitudes do not fully encapsulate the essence of wellbeing and because of this, it is essential to reflect on the causes of this ambiguity.

As a result, it is vital to consider wellbeing in terms of education and educational reform in Ireland. Nohilly and Tynan (2022) refer to the fact that wellbeing is further complicated by the use of various spelling in policy documents pertaining to it (wellbeing, well-being and well being). For example, in the wellbeing guidelines published by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Department of Health (DoH) in 2013 and 2015 respectively, for post primary and primary schools, the spelling is well-being, whereas the term 'wellbeing' is utilized in the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice published by the DES in 2018 (Nohilly & Tynan, 2022: 4). Furthermore, Svane et al (2019) suggest that the issue is made even more complex because of the nature of it and the fact that it is multidisciplinary having links in education, psychology, politics, economics, medicine etc. This point is further compounded by Gillet-Swan and Sergeant (2015: 146) who assert that

wellbeing is a highly popularised and aspirational concept in philosophical, psychological, medical and health literature

and there has not been a clearly defined and workable definition of wellbeing that incorporates its multifaceted, multidimensional and progressive elements.

In the next section, I will discuss the principles of the various acclaimed learning theorists in the field of wellbeing in order to evaluate the fundamental relevance of it.

2.2.1 Wellbeing and Learning Theorists

Theorists have been contemplating the notion of wellbeing for many years now. The distinguished philosopher, Aristotle (2004), believed that eudaimonia, or flourishing is the highest form of human activity. He posited that in order to achieve eudaimonia, a person must achieve happiness and this happiness can only be achieved through action (Aristotle, 2004). Additionally, Symons & Vanderwelle (2024: 4) suggest that Aristotle believes that this happens through 'positive subjective experience'.

Similarly, Maslow (1943) utilises a model of the 'Hierarchy of Needs' in his psychological approach to achieving wellbeing. He describes the process of self-actualization as an inherent necessity in the human condition (Maslow, 1970: 46). After fulfilling more basic physiological and safety and security needs, Maslow asserts that in order for people to experience true fulfilment, they must strive to achieve self-actualization and the primary way to achieve this is to accept oneself and the various needs they possess (Maslow, 1943). Essentially, he maintains that wellbeing is the primary way to achieve this.

In addition to this, the notarised sociologist, Bronfenbrenner (1979) recognises the need for individualism and enhanced wellbeing in his Ecological Systems Theory. He continues to assert that learning does not happen in isolation but is influenced by a myriad of community and cultural elements. He describes five environmental systems that shape and contribute to this from micro

systems such as family and school to macrosystems such as larger societal influences such as values and beliefs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In order for a child to learn, he argues that all these factors have an influence on a persons' overall wellbeing.

Equally, Cassidy (2018) agrees with Bronfenbrenner's findings. He adopts the matter of community as a driving force in the manifestation and enhancement of wellbeing. This is of significant importance here when one considers the education system itself as a stakeholder in the relation and enhancement of wellbeing as it reinforces the notion that all parties involved in the education process have a shared responsibility in the holistic development of the child (NCCA, 2020).

Furthermore, the Self Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000: 68) investigates

People's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes.

They identify three major needs within this in order for wellbeing to be engendered – competence (Harter, 1978; White, 1963), relatedness (Baumeister & O'Leary, 1995; Reis, 1994), and autonomy (deCharms, 1968; Deci, 1975). This differs from the theories of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Cassidy (2018) as it focuses solely on the individual and their understanding of themselves and relationships connected to themselves rather than the impact of societal and cultural elements.

In more recent times, Seligman (2018) suggests a model of Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment (PERMA) to establish what he believes are measurable components needed for wellbeing to flourish. This is similar to Aristotle in terms of the use of the word flourishing but Seligman believes that wellbeing is not simply a feeling of happiness but is an interconnected series of factors (PERMA) that weave together in order to generate and

promote wellbeing (Seligman, 2018). It is based on principles of positive psychology and believes that wellbeing is not about curing misery but the promotion of a positive mindset (Seligman, 2011).

Finally, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) founded in 1994, initiated specific reforms in education in the area of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and wellbeing (CASEL, 2012). They were responsible for creating the CASEL 5 Framework which utilises five key competencies in order to enrich and enhance SEL and wellbeing in schools (CASEL, 2012). The five competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Zins et al, 2007). Its framework allows children to learn key proficiencies in the development of skills that promote wellbeing and resilience through SEL techniques. Similar to the PERMA model proposed by Seligman (2011), this framework has identified specific ways in which children can develop their wellbeing through the identification of skills that promote wellbeing and allow teachers to identify specific issues and ways to resolve them.

In light of the aforementioned theories and frameworks, it is now vital to focus on the concept of wellbeing itself and specific definitions pertaining to it in a contemporary context.

2.2.2 Wellbeing Definition for the Purposes of this Research Project

As discussed, inherent issues arise when considering an exact definition of wellbeing. However, for the purposes of this action research plan and literature review, wellbeing will be defined as described by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2001, cited in Department of Education and Skills, 2018:

10) who assert that wellbeing is when a person;

realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.

This definition effectively informs characteristics of wellbeing in a practical sense within the classroom and it encompasses a wide range of skills pertaining to it. It also emphasises key components in the aforementioned PERMA and CASEL frameworks as it seeks to address aspects of social, emotional and physical wellbeing. Furthermore, the theories of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Cassidy (2018) are evident in this description of wellbeing as it emphasises the wider community as influential in the promotion of it.

Based on this, it is now crucial to consider the notion of wellbeing within the educational arena in terms of current practice in Ireland and internationally as well as future proposals for change in the sector.

2.3 Wellbeing Within the Education System

Based on the definitions of wellbeing aforementioned, this literature review now focuses on wellbeing in three areas – an international context, an Irish context and planned changes to the curriculum in Ireland.

2.3.1 The International Context

In terms of international educational practice, many countries have non mandatory wellbeing systems within their curricula however, wellbeing has been prioritised in a myriad of ways across the curricula of a plethora of countries. Countries such as Scotland, Australia, Finland, Denmark and New Zealand are pioneering efforts to have wellbeing included in their curricula with many implementing an approach that ensures it is present across curricula (Nohilly & Tynan, 2022).

In Scotland, personal wellbeing is one of the three major curricular areas along with literacy and numeracy and teachers are mandated to take responsibility for ensuring that health and wellbeing education for all is implemented and promoted (Thornburn, 2015). The Scottish model describes eight indicators; ‘every child and young person should be Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI)’ (Stradling et al, 2009: 47). These eight indicators are at the heart of the Getting it right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach to their curriculum (Scottish Government, 2006). These indicators were also adopted in the Irish post primary wellbeing framework (NCCA, 2017).

The emphasis on wellbeing in other countries also varies greatly with countries like New Zealand, Australia, Finland and Denmark all implementing wellbeing programmes that focus on a child’s wellbeing as well as their ability to be resilient. In fact, some areas such as Alberta, Canada, introduced a curriculum called the Wellbeing and Resiliency Framework (Government of Alberta, 2019). Contrastingly, the Welsh curriculum has no specific curriculum based on wellbeing but rather it is embedded into all subject areas (Welsh Government, 2022). Other countries such as Poland and Taiwan, take a view of wellbeing as non-statutory and it is not part of the curriculum (Leahy and Simovska, 2017). Indeed, in many countries such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa, commentary asserts that the presence of these types of curricula engenders more anxious and stressed children rather than resilient and optimistic learners (Young, 2013).

From the aforementioned, it can be seen that wellbeing is becoming increasingly recognised and prioritised in terms of education and curricular reform around the world. This is an important step towards ensuring that children become ‘healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society’ (Welsh Government, 2022: 11).

It is crucial to now consider the place and value of wellbeing in Irish terms within the education system in order to further explore and inform this literature review.

2.3.2 Wellbeing in an Irish Context

Currently, the Irish Education system implements the Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, 1999. The curriculum, developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) prioritises the intrapersonal development of the child ‘by helping children to recognise, understand and accept themselves as unique individuals who feel valued and loved’ (NCCA, 1999: 2). The NCCA (1999: 9) assert that aim of the SPHE curriculum is as follows;

- to promote the personal development and well-being of the child
- to foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being
- to promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects
- to enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about the social, personal and health dimensions of life both now and in the future
- to develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship and an appreciation of the democratic way of life
- to enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world.

In terms of wellbeing, it is clear from the abovementioned aims that wellbeing is an important element in the 1999 curriculum and it strives to promote wellbeing in many ways throughout. It achieves this through the use of three strands – Myself, Myself and others, Myself and the Wider World (NCCA, 1999). Furthermore, the strand ‘Myself’ is subdivided into strand units, one of which is ‘Health and well-being’ and this unit explores the development of coping skills as part of wellbeing (NCCA, 1999: 39). The current allocation for teaching time of this subject is thirty minutes per week according to DES guidelines (NCCA, 1999).

Three primary programmes are advised for use as part of this curriculum and each one is tailored to a specific aspect of child wellbeing: health (The Walk Tall Programme), social (The Stay Safe Programme) and relationship and sexual (Relationships and Sexual Education Programme) wellbeing.

The Walk Tall programme was created by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) in the 1990s as a reaction to the Ministerial Taskforce Report (1996) which was concerned with drug abuse and addiction and sought to implement preventative measures in order to minimise this in Irish society by means of education (PDST, 1999). The resource was revised in 2016 in reaction to feedback from teachers about the necessity to provide further supports in the area of SPHE.

According to the Child Abuse Prevention Programme (2016), The Stay Safe Programme was introduced in order to address safety concerns pertaining to children in Ireland. Since the launch of the Children First Act, 2015, the Stay Safe Programme has become mandatory across all primary schools in Ireland. The Act itself was created in order to raise awareness relating to child abuse and neglect in Ireland and to provide more effective safeguarding information with regard to the support and care of children ([Children First Guidance and Legislation Tusla - Child and Family Agency](#), accessed, 25th Oct 2024). As such, the Stay Safe Programme (though already in existence since 1991) was made compulsory in all primary schools and its' main purpose has been to reduce the possibility of child abuse and a child's vulnerability to it (PDST, 2016). Children learn about five distinct topics relating to safety as part of the SPHE curriculum in school-feeling safe and unsafe, friendships and bullying, touches, secrets and telling and strangers.

The Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) programme published by the DES (1995) is a programme that schools use in order to teach about sexual education through the SPHE curriculum.

It is linked with the 1999 SPHE curriculum and benefits from allowing children to feel comfortable in their own bodies and has seen many changes over the years as various different sexualities, genders etc become more normalised in our society (DES, 2024).

Finally, The Weaving Wellbeing Programme, published in 2017 has been an addition to the aforementioned wellbeing programmes which uses a positive psychology approach in order to enhance wellbeing. It is an Irish programme designed to enhance wellbeing and is divided into a variety of concepts and is broken down into class groups (See Figure 2.1 below).



Figure 2.1 Weaving Wellbeing Programme

For the purposes of this study, the Weaving Wellbeing Tools of Resilience booklet was used as an intervention. The booklet included ten specific lessons relating to resilience. They were administered as follows;

Date	Action
<i>20th January 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sheet about Weaving Wellbeing programme Tools of resilience given to parents/guardians • Weaving Wellbeing – Lesson 1 Roots of Resilience; • What is resilience? • Why do we need resilience? • Resilience tree • Self-assessment check-up
<i>27th January 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaving Wellbeing – Lesson 2 – Tool 1 Jigsaw of Perspective • Circle time based on perspective • Art activity based on this • Jigsaw activity from resilience booklet • Self-assessment check-up
<i>3rd February 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaving Wellbeing – Lesson 3 – Tool 2 Lucky Dip of Distraction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discussion based on ‘What are distractions?’ ➤ How can healthy distractions help our resilience? ➤ Use healthy distractions at home to help us ➤ Illustrate and write about healthy distractions ➤ Self-assessment check-up
<i>10th February 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaving Wellbeing – lesson 4 – tool 3 – Planning Pen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discussion about – Who can I talk to? What should I do first? What will I do if my plan doesn’t work out? ➤ Pair work based on Sophie’s story ➤ Crossword based on planning ➤ Self-assessment check-up
<i>17th February 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaving Wellbeing – lesson 5 – tool 4 – Helpful Thinking Helmet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discuss Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Have we had these thoughts before? How did they make us feel? What did we do? ➤ Hypothetical situation in pairs -discussion and class discussion thereafter ➤ What can we replace ANTs with? ➤ Self-assessment check-up
<p>24th February 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaving Wellbeing – lesson 6 – tool 5 – Key of Character Strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Circle time – character strength is within us, we just need to unlock it ➤ Pair work based on strengths we have and strengths others have ➤ Pair work-pick a movie star or character from a book-discuss their strengths ➤ Talk to family and friends about our own strengths-list five ➤ Self-assessment check-up
<p>3rd March 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue reflective journal and check ins • Weaving Wellbeing – Lesson 7 – Tool 6 – Mindfulness Switch Part 1 Bee Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bee level = busy level in our minds • Based on past and future events -discuss words relating to bee level • Think about a time you were worried about something-past or future. How did it make you feel? What did you do about it? • Mindfulness exercise • Self-assessment check-up
<p>10th March 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue reflective journal and check ins • Weaving Wellbeing – lesson 8 – Mindfulness Switch Part 2 Flower Level

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Flower level is about being present in the moment – class discussion based on this ➤ Mindfulness exercise ➤ Think about and write down words that are connected to flower level ➤ Wordsearch based on these words ➤ Self-assessment check-up
17th March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaving Wellbeing – lesson 9 – Mindfulness Switch Part 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discussion about flower level and mindfulness meaning the same thing ➤ Number the ways in which we can feel happier in our own lives ➤ Mindfulness exercise ➤ Discussion about how it felt? Was it difficult to keep attention on the present? ➤ Reading – mindful script at home each day ➤ Self-assessment check-up
24th March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaving Wellbeing – Lesson 10 -N.A.B.B (Name, Accept, Breathe, Body) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discussion about the science of the brain (amygdala and prefrontal cortex) ➤ What happens when we feel overwhelmed? We experience ‘amygdala hijack’ so using N.A.B.B helps us ➤ Self-assessment check-up

Table 1: Weaving Wellbeing Administration during Research Study

The current SPHE curriculum has many benefits in terms of its ability to support and enhance wellbeing, it is crucial at this stage to consider reasons why the Government of Ireland (2019) has devised a new Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework of Practice document and curriculum to replace it. This is be the specific focus of the following section.

2.3.3 The New Wellbeing Curriculum

In terms of Ireland's reaction to international reforms in education, The Primary Curriculum Framework (PCF) has been developed. (NCCA, 2023). This framework is due to be rolled out to all primary schools in Ireland from September 2025. The framework is proactive in recognising the importance of schools in engendering the wellbeing ethos within their schools and communities. In terms of wellbeing, it maintains that wellbeing transcends any one curricular area and should be woven into the very fabric of every school as part of the culture within the school rather than as a specific focus within one subject area (NCCA, 2023). It promotes the idea of 'being well' and as such ensures that a holistic approach is taken to children's development rather than merely an academic one (NCCA, 2023). It itemises seven key competencies which are interwoven. (See figure 2.2).

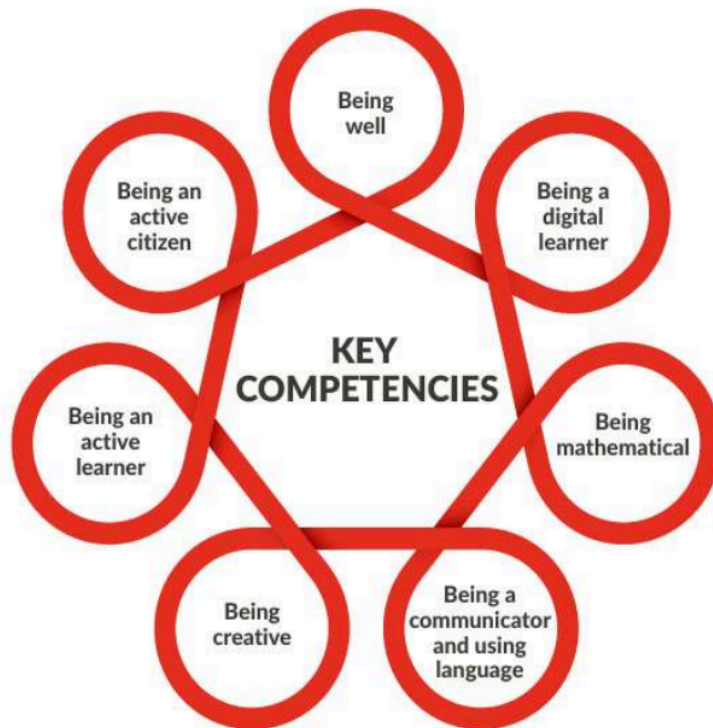


Figure 2.2 Key Competencies (NCCA, 2023: 8)

In addition to this, the DES has reconfigured and updated various curricula to include a new Wellbeing curriculum to replace the previous Social, Physical, Health Education (SPHE) and Physical Education (PE) curricula from 1999.

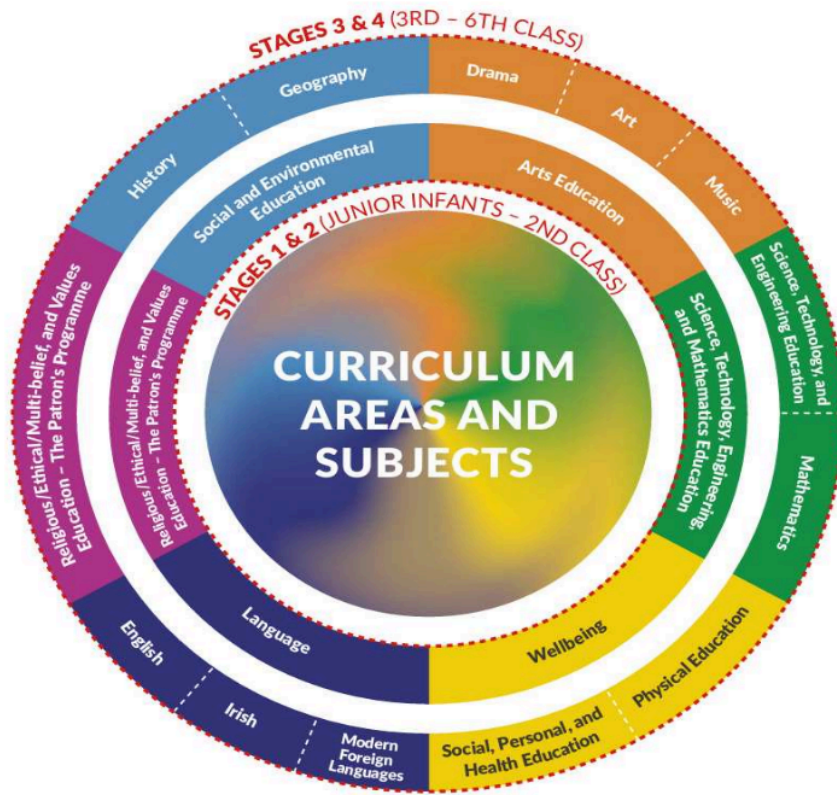


Figure 2.3 Curriculum Areas and Subjects (NCCA, 2023: 15)

The time allocations for each subject area have also been altered and Wellbeing has been granted three hours per week in the new guidelines (Figure 2.5). The 1999 SPHE curriculum gave a thirty minute allowance for SPHE and a 60 minute allowance for PE, weekly (Figure 2.4). This is a welcome amendment to the curriculum and one that follows international changes in this area (Nohilly & Tynan, 2022).

Curriculum areas	Full day		Short day [infant classes]	
	One week		One week	
	Hours	Minutes	Hours	Minutes
Secular instruction				
Language				
L ¹	4	00	3	00
L ²	3	30	2	30
Mathematics	3	00	2	15
SESE	3	00	2	15
SPHE	0	30	0	30
PE	1	00	1	00
Arts education	3	00	2	30
Discretionary curriculum time	2	00	1	00
Total secular instruction	20	00	15	00
Religious education (typically)	2	30	2	30
Assembly time	1	40	1	40
Roll call	0	50	0	50
Breaks	0	50	0	50
Recreation (typically)	2	30	2	30
Total	28	20	23	20

Figure 2.4 Time Allocations for the 1999 Curriculum (DES & NCCA, 1999: 70)

Stages 3 and 4 (Third to Sixth Class)			
	Weekly allocations	Monthly allocations (four weeks)	
Language	7 hours 45 minutes	31 hours	
Language 1	3 hours 45 minutes		
Language 2	3 hours		
Language 3	1 hour		
Mathematics	4 hours	16 hours	
		Science, Technology, and Engineering Education	5 hours
Wellbeing	3 hours	12 hours	
		Social and Environmental Education	8 hours
		Arts Education	8 hours
		Flexible Time	7 hours

Figure 2.5 Time Allocations for new Primary Curriculum Framework

As a new subject, the new Wellbeing curriculum (2024: 4)

serves as a catalyst for lifelong wellbeing by integrating vital life skills such as: self-awareness, personal safety, emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, movement,

decision-making, and healthy relationship-building. It establishes a platform for children to develop as engaged citizens who recognise the importance of leading healthy, active, and sustainable lifestyles.

It also asserts that by cultivating wellbeing in children we are essentially enhancing their connection with each other, their school, community and society itself. It is broken into four distinct strands – Movement education, Emotional and Relational education, community and belonging and health education (NCCA, 2024) (See figure 2.6).



Figure 2.6: The Strands of the New Wellbeing Curriculum (NCCA, 2024: 8)

Movement Education	Emotional and Relational Education	Health Education	Community and Belonging
Movement skills	Identity	Motivation for healthy living	Sense of belonging
Movement concepts	Emotional awareness and expression	Substance use	Family
Movement strategies	Relationships	Human development	Rights and fairness
Personal relevance	Resilience	Safety	Citizenship
	Decision-making	Media and digital wellbeing	

Figure 2.7: Strand Units of Wellbeing (NCCA, 2024: 8)

For the purposes of this literature review, it is essential to reflect on one significant aspect of wellbeing at this juncture. Resilience is an inherent aspect of wellbeing and one that is of huge relevance to this particular research project. As such, it is vital to understand it's meaning and impact. This will be detailed in the following section.

2.4 Resilience

According to the Draft Wellbeing curriculum (2024), wellbeing is a multi-faceted concept and one of the critical elements within it is that of resilience (NCCA, 2024). The New Wellbeing curriculum asserts that 'In fostering emotional resilience, children learn to recognise, interpret, and respond empathetically to their own and others' emotions and feelings' (NCCA, 2024: 5).

Rutter (2006) asserts that resilience is 'an interactive concept that refers to a relative resistance to environmental risk experiences, or the overcoming of stress or adversity (Rutter, 2006: 2). More recently, Masten (2013) defines resilience as 'the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development' (Masten, 2013: 6). Both

Rutter (2006) and Masten (2013) share many of the same thoughts as the acclaimed theorist, Bronfenbrenner (1979) and his theories pertaining to community and its value in the creation and enhancement of wellbeing. The use of the word 'adapt' is of critical importance in Mastens' interpretation of resilience as it highlights the crux of the term. Like Bronfenbrenner, she believes that community is an integral aspect of wellbeing and resilience (Masten, 2013).

Contrastingly, the American Psychological Association (APA) (2014) define resilience as 'the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress' (APA, 2014:1). This definition, while continuing to acknowledge the importance of the environment, also recognises the changing nature of resilience. It is a skill that can be learned rather than something a person is born with. Similarly, Luthar et al. (2000) agree with this point stating that 'resilience is the dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity' (Luthar et al, 2000: 543). Furthermore, Newman (2002) concur with the aforementioned and provide a simple but effective definition of resilience in childhood as 'the ability to successfully adapt to change and stressful events in healthy and constructive ways' (Newman, 2002: 2). This being the case, the relevance of resilience in learning and educational settings can be seen to be fundamentally important and will be further discussed in the following section.

2.4.1 Resilience and Education

In terms of education, the World Health Organization (2004), assert that with the consistent development of wellbeing, a child can equip themselves with the ability to increase their resilience, and to respond appropriately to any stress or anxiety they may experience, thus enabling confidence and success as a lifelong process (World Health Organisation 2004, Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2014, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009).

Furthermore, and in terms of an Irish context, the Draft Wellbeing Specification (2024) asserts that ‘In fostering emotional resilience, children learn to recognise, interpret, and respond empathetically to their own and others’ emotions and feelings’ (NCCA, 2024: 5). They continue to state that in doing so

This strengthens their ability to cultivate and maintain supportive, connected, and positive relationships and to navigate challenges such as disharmony and conflict in friendships respectfully.

(NCCA, 2024: 5)

Therefore, it is discernible that resilience is of fundamental importance in the education system in order to ensure that children develop coping skills as part of the process of lifelong learning.

Following on from this, it is inherently important to consider a global barrier that has affected resilience in education, the Covid-19 pandemic. The following section explores the repercussions of this, according to the literature.

2.5 Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic

Having ascertained a concept and definition of resilience as an integral component of wellbeing, it is now vital to address reasons why it may have been inhibited in recent years. This paper argues that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the nature of learning and wellbeing in recent times. This is achieved through reflection on and analysis of research conducted during and after the Covid-19 crisis and the impact it has had on resilient learners.

Firstly, the global Covid-19 pandemic was a significant crisis that had an immeasurable impact on various sectors in our society, including education itself (O’Toole and Simovska, 2021). Due to the contagious nature of Covid-19 and the potential health implications of it, in March 2020

Governments around the world were forced to close schools in order to prevent further spread of the virus and this led to disruptions in education systems (Al-Labadi et al., 2025). During this time, a joint report was published by the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF (2021). According to the report, at the peak of the pandemic nearly 6.1 billion learners were affected by these closures. Furthermore, this equated to over 90% of the student population, internationally. The duration of these school closures varied from country to country, nevertheless, the repercussions of it have been significant in terms of wellbeing in education (Lee, 2020; Marmot et al., 2020).

On an international level, deFigueiredo et al., (2021) assert that widespread school closures as well as lack of friendship support, and adults outside of the home environment were some of the contributing factors that led to issues in wellbeing not only in Ireland but internationally. Similarly, Liu et al., (2020) believe that children were also at risk of negative emotions derived from separation from family members during the crisis. In addition to this, many researchers (Al-Labadi et al., 2023; Thompson & Davis, 2023; Viner et al., 2020) found that children's wellbeing was adversely affected as a result of the pandemic and that children experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety that hindered their ability to successfully engage in learning.

Furthermore, Al-Labadi et al., (2025) take a more longitudinal view in saying that the full extent of this pandemic and its impact on student learning remains unknown, however, 'researchers and policymakers are increasingly focused on building more resilient education systems' in order to prevent issues of this nature in the future (Al-Labadi, et al., 2025: 2).

2.5.1 Covid-19 and the Irish Context

In terms of Ireland, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) led by Casey (2025) found that school absenteeism and high levels of anxiety have been seen in school aged children in the

wake of the pandemic, thus leading to negative concoctions for children's mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, research conducted by Egan & Pope (2025) reported that children's school readiness has deteriorated as a result of the pandemic. The study compared readiness of junior infant children pre and post pandemic and the results illustrated higher levels of anxiety, separation distress and difficulties with emotional regulation. Essentially, children's ability to cope with school life had been adversely affected and has limited their ability to be resilient learners (Egan & Pope, 2025).

In terms of this literature review, the need for resilience in a contemporary context based on the negative impact of the Covid-19 crisis is clear. It is evident from the studies discussed herein that wellbeing and in particular, resilience has been adversely affected by this pandemic in educational settings. The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2019) describes wellbeing as a lifelong process and as such, must be engendered within educational settings.

2.6 Conclusion

The above literature review has focused on a plethora of items relating to wellbeing. It has explored the concept of wellbeing itself and the fact that there is relative ambiguity over an exact definition for it. It concentrated on the notion of resilience as a key component in a person's path to wellbeing.

It has focused on the current SPHE curriculum in Ireland as well as the various programmes pertaining to it. Following on from this, it investigated international wellbeing programmes in primary schools. In terms of Ireland and proposed changes, the new PCF better informs curricular reform in Ireland and the addition the new Wellbeing curriculum with extended time allocations will ensure wellbeing promotion in primary schools.

The literature also discussed and reflected on contemporary issues that have led to emotional issues in children, namely the Covid-19 crisis.

While efforts are being made in Ireland and internationally to prioritise wellbeing in the curriculum, it is vital that educators recognise and understand the impact of this in their endeavours to implement wellbeing practices in their classrooms, especially with certain ambiguity relating to the term.

In light of this, this research project will now investigate whether or not it is possible for teachers to make positive change in terms of wellbeing in educational settings. Essentially, is it possible for me, as a classroom teacher to enhance wellbeing in my classroom to support resilient learners?

Chapter Three – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the rationale for this research study through the exploration and analysis of the methods and instruments used for data collection. It also focuses on specific reasons they are best suited to this particular research project. Furthermore, specific aspects of the research design and site, ethical considerations and potential limitations will be explored.

3.2 Research Site

The research site involved in this study was a rural primary school in the west of Ireland. The school is co-educational with a Catholic ethos. It consists of eight teachers – six classroom teachers and two special education teachers (one of whom is a teaching principal). The school also consists of two special needs assistants (SNAs) and a secretary. The school has strong links with the local community and positive relationships between the school and the local community are inherent therein.

3.3 Research Participants

The participants involved in this study consist of twenty-two fourth and fifth class children within my class. There are twelve fourth class and ten fifth class pupils, respectively. Participants have been verbally informed of an intention to conduct research about the area of wellbeing and resilience. Consent letters and information sheets were also furnished to children and their parents/guardians on the 6th January 2025 in order to obtain formal consent.

3.4 Key Research Question

The fundamental purpose of this research study was to analyse and evaluate ‘How can I, as a classroom teacher, enhance the Wellbeing of my Classroom to Support Resilient Learners?’.

The key objectives were as follows;

- To identify and discuss a range of emotions in a variety of situations within the classroom
- To prioritise the wellbeing of each child within my class in order to engender more positive wellbeing and enhance their wellbeing within the classroom
- To implement a variety of strategies that would enhance resilience in the learners within my classroom
- To incorporate the Weaving Wellbeing programme aimed at resilience in order to promote and engender resilient learners

3.5 Research Paradigm: Self-study Action Research

3.5.1 Selection of Research Paradigm

Bassey (1990) defines a research paradigm as ‘a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the functions of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpins their research actions’ (Bassey, 1990:13). In addition to this, Kivunja & Kuyini (2017: 27) assert that a research paradigm is a ‘worldwide view of the researcher’. Lather (2006) also adopts this type of stance. He believes that the selection of an appropriate research paradigm is crucial because it is reflective of the way the researcher views the world as it is and how they want to change it.

For the purposes of this study, I reviewed three research paradigms in order to select the one I felt best suited my intended research – positivist, interpretive and action research. In order to best

achieve this, I used the approach adopted by McDonagh et al. (2020). I reflected on four key questions illustrated by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017).

1. Where am I placed as a professional within this paradigm?
2. Does it allow me to think professionally, act and reflect on my practice?
3. Can it increase my autonomy as a professional?
4. Can it help to contribute to the knowledge base of the teaching profession?

(Kivunja & Kuyini 2017, cited in McDonagh et al., 2020)

I found these questions very informative and beneficial in guiding me to the most appropriate research paradigm for this research project as they allowed me the opportunity to consider my own practice.

While the positivist approach is very beneficial in many respects, it utilizes more quantitative data collection and is based on prior knowledge rather than the generation of new theories (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). The positivism approach assumes that reality is objective, measurable and independent of human interpretation. As a scientific or empirical approach, it can play a role in enhancing the knowledge of the teaching profession but not in this research context and therefore was eliminated as a potential research paradigm.

Contrastingly, the interpretive approach has a more subjective view of research. Kivunja & Kuyini (2017) assert that it enables a researcher to make ‘meaning of their data through their own thinking and cognitive processing of data, informed by their interactions with participants’ (Kivunia & Kuyini, 2017: 33). While an interpretive methodology would enable the practitioner more autonomy in terms of researching an issue within their classroom, it does not allow a researcher to test out the theories of others. Instead it focuses solely on the generation of new theory. Therefore, based on the four questions posited by Kivunia & Kuyini (2017) aforementioned, while the interpretive approach

enables more autonomy and the generation of new theory, the results can be subjective and limited to a particular context. Therefore, results may lack validity and reliability in a broader sense (McDonagh et al, 2020).

Finally, the last research paradigm that I considered was self-study action research. There are many merits to this approach and after reviewing this paradigm I believe it is best suited to this particular research study.

3.5.2 Educational Action Research (EAR)

McDonagh et al., (2020: 18) stipulate that by using action research teacher-researchers are enabled 'to create living personal theories that have current relevance'. This is particularly relevant to the proposed research study as it strives to enhance the wellbeing and resilience of children within my classroom. It is pertinent that the paradigm selected enables the researcher the opportunity to consider a particular issue of concern within the classroom and use interventions that engender positive change. In doing so, a new living theory will be created which is an issue lacking in the positive approach. Simultaneously, it allows the research to consider other research and theory and in so doing the action research model benefits from increased reliability and validity and is therefore, preferable to the interpretative model for this particular research study. Goodnough, (2010: 167) states;

While there are varying conceptions of action research and while it may be adopted for different purposes; it generally involves a social practice that has the potential to be improved; systematic inquiry into practice through cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting; and the direct involvement of those responsible for the practice.

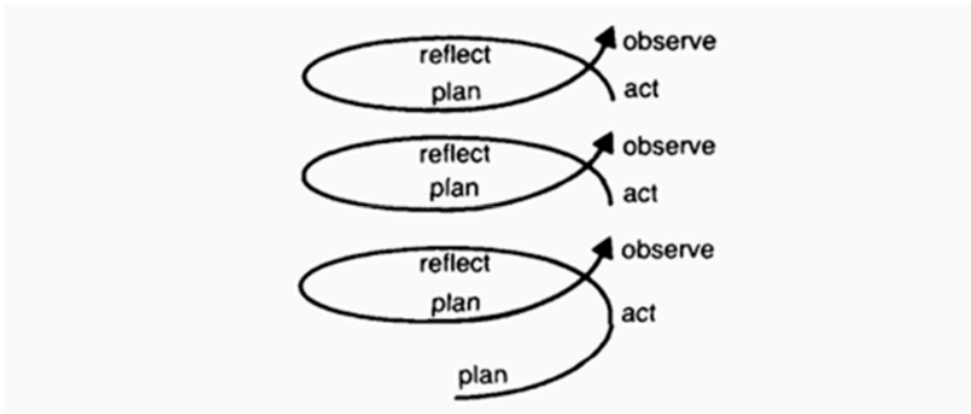


Figure 3.1 Generative Evolutionary Process of Action Research (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988; Whitehead and McNiff, 2006)

It was for these reasons that Educational Action Research (EAR) was chosen as the chosen paradigm for this project. EAR's methodology best enabled the researcher to plan, act, observe and reflect on practice within the classroom and to enable and promote positive change in the area of wellbeing and resilience within the classroom environment. EAR is underpinned by the researcher's values which will be explored in the next section.

3.5.3 Values

Values were a key component in the selection of a research paradigm. McDonagh et al (2020) illustrate this point by positing that values are an influential feature of the selection of a researchers' chosen paradigm as they encourage the researcher to reflect on their own practice and make changes to it accordingly. In terms of this research project, my own personal and professional values are particularly pertinent. The values of care, compassion and respect are of crucial importance to me.

They are inextricably linked with my choice of research topic and are therefore, synonymous with my choice of research paradigm. Self-study action research enabled me to become a reflective practitioner while remaining true to values that are instrumental to myself and my practice. In light of this, action research was the most preferable paradigm for my chosen research question as it enhanced my ability to collect relevant data on the topic of wellbeing and resilience, allowed me the opportunity to reflect on my own practice, support my values and make positive change for the good of the children I teach.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

3.6.1 Vulnerability

Children are considered to be a vulnerable research group. As such, it was important to consider the various issues that may be encountered over the course of this research project.

- **Minimizing risk:** To minimize risk, I began each lesson by asking the children if they were happy to engage in the lesson and reminded them that they were free to withdraw at any time. The class contract was also beneficial in this instance.
- **Minimizing discomfort:** To minimize discomfort, I actively ensured that all participants were comfortable with participation in the research not only through attaining written consent from their parents/guardians but also by attaining the children's assent.
- **Protecting the Researcher:** The researcher scheduled debriefing meeting with their supervisor to process any challenges encountered.

3.6.2 Power dynamics

This aspect was also of vital importance because of the potential to cause ethical issues, it was vital that I put systems in place to prevent this.

- **Researcher-participant:** To minimize the risk of any tension, I used circle time and the development and implementation of a class contract which was created together. The researcher also used child-friendly data collection tools such as pupil view templates to allow children to express themselves without feeling pressured to give 'correct' answers.
- **Participants:** The relationship between participants was also noteworthy. I ensured every child's voice and opinion was heard by using a lollipop system with names. Furthermore, through the use of the class contract, children had to illustrate turn taking.
- **Insider-research:** I informed the children that their opinions and responses would be valued. There was no right or wrong answer. I asked that their feedback be honest and informed them that they could withdraw their participation at any stage.
- **Reflexivity:** I remained unbiased in my approach to this action research project and I ensured this, through an adherence to specific, pre-planned questioning in class discussions and relevant response. Furthermore, I allowed children to discuss their thoughts openly and without prompts.
- **Gatekeepers:** The gatekeepers in this research project were the Board of Management of the school. In terms of this, once I had sought and received written confirmation that I could conduct the research, I ensured that they were given regular verbal updates during their meetings. They did not have access to any of the findings until completion of the research project.

3.6.3 Data Storage

Data was stored in accordance with GDPR guidelines and all identifiers were removed so as to ensure anonymity. Only the researcher on this application had access to the materials collected from participants. Electronic information sheets/consent forms and data collected were stored in an encrypted file and stored on a PC or secure server. Hard copy information sheets/consent forms and data collected were locked securely in cabinets, locked rooms or rooms with limited access.

Publication: Should this research project be published; rigorous efforts will be made to ensure the school and participants involved are unidentifiable. Details about the location of the school and the class involved in the research will be intentionally omitted in order to minimize the risk of this.

3.6.4 Informed Consent and Assent

I ensured that all consent and assent was provided voluntarily and fully informed by those involved in my action research. I gained approval from the following organizations and people:

1. Maynooth University (Ethical approval)
2. The principal of my school (Verbal request)
3. The Board of Management of my school (Letter of request)
4. The twenty-two children in my class (Child-friendly assent forms)
5. The parents/guardians of the children in my class (Information letter and parent/guardian consent forms)

3.6.5 Sensitivity

Prior to beginning any topic under investigation, I reminded the children in my class that should they feel uncomfortable, they could withdraw their participation at any time. Furthermore, when a child became upset or distressed, I immediately removed the child in question from the room and a SET stood into the room. In addition to this, disclosures of a sensitive nature made to me, were immediately and confidentially reported to my Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and necessary action taken.

3.6.6 Issues in Relation to my Values

In relation to my core values of respect and care, I was cognizant that my values were enacted and illustrated to the participants in the study at all times. The children may or may not share or demonstrate these values themselves, however, I had to be aware that my focus was to enhance their resilience, not to persuade them that my values are essential in the promotion of this skill.

3.7 Research Plan and Time Frame

3.7.1 Intervention Cycles

Initially, I gained verbal consent from the principal, the parents and the children in my classroom. I also held oral discussions with the class about the subject matter of this research project and the interventions that would be involved.

On the 13th January, I introduced the idea of a 'class contract' through a circle time exercise with the class and utilized their input in order to create a contract (which was then displayed) for the purposes of the research cycles.

Cycle 1: 13th January – 7th February. (4 weeks) Within this cycle, I familiarized participants with the idea of wellbeing and resilience to ascertain previous knowledge and learning possibilities within it. At the end of this cycle, a plan, act, observe and reflect approach (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) was utilized in order to readjust focus and ensure concerns and considerations were informed and acted upon going into cycle two.

Cycle 2: 10th Feb – 7th March. (4 weeks). This cycle built upon cycle one and also included more in-depth concepts in order to enhance resilience. Again, the observe, plan, act and reflect methodology was employed in order to further enhance this research cycle.

Cycle 3: 10th March – 11th April. (5 weeks) Finally, cycle 3 included more enhanced and detailed discussions and scenarios pertaining to the subject matter under consideration and came to finality with the same cyclical approach utilized in the previous two cycles. The key adjustment here was that it concluded the research aspect of this project in practical terms within the classroom.

3.7.2 Intervention Strategies

The research design included the following wellbeing and resilience intervention strategies;

- Teaching the Weaving Wellbeing programme lessons from ‘The Tools of Resilience’ booklet
- Daily Check-ins
- A class contract
- Circle time

- Sharing learning intentions using We Are Learning To (WALT) and What I Am Looking For (WILF) charts
- Art lessons based on children's learning in this area
- Drama lessons using Writers Theatre based on wellbeing and resilience
- English and SPHE debates – for and against specific topical situations pertaining to wellbeing and resilience.
- Calming exercises/mindfulness

3.7.3 Data Collection Tools

Diamond Nine: A diamond Nine is a template given to children in order for them to rank their thoughts about a particular topic, concept or statement (Clark, 2012). The template is ranked in order of perceived importance from 1-9 (See Appendix B & C). In this study, the diamond Nine was used at the beginning of cycle one (20th January), the middle of cycle two (10th March) and the end of cycle three (31st March) in order to compare and contrast changes in participants concept of resilience. The findings of this tool were very impactful in terms of children's changing concept of resilience throughout the cycles and illustrated that children's thoughts on it had shifted in a positive way. This will be discussed in more detail in *Chapter Four*.

Daily Check-ins: Daily check-ins are systems used at the start of a school day to ascertain how each child feels (Hunter, 2014). They allow a teacher to gauge the general mood of the class on a particular day and factors that might be responsible for this. This was relevant to this study as I sought to compare and contrast various emotions within the class and possible reasons for them. A chart was devised and implemented to assess this. Each child was given a star with

their name and asked to name the emotion they were feeling at that point in time and place it in one of the four emotions displayed (Happy, sad, frustrated, anxious). The findings of this generated significant results as they identified reasons why children were feeling happy, sad, angry and frustrated and the conversations about these feelings were insightful and meaningful to the data analysis.



Figure 3.2: Daily Check-in System

Children’s Reflective Journals: Written accounts of this nature are used for the purposes of enabling children to reflect on their experiences and express themselves in a safe and meaningful way (Paige-Smith & Craft, 2011). They also allow children to reflect on various lessons. In terms of the benefits of this to the teacher, it is possible to track progress and identify

potential issues or misunderstandings. During this study, children were encouraged to complete reflective journal entries after each lesson during cycle one. The entries were differentiated according to ability and some children were asked to pictorially represent their learning and thoughts while others were asked to write about it. However, the tool was not found to be beneficial as children had a negative reaction to it. It was discontinued after cycle one.

Teacher Reflective Journal: Saimon & Mtenzi (2021) assert that the use of a teacher reflective journal is an important feature of the modern-day classroom as it enables educators to contemplate their own practice and things within it that might need to be altered to enhance the learning experience of the children in the class. Additionally, it offers insights into various issues within the classroom and patterns can emerge. A teacher reflective journal was used for this study and the results were very beneficial to the data analysis. My reflective journal and entries therein, were of crucial importance here as they allowed me the opportunity to reflect on my own learning and how it could be improved in order to enhance wellbeing and resilience within my classroom. They also generated insights into children's attitudes and how they developed over the course of the three cycles.

Comic Strips: Comic strips are child friendly templates that are used for children to give responses to topics being discussed as part of classroom activities. They enable children to use pictorial representations of their learning as well as written responses to it (Sentürk & Şimşek, 2021). In this study, comic strips were successfully utilized to illustrate this. The findings were informative and demonstrated how children's concept of resilience had grown over the course of the research study.

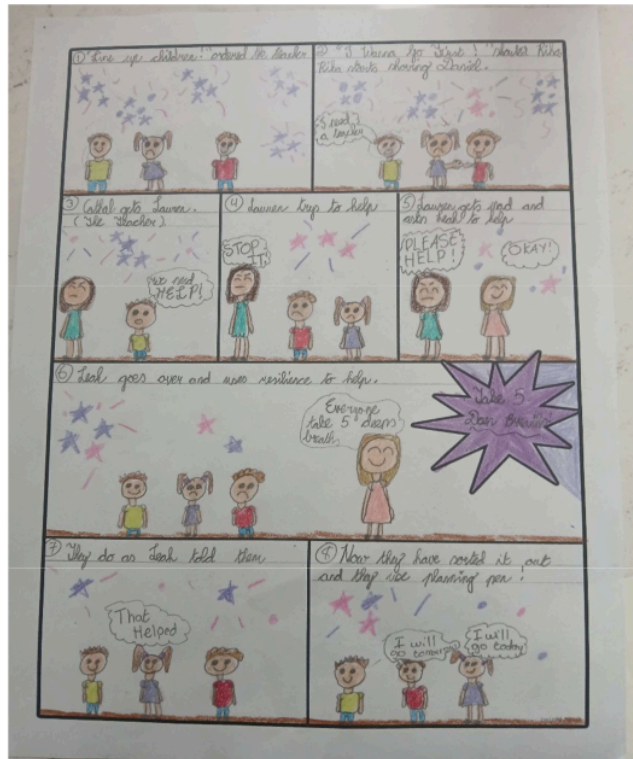


Figure 3.3: Comic Strip Activity

3.7.4 Data Analysis

Data was analysed on a continuous basis and in a multitude of ways using Braun and Clarke (2006) Reflexive Thematic Analysis. This model was employed as it allowed for the identification and analysis of various patterns and themes. It was beneficial in this research study because of the abundance of qualitative data generated. Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six phases to be used as part of the process. (See table 3.1)

Phase	Information
1.	Familiarisation with the data Data was collected and analysed through diamond nine activities, daily check-ins, children's reflective journals, teacher reflective journal and comic strips. Initial notes were taken.
2.	Generating initial codes Initial codes were generated as follows; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diamond Nine & Daily Check-ins; Codes were generated numerically • Children's reflective journal, teacher reflective journal & comic strips; Codes were generated thematically through the use of colour coding specific to each them generated
3.	Searching for themes As patterns began to emerge, codes were then grouped into potential themes. This approach was used for each of the three cycles separately and then collated using an inductive approach
4.	Reviewing themes Once potential themes were identified, overlapping themes were merged and less relevant ones discarded for the purpose of the study (See Table 5).
5.	Defining and naming themes Each theme was then given a name that encapsulated its essence and what it sought to analysis for the purpose of the data analysis
6.	Write up Data extracts and analysis were then synthesised and included in <i>Chapter Four – Data Analysis</i>

Table 2: Steps in RTA pertaining to this study

Theme	Code
Lived Experience & Impact of Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context • Prior Knowledge • Shared Information • Helping each other • Communication skills • Peer support • Storm Eowyn
Participant Engagement and Empowerment of Student Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement • Enthusiasm • Listening • Responses • Learning
Safety and Security in the Research Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to class contract • Familiarity with rules • Trusting each other • Trusting the researcher • Sense of Belonging • Pupil Identity and Autonomy
Key Influencers in the Enhancement of Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with teacher • Relationship with Peers • Responses based on this • Shared history of concepts

Table 3: Codes and Associated Themes

3.7.5 Data Rigour and Validation

- **Triangulation**

Triangulation was extremely advantageous to an action research project of this nature as it enables the researcher to consider the research question and relevant findings based on data collection from a wide range of informed and knowledgeable perspectives in order to create validity of the research undertaken. Triangulation refers to;

Triangulation provides the researcher with the opportunity of having the findings of the research corroborated by others not directly involved in the research and can add to the validity of the research and the reliability of the outcomes.

(McDonagh, et al., 2020: 148)

Triangulation was instrumental in enhancing the validity and trustworthiness of this research study as it challenged researcher assumptions and ensured reliability of the data collected.

- **Critical Friends**

Throughout the course of this research, critical friends were of the utmost importance. Fortunately, one particular friend gave me honest and constructive feedback on any given area and in the case of this research project, offered suggestions, advice and alternatives in a meaningful and productive way. Additionally, fellow classmates were instrumental as we all sought to find the most appropriate means of investigating and enhancing our own chosen research topic.

3.7.6 Action Plan

Date	Action
<i>13th January 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion with the children about the research • Sent home consent and assent forms and information sheets • Met with critical friend prior to start of cycle 1
<i>20th January 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to 'Check in' system • Creation and implementation of 'class contract' • Completion of Diamond Nine based on resilience and current understanding of it • Self-assessment check-up
<i>27th January 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to reflective journals – children will add to journal each day. • Continue check in system • Give information sheet about Weaving Wellbeing programme Tools of resilience to parents/guardians • Circle time • Art - Create poster based on wellbeing • Self-assessment check-up
<i>3rd February 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue reflective journals and daily check ins • Self-assessment check-up • Debate – based on healthy versus unhealthy distractions
<i>10th February 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue reflective journals and daily check ins. • Circle time -discussion on planning • Self-assessment check-up • Writers Theatre – based on resilience scenarios
<i>17th February 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue daily check ins. • Self-assessment check-up • Circle time based on automatic negative thoughts (ANTs)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer's Theatre based on ANTs • Comic strip completion
24th February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue daily check ins. • Self-assessment check-up • Art – poster about the children's own unique character strengths
3rd March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue daily check ins • Circle time based on our understanding of mindfulness • Mindfulness exercise • Self-assessment check-up • Comic strips
10th March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue daily check ins • Weaving Wellbeing – lesson 8 – Mindfulness Switch Part 2 Flower Level • Self-assessment check-up • Diamond Nine child friendly template administered
17th March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue reflective journal and check ins • Mindfulness exercise • Reading – mindful script at home each day • Self-assessment check-up • Art – Flower level and Bee level
24th March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue daily check ins • Mindful activities • Circle time based on how mindfulness makes you feel • Self-assessment check-up • Debate – whether our brain is the only part of our body that makes us feel overwhelmed
31st March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue reflective journals and check ins • Diamond Nine reflective activity • Mindfulness exercise

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comic strip activity based on how our attitude to unplanned events and circumstances has changed.
7 th April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue reflective journals and check ins • Discuss our understanding of wellbeing and resilience • Children will write about their own personal learning journey and ways in which their attitude to school may or may not have changed.
April 2025	Data Analysis

Table: 4: Research Plan Timeframe

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the key issues pertaining to the research project under consideration as part of this thesis. It has outlined the specific justification for the chosen research paradigm that will be employed as part of it, namely self-study action research. In addition to this, it has identified various ethical considerations that will be dealt with as part of the project as well as providing a detailed evaluation of data collection tools to be utilized and a specific timeframe for the completion of the various cycles herein.

Chapter Four – Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the findings obtained from this action research study. These findings were achieved over the course of three cycles. The study sought to identify and evaluate the children's wellbeing through the promotion of resilience within the classroom.

As discussed in chapter three, the following interventions were utilised in this research study;

- Teaching the Weaving Wellbeing programme lessons from 'The Tools of Resilience' booklet
- Daily Check-ins
- A class Contract
- Circle time
- Sharing learning intentions using We Are Learning To (WALT) and What I Am Looking For (WILF) charts
- Art lessons based on children's learning in this area
- Drama lessons using Writers Theatre based on wellbeing and resilience
- English and SPHE debates – for and against specific topical situations pertaining to wellbeing and resilience.
- Calming exercises/mindfulness

On completion of the three cycles conducted as part of this research study, the researcher gathered the data and analysed it. The researcher utilised Braun and Clarke's (2021) model of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) to evaluate the data.

The following themes were identified;

1. Children's Lived Experiences and their Impact on Resilience
2. Participant Engagement and the Empowerment of Student Voice
3. Safety and Security in the Research Setting
4. Key Influencers in the Enhancement of Resilience

This chapter will present the findings under the four major themes outlined above.

4.2 Data Analysis – Cycle 1-3

Using Braun and Clarke's (2021) model of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), I analysed the collected data. As discussed in *Chapter Three*, using the RTA model, I collected and analysed the data and thus generated initial codes which were then grouped into themes. I did this using an inductive method over the course of the three cycles and the data sets therein.

At this point, I began to systematically navigate my way through the data to identify emerging themes. On completion of the data analysis for cycle one I identified six preliminary themes;

- Key Influencers
- Engagement with activities
- Pupil Identity and autonomy
- Belonging
- Contextual learning
- Agency

Using these six themes, I continued to code the data retrieved from cycle two and discovered that although many of the same themes were apparent, themes such as belonging and pupil identity

became less influential. Simultaneously, the children's data focused more on their own agency and involvement in the lessons relating to resilience.

Cycle three identified similar themes. However, at this stage of the data analysis, I felt that the term 'contextual learning' had evolved and thus amended this term to 'Children's Lived Experiences and their Impact on Resilience'. This adjustment was more inclusive and encapsulated a more detailed account of the data retrieved as part of this analysis.

The following four themes would therefore inform the data analysis and research study;

1. Children's Lived Experiences and their Impact on Resilience
2. Participant Engagement and Empowerment of Student Voice
3. Safety and Security in Research Setting
4. Key Influencers in the Enhancement of Resilience

These four themes also connected with my ontological values of care, compassion and respect during the course of this research project. Care and compassion were evidenced in all themes. Children felt cared for and recognised that their opinions and previous experiences would be met with these values in mind. In addition to this, the class contract and discussions thereafter initiated a respectful environment within the classroom which engendered collaborative discussion and learning.

Theme	Code
Lived Experience & Impact of Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context • Prior Knowledge • Shared Information • Helping each other

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills • Peer support • Storm Eowyn
Participant Engagement and Empowerment of Student Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement • Enthusiasm • Listening • Responses • Learning
Safety and Security in the Research Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to class contract • Familiarity with rules • Trusting each other • Trusting the researcher • Sense of Belonging • Pupil Identity and Autonomy
Key Influencers in the Enhancement of Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with teacher • Relationship with Peers • Responses based on this • Shared history of concepts

Table 5: Codes and Associated Themes (Repeated from Table 3)

4.3 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

4.3.1 Children's Lived Experiences and their Impact on Resilience

During the course of cycle one, the children understood resilience as relevant to their lives in terms of their ability to adapt to issues derived from the Storm Eowyn disaster.

The researchers' reflective journal cited that

13 children remain without electricity and many of them have had to move to a grand parents' house. Some have even gone to stay in hotels. They have no access to light, heat or running water and it is important that, as a school, we address their needs.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal: 31st January, 2025)

Subsequently, parents were invited into the school in order to charge devices, access running water and wash clothes etc. The children affected were provided with warmth and water. This essentially framed my research study and allowed the researcher to effectively discuss, identify and analyse factors pertaining to the issue of resilience in a practical way.

During daily check in activities, children discussed their frustration that others had their electricity back while they remained void of it (See Figure 4.1).

Child M believed that 'the ESB were not doing enough to restore power' while *child P* had a father working for ESB Networks that he 'had not seen for 8 days because he was working to restore various areas'

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 31st January, 2025)

The conversation, though didactic, was insightful. The children and their families, were able to recognise issues with the services while simultaneously able to utilise resilience strategies in order to generate and engender meaningful and effective resilience.



Figure 4.1 Daily Check in System

Interestingly on this point, Van Manen (1990: 25) describes a lived experience as follows;

Lived experience refers to the subjective, first-person perspective of an individual's direct, personal engagement with events, conditions, or phenomena, emphasizing how these are perceived, interpreted, and given meaning within the context of one's life.

This was particularly relevant in relation to storm Eowyn and the direct effect it had on the children and their lives. This aided their understanding of resilience as they had first person experience of it.

Through the use of the Weaving Wellbeing programme and circle time activities, the theme of the children's lived experiences and their impact on resilience was central to the discussions, not only

in cycle one but over the course of all cycles. Children expressed a myriad of lived experiences that had affected them and discussed strategies that helped them to overcome these issues.

I found that children often cited their own experiences in and out of school and ways in which they could resolve them. It became apparent as the data collection advanced that this lived experience was of great relevance to many of the class and that they used it in order to contextualise the various topics under discussion. I considered a quote from Einstein (1954: 271) 'The only source of knowledge is experience'. This was particularly relevant here.

Child C: 'I often worry when daddy goes away for work. I think he might get in an accident or something'

Child J: 'My grandad is sick in hospital at the minute. I'm not sure he will get better'

Child D: 'I remember when my granny was sick and then she died. Everyone was really sad'

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 7th April)

Children expressed genuine concerns about real life issues and experiences. I began to contemplate the place of the school environment in helping children to overcome or cope with these perils and whether or not I had been helping them. It was then that I turned to the work of Maxine Greene (1988). In terms of education, Greene (1988) asserts that teachers should endeavour to create spaces for children to reflect on their own lived experiences and in doing so they can change their realities through the use of critical engagement. She coins the phrase 'awakening consciousness' in order to describe this necessity. In terms of this research project, and the concept of resilience itself, the theme of lived experience and its' impact on resilience is an important one as it enables what Greene (1988: 5) describes as 'awakening consciousness'.

The use of the Weaving Wellbeing programme offered ways in which I could employ an intervention that would help children develop the skills of resilience they needed to cope with the unexpected.

The children found 'The Lucky Dip of Distraction' a tool that had benefitted them, in this respect and they were able to effectively apply this to the discussion about resilience.

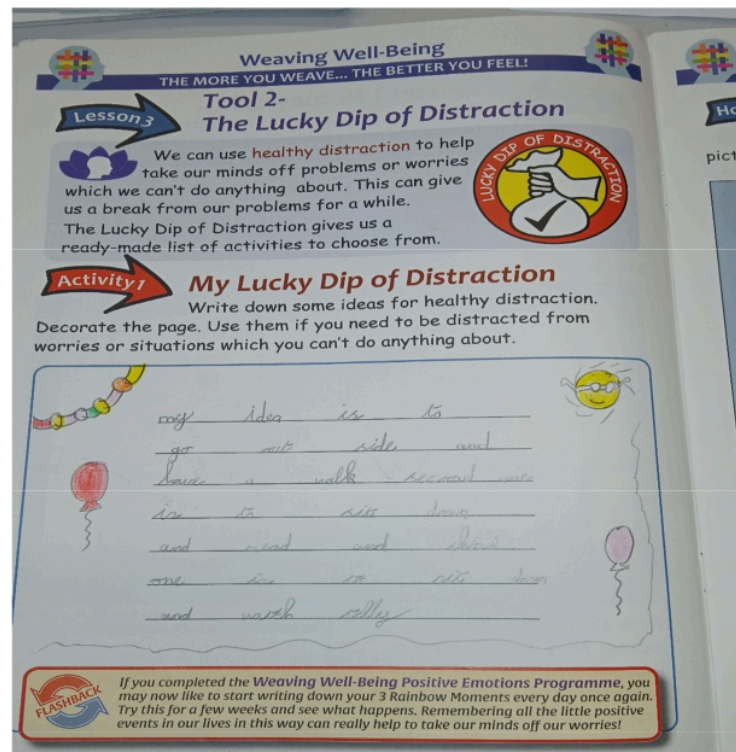


Figure 4.2: Lucky Dip of Distraction activity

During one circle time activity, Child B identified 'I hate doing homework in the evening. My baby sister makes lots of noise and tries to take my books'. Many of the other participants agreed and continued to say things like 'mum is busy getting the dinner ready so it is noisy' and 'I keep flicking through the books I haven't done'. This lived experience is an inevitable reality in modern day

society and therefore the question was posed 'does anyone do their homework differently and if so, do you find it helpful?'

Child H: 'I go to my room and that helps me to concentrate'.

Child B: 'using a timer helps me to get it (homework) done'

Child I: 'I always start of the hardest bit of the homework, usually the dictionary work'.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 24th February 2025)

Following on from the discussion, children were asked to complete a homework activity and enact some of the suggested strategies into their homework routine in the coming week. On completion of this, all participants agreed that they found these strategies beneficial and that their resilience had benefited from them.

However, while I felt the intervention had worked well and could see meaningful data from it, I still wondered if I, myself could do more. I reflected on this idea for a considerable amount of time and pondered whether my own core values, both personal and professional were being effectively enacted within the classroom or whether their practice had become a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989). Indeed, and unfortunately, the latter was the case. Although I had fundamentally believed that my values of care, compassion and respect were inherent in my practice, in fact, that had not been evident in either for quite some time. Though a concerted focus on my lived experience, I realised that this was an issue that needed to be addressed in order to improve and enhance my own practice for the benefit of the children under my tutelage.

Cycles two and three benefited greatly from this new learning and during cycle three, Writer's Theatre coupled with my own observations, children were enabled to delve into their own lived experiences further. In small groups they wrote a script and then presented it to the class. Group A

depicted a yard scene where two children were fighting over a ball. The scene illustrated the argument that ensued and the other children's attempts to resolve it. They asked probing questions like 'What happened?' 'Who had it first' and then 'Could we could put this into perspective to solve the problem?'

Child A (in the row); 'Maybe if you have the ball on small break, I could have it on big break?'

Child B (in the row); 'Ya, that's actually a good idea and we can do it the other way round tomorrow'.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 7th April)

The quality of learning that was evident here, assured me that the children were in fact now able to use their own lived experiences in order to enhance resilience. It also confirmed for me that my values were important and needed to be shown to the children as an inherent part of my practice. They felt more comfortable and confident in sharing their ideas and expressing themselves through drama because of the relational approach I had utilized.

It became clear that the use of interventions such as circle time, daily check-ins, the Weaving Wellbeing programme and Writer's Theatre positively affected children's ability to develop resilience within the classroom context.

In terms of van Manen's (1990) previously mentioned beliefs on lived experience, this was certainly evident in this research study, as the data generated clearly illustrates that children's personal experiences of a situation shape their concept of it. Likewise, Greene's (1988) emphasis on teaching as a tool to 'open spaces' where children can engage in and reflect on their own lived experiences is vital here (Greene, 1988). Spaces were created within my classroom in order to enable children to express their lived experiences in order to facilitate and promote resilient thinking. The use of

circle time and daily check ins was particularly noteworthy here as children were given opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings to promote resilience. My ontological values of care, compassion and respect also enabled this.

4.3.2 Participant Engagement and Empowerment of Student Voice

At the beginning of research cycle one, it was evident that there were varying levels of pupil participation and that some felt more empowered to speak than others. This was evidenced across the curriculum, in all subject areas. I observed and monitored this during the course of the three cycles and discovered that children's active participation and engagement improved over the course of the research study. I observed that their levels of confidence in speaking about themselves, their feelings and answering questions in other subject areas increased over the duration of the project.

Active participation refers to students' deliberate and meaningful involvement in the learning process through behaviours such as asking questions, contributing to discussions, collaborating with peers, and engaging in hands-on or problem-solving activities. It reflects a learner-centred approach where students are not passive recipients of information but are cognitively, emotionally and socially engaged in constructing knowledge (Prince, 2004).

In terms of this research project triangulation of this theme was achieved through a myriad of interventions including circle time, weaving wellbeing programme, Writers Theatre, visual arts activities and mindfulness. The use of data collection tools such as diamond nines, comic strips, daily check in systems and reflective journals also benefited this.

The first lesson from the Weaving Wellbeing programme, focused on of the idea of wellbeing itself. The children were asked to discuss this in a 'Think, Pair, Share' activity.

Firstly, I observed that pair A spoke to the class about the idea of a person 'being healthy and well'. While others agreed, pair B continued to add 'it is about your head'. Some children appeared to look confused at this notion and required prompts. I asked pair C about their perspective. 'Is it not about being physically active?' they agreed but did not volunteer the information or wish to expand on their answer. Many of the other participants raised their hands to agree. When I asked them directly, Group E looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders and said 'I don't know' under their breaths.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 3rd February 2025)

Following on from this, I provided the children with the following definition wellbeing as provided by the Weaving Wellbeing Programme;

Well-being means feeling **good** and **strong** in our **minds** and **bodies**, having **energy**, getting along with and helping **others**, knowing our **strengths** and feeling **proud** because we are doing our **best**. It means we can **cope** with the little problems and disappointments of life. It means **enjoying** life, being **grateful** for what we have and **accepting ourselves** just as we are!

(Forman & Rock, 2021: 1)

This definition led to further discussion among a minority of the participants.

Child A asked 'But why is it important for our mind?' Child B suggested that 'we need our mind to work properly in order to be well, the answer is in the question!'

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 3rd February 2025)

However, no other children offered feedback and the lesson ended quickly and without any meaningful participation.

This was concerning to me and I wondered why this might be the case in my reflective journal;

Why are children not participating in the way they usually would? Have I missed a step? Do they not feel comfortable with the topic? Maybe they're afraid of being wrong or maybe I am not demonstrating my values effectively to them.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal, 14th January, 2025)

I consulted my critical friend on this point.

Me: I just don't understand why they are so quiet. Like, do they think there's a right or wrong answer because there really isn't! I just want them discussing it.

Critical Friend: Are they always quiet? Maybe they are nervous that you will put them on the spot in front of the class?

Me: I hadn't thought of that and actually, sure that's exactly what I was doing! I kept asking different children because I was hoping someone would answer!

Critical friend: So maybe tomorrow try to explain that to them at the start of the lesson or maybe give them white boards where they can write down their answers and discuss them with you privately.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal, 14th January, 2025)

My critical friend had given me excellent feedback here and the following day, I followed her advice and began to see the benefits. At first it was minor but over the course of the research cycles, participation improved and children used their voices not only in resilience lessons but in all curricular areas.

On the 14th March 2025 in my reflective journal, I observed the following;

In today's lesson, I noticed children were far more engaged in the circle time. Even child J spoke out and he is always very shy and nervous but today, he even answered one of the maths talk questions. I was so impressed!

(Duffy, Reflective Journal, 13th March, 2025)

In terms of my own personal values and their shortcomings, it was found that while the researcher was lacking in care, compassion and respect prior to the commencement of this research study, these values ultimately proved very beneficial throughout the data collection. Throughout the implementation of cycle one in particular, it was discovered that active participation had been lacking and that the use of circle time in particular had motivated students to speak about their own personal circumstances and the impact this had on their ability to cope with various difficulties. Without the use of care, compassion and respect, this would not have been possible.

The use of 'daily check ins' highlighted a myriad of reasons why this was important for the researcher to use in order to promote resilience and overall wellbeing. The children's active participation and the use of their voice was pivotal here.

Children discussed issues that were troubling to them and made concerted efforts to help one another find ways to deal with the various issues that bothered them. In one particular circle time activity based on the check in system, one child expressed worries about issues at home. They completed a think pair share activity that highlighted issues pertinent to an upcoming orthodontic appointment. Child A was able to express similar concerns from the previous year and how they coped with them. Once the rest of the class discovered this information. Many of them shared similar problems and they were able to help child A to feel more comfortable and confident in facing them.

Child A: The orthodontist says I have to get two teeth out and I am really scared about it'.

Child B: ‘Child A told me that she is worried about this and I told her that when I was really little, I had to have surgery on my mouth and it wasn’t too bad because I got to eat ice-cream and mashed potatoes for like a week afterwards’.

Child C: ‘Ya, I had to get two teeth out before. The dentist put stuff into my mouth that numbed it and I didn’t feel a thing’.

Teacher: ‘‘Child A, how does that sound?’

Child A: ‘Not too bad, it might be better than I think’!

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 25th January, 2025)

In addition to this, in cycle three, children used Writers Theatre in small groups in order to illustrate their learning. They enacted fictitious scenes in which they highlighted aspects of resilience in which they had previously struggled. Group B demonstrated a yard situation in which a classmate refused to share the ball during a football game.

Child A: Why won’t you give me the ball?

Child B: I was going for a goal and you blocked me!

Child A: But I passed it to you and you wouldn’t give it back!

Child B: That was your fault. I was able to score from where I was.

Child C: Why are we fighting about this? We got the goal!

Child A & B: Oh Ya. Never mind!

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 14th March, 2025)

This illustrated a shift in the resilience of the children within the class. Firstly, they dealt with the situation independently and secondly, they demonstrated an ability to resolve it without intervention through the use of skills they previously had not acquired.

In terms of their voice, I mused over various factors which may have contributed to this within my reflective journal.

Today, I observed the children dealing with an issue on yard. Something about it struck me and I just can't pinpoint what it is. They coped! They actually coped with the situation, instead of trying to get a teacher involved or pull other children into it, they managed it by themselves and even more so, they expressed themselves. They were empowered! I hadn't noticed that until now.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 5th April, 2025)

On reflection, I considered the impact my own values may have played in this scenario, values which had been hitherto unseen. It appeared that the children in this research study had embraced the ideals of care and compassion in one another because of the numerous interventions put in place and that because of this, they had used their voice to speak out about issues that concerned them, thus empowering them in a way that would not have been possible without this.

Furthermore, participants were enabled to utilise critical thinking and reflection in order to address issues of resilience that were meaningful to them in practical ways, the researchers summation of this, identified that this was possible through the use of intentional, purposeful enactment of her own core values, which had previously been unseen by participants and that this methodology coupled with the use of specific and concerted interventions, had manifested more relevant and meaningful ways in which care, compassion and respect could be illustrated in classroom practices.

Triangulation of multiple data sets was again evident here. Circle time, observation, writer's theatre and my own reflective journal outputs indicated that children had developed enhanced resilience from active participation and empowerment of their voice.

4.3.3 Safety and Security in the Research Setting

The creation of a safe space was a key element in the promotion of resilience within the classroom.

My reflective journal observed that;

The class contract was so helpful today. The children really threw themselves into it and they took it so seriously. I think they all want to feel safe to speak openly and I think this is really going to help them to do this. I also realised something during today's lesson, my values helped them through it. I showed that care and compassion that I haven't thought about in a long time.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 20th January 2025)

In order to further understand the meaning of the creation of a safe environment, it is important to reflect on a definition of it. Domalewska et al (2021: 35) define a safe space as follows

Safe space describes a classroom climate that feels secure, supportive, and risk-free so that students can honestly express their individuality and opinions without fear of being the target of violence, harassment, or hate speech.

In respect to this research project, the creation and implementation of such a space was very relevant as it would enable children to speak openly about their feelings in order to engender enhanced resilience.

Safety, was a theme in this study that was highlighted in a myriad of ways. When I reflected on my own values it became apparent that care and compassion were very relevant here. The participants needed to feel safe in order to discuss issues relevant to their wellbeing and in particular, resilience. As this study focuses on resilience, I, as the researcher needed the children to give open and honest accounts of their emotions in order to effectively make positive change to their ability to cope with various daily challenges in the classroom and in their personal lives.

Through the creation and implementation of a self-directed class contract, participants were enabled to feel safe and secure in terms of the research being conducted. They had the agency to develop rules that would protect them and keep them safe as the research was conducted. From the researcher perspective, it highlighted how my own values were important in order to engender this. Respect was inherent here. By enabling the children to introduce their own set of rules, they were shown respect. Indeed, this was one of the first rules they wrote down in their contract (Appendix A). They took the task of creating their own contract very seriously and worked tirelessly in small groups in order to identify issues that were fundamentally important to them.

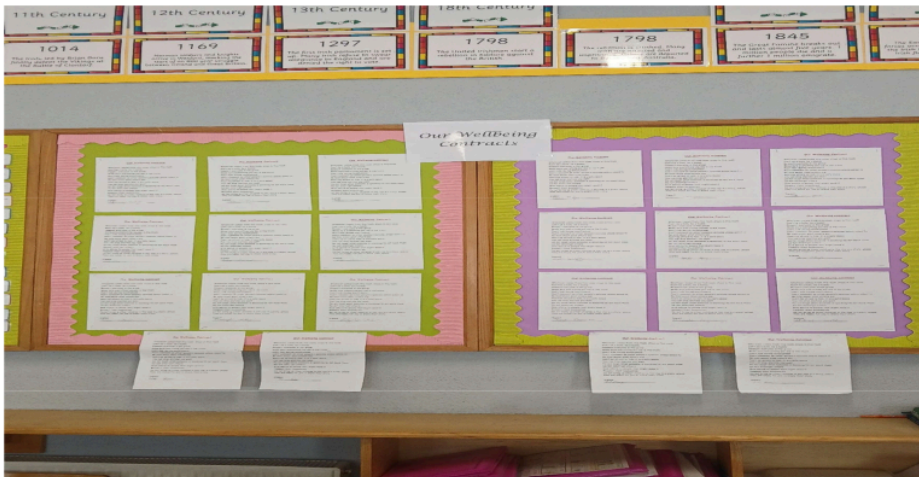


Figure 4.3: Class Contracts Display

All children were happy to give feedback and many of them discussed personal and private details of times when they had to use resilience in their own lives. During one particular Weaving Wellbeing lesson based on our Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) the following was discussed;

Child M: I wanted to join the football team but I was really afraid that I would be bad at it and that I wouldn't know anyone. My mum brought me anyways but I was really nervous. Then I saw two of my friends and went over to them. In the end, I actually really enjoyed it'

Child P: Ya, I was there. Child A was actually really good too!

Child M: Do you think? Well I am going to go again next week and I think I will enjoy it more now that I know I'm not as bad as I thought'.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal; 20th January 2025)

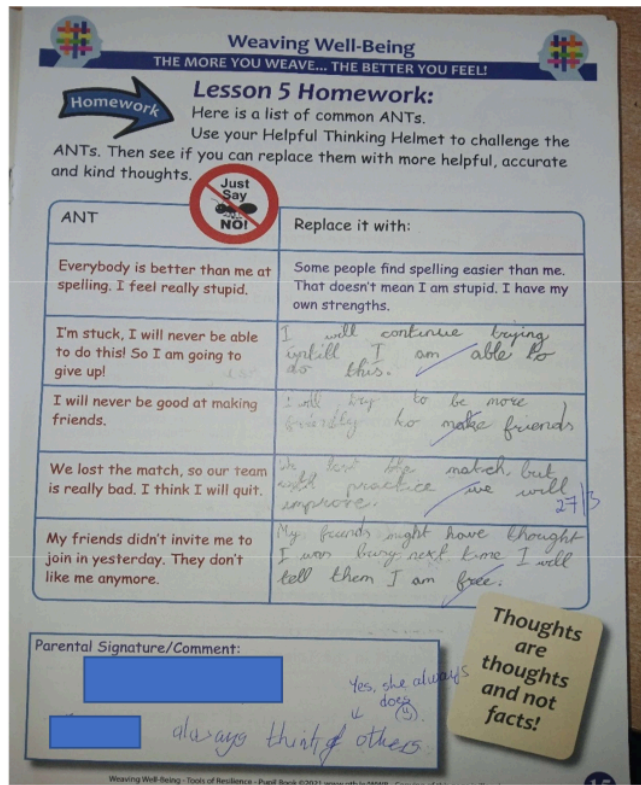


Figure 4.4: Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) Activity

Throughout all three cycles, circle time was hugely beneficial. On many occasions they requested that we use this methodology to discuss various issues pertaining to resilience. Through the use of it, they explored many different strategies they could use in order to enhance their resilience. Primarily, this was achieved through the implementation of the Weaving Wellbeing programme. Ideas such as planning ahead, distraction techniques, perspective etc were discussed and future plans were made by the children in order to promote resilience.

In a lesson based on character strengths, the participants found it more difficult to speak about their own personal strengths in the initial stages. Instead, we looked at the strengths' others felt we had and these findings were illuminating.

Child J: 'I think that Child B is really good at dancing. Every time we do a dance with the dance teacher, they just get it straight away'

Child K: 'Child C is really good at history. He knows loads of things about Hitler and stuff!'

Child C: 'Child D is really kind. She always helps me when I'm stuck on things'

(Duffy, Reflective Journal, 26th February, 2025)

Following on from this, children were able to reflect on their own strengths and identify them. They also completed activities based on the character strengths of characters in various books and movies. They enjoyed this activity and were able to identify times the character had to overcome a problem in order to show resilience.

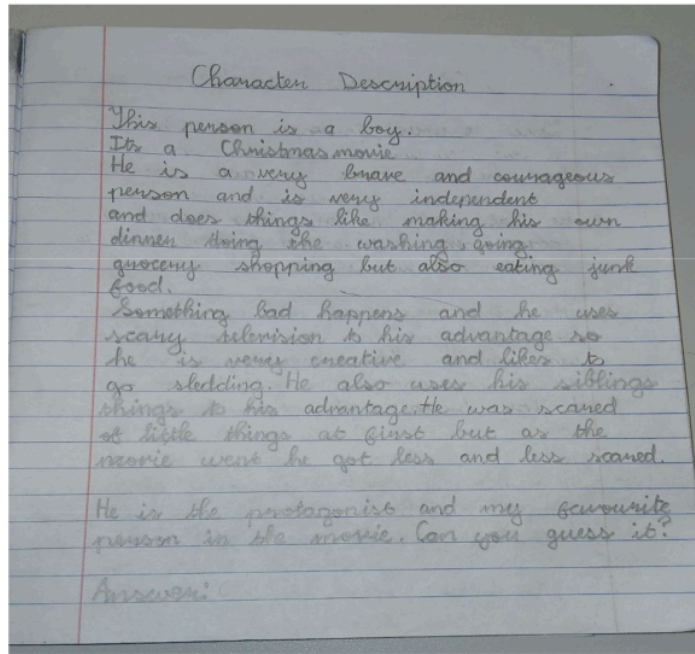


Figure 4.5: Character Strengths Activity

The specific triangulation of data between teacher reflective journal, collaboration with a critical friend and circle time as well as the impact of Weaving Wellbeing programme concurs with Domalewska's (2021) beliefs that through the creation of a safe space that engenders open and honest conversation, children can flourish in their learning. In this instance, children felt safe to explore issues of resilience within the classroom context in a practical way. My own personal values underpinned this as I initially did not illustrate for the children the importance of them but after consultation with my critical friend, my practice was enhanced, to the benefit of the children and their endeavours to enhance wellbeing and resilience.

4.3.4 Key Influencers in the Enhancement of Resilience

Through the triangulation of various data, including diamond nine, observation, teachers reflective journal, daily check ins, comic strips and art activities, it became apparent that two stakeholders played an integral role in the creation and development of resilience within the classroom – the teacher and the children's peers.

Acer (2021: 4) asserts that;

A positive and warm relationship, also referred to as a teacher–child relationship that is high in closeness, may help the child feel emotionally safe, develop cognitive and social competence, and have improved school success

In addition to this, the OECD (2017) recognises that teachers are key influencers in the promotion and enhancement of wellbeing.

While the Wellbeing framework of Ireland (2022) stipulates that

The relationship that teachers develop with the young person is a key influence on wellbeing development. Access to 'one good adult' who can guide and support a young person at a vulnerable time is an identified protective factor.

(DES, 2019: 15)

Identifying the teacher as a key influencer was an important finding of this research project and on completion of the data analysis it became apparent that the relationship that was built between the students and myself was very important and very beneficial to the creation and promotion of resilience within the classroom.

As part of the diamond nine activity in the first week of the research cycles, I observed that children were unsure of what to answer (See appendix B & C). I felt they were waiting for me to offer advice to them. However, when I worked with them in groups, I discovered that they wanted me to give them the 'right' answer. I realised at this stage that I had an influence on their response because they trusted me and valued my opinion. At this stage, I understood that I had to be more explicit in my teaching interventions if the children were to benefit from it and really understand resilience. I therefore, expressed to the children that there were no right or wrong answers but that every one of their opinions was valuable to me. This equated to stimulating conversations between peers and their understanding of the topic at hand.

During cycle one, the researcher also observed and recorded the following;

The children are starting to mimic certain phrases I am saying. The often say 'we just have to try our best, that's the most important thing'. Poor child X has been really struggling with his Irish but today he said to me, teacher, I'm trying my best! To which I answered, that's all I want. Well done! It is satisfying to see that the children are less anxious and worried about the outcome. They are focusing more on the things that are going right for them

(Duffy, 'Reflective Journal' 14th February 2025)

On reflection of this extract, it struck me that the narrative created by them was significant and was responsible for how the participants felt about the issue of resilience. In fact, it made me contemplate whether my values, that had been diminished in previous months were responsible for this change in attitude. Perhaps respondents felt more comfortable being open and honest because that skill had been modelled for them during the course of data collection. On reflection, I consulted my critical friend in order to gain further insight;

Me: I just realised that the children are mimicking things I say in class like ‘we just have to try our best’ and I’m wondering if they are realising it?

Critical friend: Do you think they might see you as an enabler? Like someone whose helping them through this?

Me: I hadn’t thought of that. I suppose I am modelling my expectations for them but I feel like it’s more. We definitely have a stronger relationship since this started.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal, 1st April 2025)

The close teacher-child relationship was again highlighted in the ‘Talk it Out’ activity from Weaving Wellbeing. Children wrote down five people they could turn to and talk about their problems or worries. It was interesting how many children not only included me in the activity but placed me as the number one person they could trust.

Children also took turns in ‘being the teacher’ for the purposes of the daily check in activities which further highlighted the importance of the teacher in respect to this. Many of them imitated me and verbalised the same instructions and directions as I would. During one observation of this, I noticed that they would begin by saying ‘So, how is everyone today?’ feeling a bit tired, I was busy doing an assignment last night’.

In addition to this, when completing my presentation for the course, I showed it to the children and said 'this is what you helped me with, what do you think?'

Child R put up her hand and said 'can I give you two stars and a wish?' to which I answered 'yes'.
'Well then, I think it's really good and really colourful and I like the charts but the yellow background with the white writing doesn't work!'

(Reflective Journal, 12th June 2025)

In spite of myself, I laughed and told her she would make a great teacher someday. I could hear myself in her words and felt that she was mirroring comments I would have previously given to her.

Overall, throughout the data analysis, it became evident that the teacher was indeed a key influencer in building resilience and that myself and the children developed a strong relationship.

Secondly, it was discovered that another key influencer in the promotion and enhancement of resilience was the participants peers themselves.

On multiple occasions I observed this within the course of the research cycles and on compiling the data, this was an element that was highlighted in many ways from diamond nine (Pupil view templates) to art activities, comic strips, Writers Theatre, teacher's reflective journal, daily check ins, observation and circle time.

Valiente et al. (2020) stress that students interact with one another on a regular basis each day and as such they have an effect on the emotional and learning outcomes. Indeed, they continue to emphasize that 'because students strongly value peer relationships and often match their behaviours

to the behaviours of their peer group, peers are believed to influence student outcomes' (Valiente, et al., 2020: 582).

This became very evident during the data collection and analysis phase of this research study. Children enjoyed activities where they worked together in 'Think, Pair, Share', small group and whole group activities. They frequently offered advice to one another about the various conflicts they were having issues with and this often meant that advice was taken and utilised in a manner that it may not have been if an adult was giving it. It was experienced, that the children listened to each other and tried to help each other in ways that were meaningful and effective. In one particular lesson based on the Weaving Wellbeing programme, children reflected on the concept of distraction and things they could do to help themselves when they felt overwhelmed, worried or anxious. The objective of the lesson was to encourage them to recognise and utilise strategies that would aid these negative feelings, however, the data analyse revealed that the participants were now engaging in higher order thinking skills such as problem solving and critical thinking, not just for themselves but for their peers.

Child A: Last week I was really worried about my tables test on Friday but I had a chat with Child B on yard and she told me that if I just kept practicing then I could do it. She was right. I planned it out and then used some distractions like getting Chinese afterwards and the next thing I knew, the test was over and I got 29/30'

Child N: I knew you would because you worked really hard on them!

(Duffy, Reflective Journal, 7th March, 2025)

The sentiment that existed within this conversation enabled me to recognise this as a major theme within the data collection and subsequent analysis. It highlighted, what Valiente et al (2020)

described as the importance of feeling heard by the children's peers and the impact that had on their ability to enhance their own resilience as a result of it.

In addition to this, the impact of the peer relationship was again present during art activities in which the children collaborated with each other to design posters based on wellbeing. Many of them used the same concepts as their peers and even the same language was evident within these pieces of art.



Figure 4.6: Wellbeing posters



Figure 4.7: Close up photos of wellbeing posters

Likewise, the comic strip activities highlighted the peer relationships and their impact on resilience as the children illustrated drawings of one another within the strips.

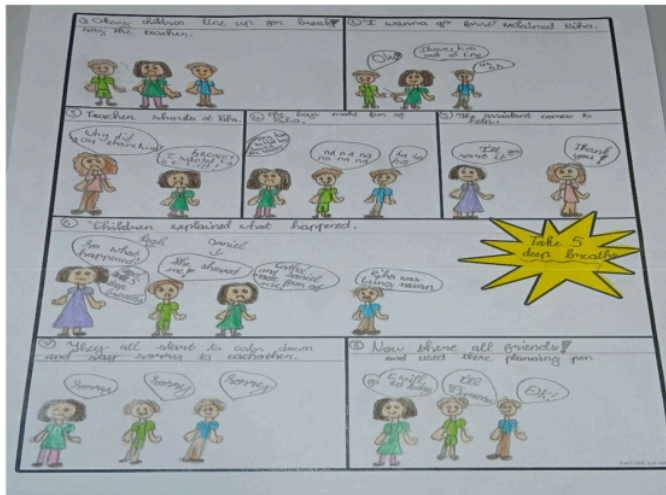


Figure 4.8: Comic Strip activity

Box 1: 'Ok children, line up for you break' called the teacher.
 Box 2: 'I wanna go first' exclaimed Ri
 Child 1 (L): Ok
 Child 3 (Ri): Shoves him out of the line
 Child 2 (D): Uh oh
 Box 3: Teacher shouts at Ri
 Teacher: Why did you shove him?
 Child 3 (Ri): Because I wanted to be first!
 Box 4: The boys made fun of Riha
 Teacher: Hey, don't do that boys:
 Child 2 (D): Na, na, na, na, na, na
 Child 4 (Ca): Hahaha
 Box 5: The assistant comes to help
 Assistant: I'll go help
 Teacher: Thank you
 Box 6: Children explained what happened.
 Child 1 (L): So, what happened and take five deep breaths
 Child 2 (D): She shoved me
 Child 3 (Ri) C and D made fun of me
 Child 4 (Ca): Ri was being mean
 Box 7: They all start to calm down and say sorry to one another
 Child 2 (D): Sorry
 Child 3 (Ri): Sorry
 Child 4 (Ca) Sorry
 Box 8: Now they're all friends and used their planning pen.
 Child 3 (Ri): I'll go first today
 Child 2 (D): I'll go first tomorrow
 Child 4 (Ca): Ok

Figure 4.9: Excerpt from Comic Strip 4.8

During the Diamond nine activity, peers made efforts to speak to friends who were not in their groups to see if they were going to put down the same answer and I observed that they engaged in extensive debates about their differing opinions.

Child K: No, no, you're wrong! Physical activity is the most important. Sure, you need exercise if you are feeling stressed or worried

Child H: Ah no, but managing your emotions is way better because then you can talk about what's wrong

Child K: That's true too. Maybe I'll put that as my second choice.

(Duffy, Reflective Journal, 8th March 2025)

The use of thematic analysis was hugely beneficial here as it highlighted the fact that peers were key influencers in the creation and enhancement of problem-solving skills, critical thinking and most importantly for the purposes of this research study, resilience.

Writers Theatre was a hugely beneficial collection tool in order to emphasise the importance of peers as key influencers in the enhancement of resilience. The children worked together to create and reflect on issues pertaining to resilience and how they could cope with them in everyday, practical ways. While they unanimously agreed that they enjoyed the activity, they also collectively agreed that it had enabled them to reflect on the subject matter.

Furthermore, this activity demonstrated a myriad of themes including student voice and empowerment, lived experiences and their impact on resilience, the importance of safety in the research setting and the key influencers that had enabled them to feel more resilient. It also connected with the literature in terms of Valiente et al (2020) emphasis on peer relationships enhancing overall learning outcomes because children valued strong friendships.

4.4 Conclusion

Four main themes were identified as part of this research study. Each theme has been hugely important in the creation and promotion of resilience in the participants involved in this study. The themes generated and discussed, benefitted from a plethora of interventions as part of the data analysis including circle time, The Weaving Wellbeing Programme, Writers Theatre, observations, teacher's reflective journal, conversations with a critical friend, pupil view templates (Diamond nine and comic strips), circle time and daily check ins. The theme Lived Experience and its' Impact on Resilience illustrated the significance of past experiences in shaping children's responses to

resilience while the theme Active Participation and Empowerment of student voice illustrated the importance of children's opinions in the promotion of resilience. Furthermore, the creation of a 'safe space' within the theme of Safety and Security in the Research Setting highlighted the fundamental value of trust and belonging as integral in the enhancement of resilience. Finally, two key influencers were identified as vital to this process – the teacher and the peers. This ensured that children utilised trusted adults and friends in their attempts to understand and foster resilience skills.

In addition to this, I have been reminded that the benefits of remaining true to my core values of care, compassion and respect and during the course of this data analysis, the importance of these was evidenced throughout.

Chapter Five – Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides details of the overall research undertaken with an overview of the findings. Following on from this, it discusses various limitations that may have inhibited data collection and findings. In addition to this, it reflects on the personal growth and change that has taken place for this researcher in terms of their own core values and their impact on the research project. Finally, it addresses the issue of future implications for the research with specific emphasis on the school setting and implications for the wider educational community and contemplates possible avenues for the dissemination of this research project.

5.2 Literature Review Summary

The literature review in *Chapter Two* was instrumental in aiding me to discover and reflect on my own values as well as the literature relevant to wellbeing itself. In doing so, it enabled me to engage in a critical analysis of the concept of wellbeing through the exploration of various definitions and the ambiguity surrounding them and highlight current practice in wellbeing in education in Ireland and internationally. Furthermore, it allowed me the opportunity to contemplate the notion of resilience as an inherent feature of wellbeing and how this was connected to the wellbeing programmes currently employed within our education system as well as proposed changes to these curricula.

The following section will detail an overview of the findings mentioned above.

5.3 Research Findings Summary

In the initial stages of this study, I observed that children in my classroom were visibly anxious and worried in terms of their learning. They were quiet and disengaged during classroom activities and their participation was minimal, irrespective of the subject area. On reflection, I identified wellbeing and in particular resilience, or lack thereof, as the contributor and sought to transform this within my classroom.

The study sought to identify and address ways in which, I as a classroom teacher could enhance wellbeing in my classroom, to support resilient learners. Throughout the course of the three cycles utilised in this action research project, the data collection and subsequent analysis revealed four key findings and their relevance to the enhancement of resilience within this particular demographic. The key findings were as follows;

Theme 1: Children's Lived Experience and its Impact on Resilience

Through the use of daily check-ins, children's reflective journal and teacher reflective journal, the data revealed that children's experiences of events such as storm Eowyn, as well as their own personal experiences enhanced their understanding of resilience. The use of interventions such as the Weaving Wellbeing programme, art activities, circle time and Writers Theatre further promoted this as it enabled children to actively explore their own experiences in relation to others, how they dealt with them and how they might deal with them differently in the future using tools of resilience.

Theme 2: Participant Engagement and Empowerment of Student Voice

Over the course of the three cycles of this research project, there was a significant improvement in participation levels of the students, not only in terms of their lessons on resilience but also across

other subjects. Data collection tools such as comic strips, teachers reflective journal, daily check-ins and children's own reflections illustrated this increased participation and promotion of student voice. While in the initial stages, children had been quiet during Weaving Wellbeing and Writers Theatre activities, they became empowered as the cycles progressed and their participation was an integral finding in this research study that demonstrated their learning in terms of resilience.

Theme 3: Safety and Security in the Research Setting

Another significant theme that emerged during this research project was that of safety and security in the classroom. This was achieved through the use of interventions such as class contracts, the Weaving Wellbeing Programme and circle time activities. Through these interventions, children were enabled to trust one another as well as me as their teacher and they felt more comfortable opening up about issues that concerned them. Emanating from this, children learned skills of resilience and how to deal with challenges they faced within the class and on the yard.

Theme 4: Key Influencers in the Enhancement of Resilience

This study also revealed that the children's relationship with myself and their peers was of critical importance in the creation of resilience. They connected with each other and with me in unexpected ways over the course of the three cycles and they offered each other advice and support on various issues of concern to them. Interventions such as comic strips, the Weaving Wellbeing programme and diamond nines were very beneficial to this process and greatly contributed to the learning of resilience.

5.4 Significance of the Research

5.4.1 The Centrality of a Child Centred Approach

The findings of this study found that the use of child centred approaches to wellbeing was of critical importance to the promotion of it. Piaget (1969) used a constructivist approach in order to highlight the importance of the use of a child centred approach to classroom practices. He asserted that children actively learn through interactions with and exploration of their environment and posited that active learning is the best means in which educators can achieve learning goals for the children within their classrooms. Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized child centred teaching approaches as crucial to a child's learning and stressed the need for the social and emotional learning to be prioritised by educators in order to facilitate and engender this. These theories are particularly relevant here as their influence was evidenced in a myriad of ways during the course of this research study.

A plethora of child centred interventions were used over the course of this research project and their effectiveness had a positive impact on learning outcomes over the course of the three cycles.

The findings identified that interventions such as The Weaving Wellbeing Programme, circle time, Writers Theatre and art activities played a vital role in the promotion of wellbeing throughout the course of this particular study. The findings concurred with the notions of Piaget (1969) and Vygotsky (1978) and the necessity for child centred approaches being a necessary prerequisite for children's learning and overall development. These findings offered a variety of insights into the children's feelings and thoughts on resilience and it became clear through the data collection and subsequent analysis that children responded well to this child centred approach. This was evidenced across all four themes generated from the reflexive thematic analysis and it became clear that children's resilience benefitted from discussions relating to their own lived experiences, the

expression and empowerment of their own voice, feeling safe in the research setting and the influence of each other as well me as their teacher.

In terms of my own learning from this, I gained critical knowledge about myself and my professional practice within the classroom through targeted self-reflections on my practice. The use of Educational Action Research (EAR), allowed me to engage in more reflective practices based on Whitehead and McNiff's (2006) cyclical approach of plan, act, observe, reflect.

Additionally, when I considered my own values of care, compassion and respect and their impact on the findings, I discovered that had I not shared them with the class, the results would not have been as effective. The rediscovery of these values was of considerable impact to this study as it reshaped my attitude to the children's learning and in particular their ability to share their own experiences and concerns in terms of wellbeing.

One particular finding within this research project that may require attention if this research was to be replicated is the centrality of the teacher and their ability to engender critical and reflective thinking within their own practice. I believe that without this intentional reflection and use of more child friendly interventions, the findings generated by this study would not have been possible.

5.4.2 Relational Dynamics and the Enhancement of Resilience

The findings also emphasised the significance of relational dynamics within the classroom throughout the course of this research study. Liu (2024) believes that positive relationships between students and their teachers is an important predictor in overall academic performance. While Ryan and Deci (2000) use a theory of self-determination to explore ways in which teacher relationships with their students can satisfy a child's basic needs. They emphasise that relatedness is a key element of this.

Over the course of this study, the data collection and analysis demonstrated significant relatedness between myself and my students. Data collection tools such as my reflective journal, comic strips and daily check-ins illustrated the development of these relationships and their evolution throughout. Furthermore, the themes generated as part of the data analysis compounded the necessity for relatedness to be present in order to engender wellbeing and resilience. Learning in relation to this was observed and documented across all four themes and on reflection, I believe the relational aspect of the study was an inherent aspect of it. Children learned resilience through their relationships with myself and each other. In fact, one entire theme was born out of these relationships in the form of 'Key Influencers and their Enhancement of Resilience'.

In terms of my own learning, it became evident to me that through the creation and enhancement of relationships within my classroom I was living more closely to my values. These values enhanced relationships within the classroom and created a classroom that felt safe and secure for the children. It also encouraged children to find and use their own voice and empowered them to participate in lessons, not only within terms of the research study itself but this was also evidenced across the curriculum.

Were it not for this shift in my reflective practices, I do not believe that this research study would have been as effective. Children learned skills of resilience through the interactions they shared with myself and each other. I firmly believe that going forward, teachers need to reconnect with their own values in order to create more relational practices that will engender enhanced learning in the children they teach. The use of interventions such as Weaving Wellbeing, Writers Theatre and circle time can only be effective within the classroom when used in conjunction with a relational approach. This research has highlighted that participants within this study responded well to this approach and it warrants further investigation.

5.4.3 Implications of using a Values Based Approach to Learning

This research dissertation has been underpinned by three core values – care, compassion and respect. My research journey for this investigation commenced with a specific and intentional introspection based on my own values and how they could effectively benefit my practice as well as the learning of the children within my classroom.

‘We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience’ (Dewey, 1933: 78). This quote struck me over the course of my studies and it was a sentiment that had a profound effect on me. In order to learn from an experience, it is crucial that we contemplate it, that we plan, act, observe and reflect (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Without this, what have we really learned?

Once I had acknowledged the considerable gap that existed between my ontological values and their necessity within my classroom practice, I was better able to inform my judgement as I started this learning journey. This in turn enabled me to select an appropriate research paradigm, having reviewed positivist, interpretative and educational action research (EAR) approaches.

It became apparent over the course of this dissertation that the intentional self-reflection I had engaged in, was responsible for a resurgence in these values in my professional practice and that this had in fact contributed to the enhancement of resilience in my classroom over the course of the study. Again, this became clear through the use of various interventions and data collection tools. I began to observe a pattern as I engaged in Braun and Clarke (2006) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) and found that the enrichment of my values had positively contributed to the creation of a classroom culture and environment in which the children felt confident in expressing their worries and anxieties. They also offered suggestions to each other about possible ways to resolve these issues and it became evident that they were learning to become more resilient because of the values

modelled for them. Across all four themes synergised as part of the data analysis, it was clear that my values underpinned the promotion of wellbeing and resilience in the children in my classroom.

Furthermore, on reflection, I had to admit, quite early on, that these values had been absent in my classroom practice in recent times and that the negation of these values had hindered me in my previous endeavours to promote resilience in the learners I had taught. Over the course of the study, I learned that the re-emergence and emphasis on these values had not only transformed my classroom practices but had benefitted the children within the class in their endeavours to develop resilient skills.

It is for this reason, that I believe that further research in this area can only be effectively achieved once an educator and researcher embraces the criticality of their own teacher values within the classroom and uses these values in order to promote and enhance the wellbeing of the children they teach. The transformation of my own personal values throughout this study is an aspect that makes it unique and while many interventions exist in order to teach resilience, I firmly believe that their effectiveness will be limited without reflection on the teacher's part.

5.5 Future Implications

5.5.1 Workplace

In the context of my particular school, the School Self Evaluation (SSE) on Wellbeing needs to be reviewed and updated in order to adhere to the new Curriculum Framework, Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2020; Department of Education and Skills, 2019).

In addition to this, the administration of a questionnaire to parents would be advisable here as it would foster collaboration between stakeholders to ensure the optimisation of wellbeing as a priority within the school.

The findings of this particular research study would also benefit staff members as they would familiarise themselves with current practice in the area of wellbeing and find new strategies to work from. To this end, I feel the implementation of the Weaving Wellbeing Programme from second class to sixth class would be beneficial as well as The Welcome to Wellbeing Programme for Junior Infants to Second Class. However, as previously cited, I feel the most effective way to achieve this will be through the creation and implementation of child-centred, relational and values-based approaches.

5.5.2 Wider Educational Settings

With the rollout of the New Wellbeing Specification for all primary schools in Ireland set to take place in September 2025, it is vital to recognise that while it offers a welcome and necessary change in terms of emphasis on wellbeing it does not address the very real need for specific interventions to be inherent within it. Without the support of specific strategies, teachers and school communities themselves may not benefit from enhanced wellbeing practices. There needs to be more specific guidance on this in order for teachers to effectively teach wellbeing and for children to successfully learn from it.

A study conducted by Dempsey and McCoy (2024) concurred with this point and found that while various stakeholders in schools agreed with the proposed changes, they felt that schools faced challenges in translating policy into practice due to resourcing concerns and issues with teacher training.

However, as the findings of this study conclude, in order for wellbeing to be effective within the new curriculum, teachers need to utilise child-centred, relational and values-based approaches to their teaching. Without this, programmes and training intended to support the proposed rollout will be ineffective.

I believe the findings of this study will benefit the wider education sector in this way as it will enable organisations such as the (Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to explore opportunities in which to engender specific strategies for the promotion of wellbeing within the curriculum and as part of training opportunities for schools through the use of child centred, relational and values-based training programmes and courses.

5.5.3 Teacher Education and Training

In terms of teacher education, this research is an important step in recognising issues to the proposed Wellbeing Curriculum as it highlights fundamental gaps within it. While the new curriculum is a very welcome move towards prioritising wellbeing, this paper has shown that teachers need to feel confident and competent in providing children with child-centred, relational and values-based interventions.

For this reason, it is vital that teachers are provided with specific and co-ordinated training courses and that the facilitators use these courses to foster and promote child-centred, relational and values-based approaches.

This study has illustrated how specific and targeted supports enhance wellbeing and support resilience within the classroom. However, these interventions alone are ineffective without the aforementioned approaches. While various programmes exist and are beneficial, the success of

these interventions is only as effective as the teacher engaging with it. It is for this reason that during the rollout of the new curriculum, trainers and mentors from Oide need to provide specific training to teachers on the use and benefits of child-centred, relational and values-based approaches to the teaching of wellbeing.

5.6 Limitations of the Data

5.6.1 Disruptions to the Data Collection

Unfortunately, due to impact of Storm Eowyn in January 2025, cycle one was shortened by a period of one week. The storm's impact on our school building meant that we were unable to safely open. This equated to a loss of data collection time for the purposes of this study.

In addition to this, personal circumstances, outside of my control, prevented me from attending school for a period of one week during the last week in February during cycle two, again this had a negative impact on the ultimate data collection during this period.

Nevertheless, rigorous attempts were made to ensure effective data collection over a twelve week period. During the course of the data collection, I ensured that my reflective journal was utilised and that all data was categorised, recorded and stored in accordance with ethical guidelines. Following on from this once data collection had ceased, all data was printed and subsequently significant information was highlighted therein.

5.6.2 Limitation of Specific Interventions

The use of reflective journals proved ineffective during cycle one and was subsequently discontinued. Children did not enjoy having to write down their thoughts about the various subjects under discussion and they often asked questions like 'How long does it have to be?' and 'do we

have to do it?'. The research mused over the reasons for this. Was it because they did not feel safe writing their thoughts? Were they afraid a third party might look at their inner most thoughts and feelings? Or was it simply that they felt the enjoyment was taken out of the lesson in question? On reflection, I discovered that this method was not as beneficial to the children as others as it was not child-centred. They felt that this activity was more like 'work' than the other interventions. On further reflection, I embraced the idea, that their questions in relation to this task were in fact founded. They felt that I was putting pressure on them to complete a certain amount of work and in a specific timeframe. This was not the case, however, the data collection from these journals did not benefit either the children or the researcher and was discontinued for Cycle two and three. If I was to conduct a similar study in the future, I would eliminate this type of data collection altogether as I found it did not allow opportunities for child centred learning.

5.6.3 Time Constraints

Currently, the time allocation given for SPHE within the curriculum is thirty minutes per week (DES, 1999). Unfortunately, in terms of this research study, it did not allow for the effective administration of the cycles and therefore, time had to be borrowed from discretionary time as well as other curriculum areas in order to effectively conduct it.

Regrettably, under current practice this time allocation is not sufficient. It does not allow for the thoughts and feelings of children in meaningful or realistic ways in order to enhance their wellbeing. However, the New Primary Curriculum Framework advise a period of three hours (two hours thirty minutes for Junior and Senior Infants) be spent on Wellbeing per week (NCCA, 2023). This is a welcome change to the subject of wellbeing and will ensure that children have opportunities to speak more about their thoughts and feelings in practical ways.

5.7 Dissemination of the Research

5.7.1 Dissemination of the Research in School Setting

I intend on making this self-study action research plan available to all colleagues within my school on my return in September. Furthermore, I intend to make it accessible to parents and children who have an interest in reviewing the learning and findings.

In addition to this, I plan on reviewing and updating the Wellbeing Promotion Process to include the most up to date information about our particular setting and the students within it.

Finally, I intend to administer a questionnaire to all parents within the school based on their understanding of wellbeing and suggestions they may have for potential improvement of it within the school.

5.7.2 Dissemination of the Research in the Wider Educational Sector

Thus far, my research and its findings has been shared by means of an online presentation with fellow classmates and lecturers.

Going forward, I hope to share my research with Teachers Research Exchange (T-REX) in order to aid other teachers and researchers in their endeavours to make change.

Finally, I plan to submit an article to the Irish National Teacher's Organisation for publication.

5.8 My Claim to Knowledge

My claim to knowledge has emanated from two major aspects of this research study. Firstly, my personal learning in terms of my core values and their significance to my teaching as well as the impact of this learning on the children I teach. Secondly, my claim to knowledge in terms of

wellbeing and resilience is based on the introduction of the new Wellbeing Curriculum and the necessity to provide specific interventions and strategies for the teaching of wellbeing in primary classrooms.

5.8.1 Core Values and their Impact on Learning

During the course of this thesis I reflected on values that had been absent from my own practice and the reasons why this was the case. Perhaps my own past experiences had made it difficult for me to remember the things I loved about teaching and the reasons I pursued it. However, once I recalled and enacted them within my classroom practice, the results for the children, as well as for myself were astonishing. Daily interactions became more positive and enjoyable. Children felt nurtured and supported in their learning journeys and I felt more content knowing they were respected and cared for. My claim to knowledge is such that I now understand the meaning of values in action and the benefit these have for the children I teach.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Wellbeing Contract

Our Wellbeing Contract

Whatever comes from this room, stays in this room

Don't be a bully, be a buddy

Respect everyone in the group

Make sure everything you say is the truth

Don't talk during mindfulness

Don't comment on other people's opinions unless asked to

Be kind about what others say

Don't be afraid to talk, it is a safe space

You can stop anytime you want

Do not laugh when someone is speaking/do not mock them

Do not interrupt others

Give advice to people that might need it

Respect their boundaries

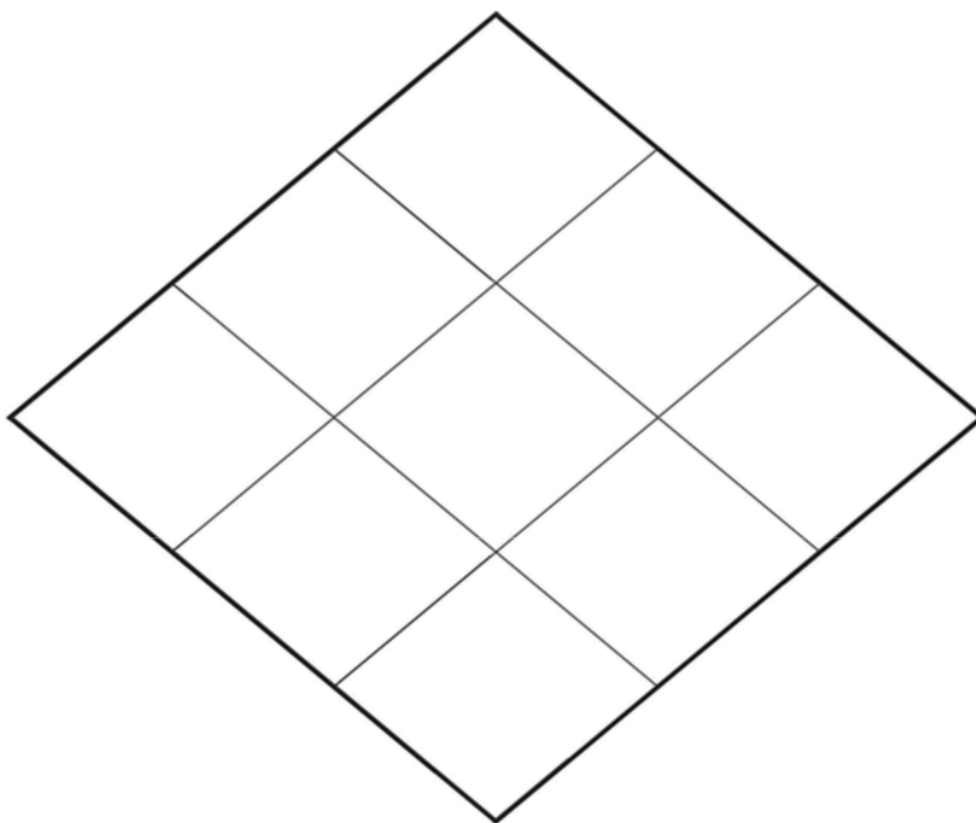
Do not bring up other children in the class in a story, unless they are happy for you to share their story.

Signed:

Appendix B – Diamond Nine (Pupil View Template)

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Diamond Nine



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Appendix C - Diamond Nine Ranking System

Diamond 9 - Resilience

Rank these concepts according to how important you think they are:

- **Asking for Help** - Encouraging children to reach out to trusted adults or friends when needed.
- **Positive Self-Talk** - Teaching kids to encourage themselves with kind words.
- **Friendship Skills** - Building strong, supportive friendships.
- **Problem-Solving** - Learning to break problems into smaller steps and tackle them.
- **Managing Emotions** - Recognizing and managing feelings like anger or sadness.
- **Physical Activity** - Using exercise to boost mood and energy.
- **Growth Mindset** - Understanding that mistakes help us learn and grow.
- **Healthy Routines** - Sleep, eating well, and regular habits that keep the mind strong.
- **Gratitude Practice** - Focusing on things they are thankful for.

Appendix D – Comic Strip Pupil View Template

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Comic Strip



Appendix E - SAMPLE Information letter for Parent/Guardian



*Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood Education*

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

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree I am doing a research project. The focus of my research is based on children's wellbeing and whether the enhancement of this can enhance resilience.

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by administering questionnaires, utilizing the 'Weaving Wellbeing' programme and completing daily checks ins with children based on how they feel and potential reasons for this. The data will be collected using observations, student grades, a daily teacher journal and the pupils test scores. The children will be asked their opinions through discussing how they feel on a regular basis and how their wellbeing can be enhanced within the classroom.

The child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. Your child will be allowed withdraw from the research process at any stage.

All information will be confidential and information will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with the University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

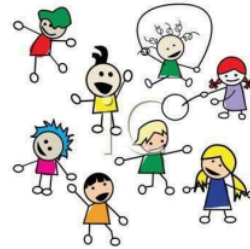
I would like to invite you and your child to give permission for him/her to take part in this project.

If you have any queries on any part of this research project feel free to contact me by email at karenduffyschool@gmail.com

Yours faithfully,

Karen Duffy

Appendix F - SAMPLE Information Letter for Child



Child's name

I am trying to find out how children feel in school and how I can help you to improve your wellbeing and coping skills. I would like to find out more about this. I would like to watch you and listen to you when you are in school and to write down some notes about you.

Would you be ok with that? Circle one. **YES** **NO**

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

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

Appendix G - SAMPLE Information Letter for Participants



Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and

Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas

Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Information Sheet

Parents and Guardians

Who is this information sheet for?

This information sheet is for parents and guardians.

What is this Action Research Project about?

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

What are the research questions?

- How can I, as a classroom teacher, enhance Wellbeing in my Classroom towards the creation of Resilient Learners?

What sorts of methods will be used?

- Observation, Reflective Journal, Questionnaires etc.

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by myself 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 leaders, Prof. Marie McLoughlin and Dr Suzanne O'Keeffe and will be examined by the Department staff. The external examiners will also access the final thesis.

What are you being asked to do?

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

Contact details: Student: *Karen Duffy*

E: *karenduffyschool@gmail.com*

Appendix H - Consent Form for Parents/Guardians



Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and
Early Childhood Education
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Parental/Guardian Consent Form

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

Parent / Guardian Signature _____

Parent / Guardian Signature _____

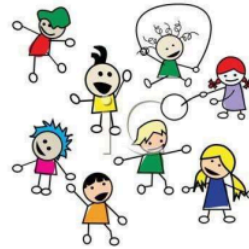
Date: _____

Name of Child _____

Child's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I - SAMPLE Child's Assent Form



Child's assent to participate

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

Name of child (in block capitals):

Signature: _____

Date: _____