Young Children's Engagement with Issues of Global Justice

A report by the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Trócaire

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Introduction

1.1 Preface

> Help me to learn to value social and cultural difference and to recognise that I live in a diverse, multi-ethnic society. Help me to learn to recognise and challenge injustice and discrimination and to stand up for myself and others
>
> National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2009) P.7

1.2 Education Context

The publication in 2009 of *Aistear, the National Framework for Early Childhood Education* by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment signals the potential for Early Childhood Education to be a significant site of educational change over the coming years. In putting in place a rubric for the education of children, from birth to 6 years, the Framework offers educators an important road map in developing and providing education programmes for young children. As can be seen from the above quotation, the Framework acknowledges the changing nature of Irish society and values young children as citizens who actively engage in their own learning with others and in the world around them. The Framework challenges educators to integrate a concern for social justice into their work with young children. It does not set geographical boundaries on the degree to which young children should engage. This raises the question of the extent to which young children can and should engage with issues of justice at both local and global level.

1.3 Background to Research

The contention that young children can and should learn about the wider world is not new. Trócaire has established a strong profile in the area of development education in the early years and developed a range of quality materials for use in early childhood education settings. While a number of publications and resources which feature a global perspective are available to teachers of early years children in the Global North, (e.g., Fountain 1997, Ruane et al, 1999, Hickey, 2004, Trócaire, 2005,) the research that has been done in this area is limited. What research has been done, both in Ireland and internationally tends to focus on children's engagement with the diversity dimension of the global perspective (Connolly and Hosken 2006). This focus on diversity is also reflected in the aims of Trócaire's early years materials, *Watoto, Children from Around the World* (Trócaire, 2000) which aim to enable children to:

- develop a curiosity about the wider world;

- learn what life is like for others in the world;

- see similarities and differences between their lives & others';

- develop an appreciation of and respect for others;

- appreciate cultural diversity around the world and in our own society;

- celebrate the differences which they encounter;

- think about the wider world and not just their own little environment;

- ask questions about themselves and others.

Recognising the need to focus on the justice perspective in addition to the global perspective, in early years programmes, Trócaire, approached the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education (CHRCE), in St. Patrick's College with an aim to build on the research that has been done in the area of diversity and the early years, to explore how children in Irish educational contexts engage with the justice dimension of the global perspective. The College has a particular commitment to education for social justice, democratic citizenship (local and global) and equality. As an expression of this commitment and in recognition of the synergy between human

rights education and democratic citizenship, the college established the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education (CHRCE). The CHRCE is committed to building capacity in human rights and citizenship education in initial and post-graduate teacher education and in the school system in general.

The Centre would seek to support Trócaire in consolidating and building on its work in this area through support of professional development programmes and strategies, the use and application of Trócaire's programmes in initial teacher education and exploiting synergies with this area of work and other initiatives in which the College and the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education are involved.

In order to underpin this work, it was felt that research was needed in the area of young children's engagement with social justice in the Irish context. In designing the research project Trócaire and CHRCE sought to trial a range of approaches which have the potential to engage young children in a deeper exploration of social justice issues and offer teachers new approaches in identifying children's existing perceptions and understandings. It was intended that the research project would result in the following outcomes:

- Contribute to our understanding of how young children in Irish contexts engage with global justice issues in educational settings

- Provide a frame of reference on which to design programmes in initial and continuing teacher education

- Inform the future development of educational support materials for early years.

These outcomes would be reached, it was hoped, through addressing the following research questions

How do young children in early childhood education settings engage with issues of global justice?

What approaches and strategies best support that engagement?

This report outlines the background, context, findings and conclusion of this research project to date and in addition sets out recommendations for future work in the field of development education and children in early childhood education settings.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The inclusion, or otherwise, of global justice education on the early childhood education agenda is intertwined with conflicting attitudes regarding children's perceived "readiness" to deal with global justice issues.[1] These attitudes, inturn, are strongly interconnected with different early childhood discourses and theories of socialisation and developmentalism. Discourses of childhood innocence and the perception that children are too young and too cognitively and emotionally immature to deal with global justice issues still impede on the provision of global justice education for children in the early years of schooling. This literature review will first examine prevailing theories, perspectives and discourses on childhood and children's learning and their implications for global justice education. It will then explore conceptualisations of global justice education and how children engage with global justice issues. Given the context of global justice education, it is important to acknowledge from the outset that the literature examined for this review predominately draws on research and perspectives located in the countries of the Global North and is rooted in the context of the lives of children who live in these countries.

2.1   Traditional Perspectives on Childhood and Children's learning

Traditional modernist perspectives of early childhood education have been increasingly challenged and critiqued in recent years (Devine, 2003; Hong, 2003; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Thornberg, 2008; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Kelly & Brooks, 2009; Ramsey, 2008c). Researchers (Kelly & Brooks, 2009; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Hirschfeld, 2002; Bickmore, 1999; Cullingford, 1992 cited in Kelly & Brooks, 2009) are increasingly arguing that many "widely held assumptions about

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[1] Global justice education includes issues such as sustainable development, social justice, human rights, world democracy and world citizenship.

what children are capable of understanding may be unwarranted" (p.204, Kelly & Brooks, 2009). Donaldson (1978) maintains that many educationalists' meticulous adherence to Piaget's cognitive development stages could restrict the development of some children. New and innovative ways of thinking about and understanding childhood and children's learning have emerged from the new sociology of childhood, postmodern/poststructuralist theories and critical psychology (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Devine, 2003; Hong, 2003). While not rejecting theories of developmentalism and socialisation this literature review discusses newer theories that depart from much of the conventional literature on the cognitive development of children under seven.

Proponents of these new perspectives challenge conventional fixed definitions of childhood, the perception of children as passive recipients of the dominant culture and many of the traditional universalised "truths" about "the child" which underpin modernist perspectives (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Devine, 2003). Theories of child development such as Piaget's (1932) theory of cognitive-development[2] which has dominated understandings of children's learning for decades have been challenged by educationalists (Ramsey, 2008c; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Kelly & Brooks, 2009; Davies, 1989, 1993 cited in Kelly & Brooks, 2009). Donaldson (1978) maintains that Piaget underestimates children's capabilities by failing to acknowledge the social context within which they learn. Poststructuralist early childhood scholars' research (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Kelly & Brooks, 2009; Davies, 1989, 1993 cited in Kelly & Brooks, 2009) indicates that Piaget's concept of "readiness" has "unnecessarily helped to restrict the equity-related work that teachers envision by implying that it is developmentally inappropriate for younger children" (p.204, Kelly & Brooks, 2009).

Theories of developmentalism and socialisation are criticised for essentialising children and childhood. Other criticisms of these traditional theories include: their assumed biological determinism, their universalism and linearity and their

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[2] Piaget's theory is based on the notion "that *all* children reach certain cognitive development stages" (that are biologically predetermined) that "correlate" with specific chronological ages. The process is linear, begins at birth and continues until adulthood (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009, p.6). Piagetian theory ignores children's social world (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996). On the other hand theorists such as Vygotsky (1986) and Donaldson (1978) locate children "in a social world in which interactions are the source of mental functioning (Peterson and McCabe 1994) and meanings for social concepts" (*ibid*, p.780).

generalisations from small groups to all children (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009). Traditional theories are also trenchantly critiqued for not acknowledging children's agency or the significant influence of socio-cultural factors and other issues such as gender, sexuality, class, "race", (dis)ability, ethnicity etc. on children's experiences of childhood (James & Prout, 1990; Gittins, 1998; James *et al.*, 1998 cited in Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Devine, 2003).

The critique of traditional perspectives and the promulgation of new perspectives have particular significance for engaging in global justice education and particularly social justice education with young children.

2.2 New Perspectives on Childhood and Children's learning

Postmodernist/poststructuralist educationalists view childhood as a social construction (Devine, 2003; Robinson & Jones Díaz; 2009). They assert that experiences of childhood are influenced by different socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. These new perspectives suggest that:

> the child is born into society as an embodied being who grows and physically matures over time, but the collective notion of "childhood" and understandings of what this constitutes are primarily socially, culturally, and historically variable across ethnicity, class and gender contexts.

> (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009, p.6).

Postmodernists/poststructuralists challenge modernist humanist discourses of childhood innocence and the notion that children are intrinsically different from adults (Kelly & Brooks, 2009; Robinson & Jones Díaz; 2009).

Robinson & Jones Díaz (2009) argue that:

> Childhood has been romanticised by adults and childhood "innocence", a discursive construction, has been critical in justifying the way that adults have kept children separate from the public domains of active citizenry (p.6).

Modernist discourses construct children as being too young and too innocent to engage in "adult" issues (Devine, 2003; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Kelly & Brooks, 2009). Jackson (2006) argues that this discourse of innocence and vulnerability "is not necessarily helpful to children" as it works against children's abilities to know and understand the world (cited in Kelly & Brooks, 2009, p.207). This discourse of childhood innocence has a significant impact on early childhood educators' perceptions of "children's experiences and understandings of diversity, difference and social inequalities" (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009, p.171). This, in turn, influences what if any aspects of social justice education are explored with young children.

Research carried out by Kelly & Brooks (2009) and Robinson & Jones Díaz (2009) found that many early childhood educators excluded social justice issues from their teaching as they felt that these concepts were developmentally inappropriate and they desired to protect children's innocence. Many participants felt that children were indifferent to social, economic and political events and were incapable of constructing "nuanced opinions". Thus many issues that were impacting on the lives of children and their families were deemed "developmentally inappropriate and irrelevant to children's early education" (Robinson & Díaz, 2009, p.7).

Brooker (2006) claims that research by Connolly (2006) "dispatches any residual myth of young children's innocence of the importance of socially and biologically constructed identities in the social ordering and power relations of the societies they live in" (p.118). Connolly's (1998) research demonstrates how boys aged five and six can draw on racialised discourses to construct gender identities and to regulate the behaviour of their peers.

New perspectives suggest that rather than being passive recipients of knowledge and culture as socialisation theory suggests, children are active agents in the socialisation process (Thornberg, 2008; Devine, 2003). As active reflective agents children "are acutely aware of the normalising discourses that operate in society and actively regulate and police their own behaviours and those of others according to these social norms" (p.171, Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009). Hirschfeld (2002) asserts that socialisation theory overestimates the role that adults play in children's development and obfuscates children's input into their own development.

Harris (1998) argues that:

> A child's goal is not to become a successful adult.... A child's goal is to be a
> successful child.... Children are not incompetent members of adults' society; they are
> competent members of their own society, which has its own standards and its own
> culture...a children's culture is loosely based on the majority adult culture within
> which it exists. But it adapts the majority adult culture to its own purposes and it
> includes elements that are lacking in the adult culture
>
> (pp. 198-199 cited in Hirschfeld, 2002).

Siraj-Blatchford (1994) argues children learn "not only what we intend to teach but from all of their experiences" (p.4). Research indicates that by the time children start school they are capable of identifying "the socially acceptable behaviour and expectations for males and females and for different ethnic groups in their own society, as presented through the media as well as through their own daily experiences of roles and relationships" (Brooker, 2006, p.118).

Modernists view children as inhabiting a different world to adults. Children's identities are constructed as being opposite to that of adults (Kelly & Brooks, 2009; Devine, 2003; Hirschfeld, 2002; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009). Children are viewed as being "radically distinct" and "unequal" to adults and are accorded minority status within society (Hirschfeld, 2002; Kelly & Brooks, 2009; Devine, 2003).   Robinson & Jones Díaz (2009) argue that "this perspective has largely determined what knowledge is accessible to children and expectations of what children are capable of achieving and comprehending" (p.7). These discourses are extremely influential particularly in terms of determining the extent to which young children are provided with social justice education and to which they have the opportunity to actively explore issues of global justice in their educational settings.

Traditional discourses of childhood take little account of the significant impact of globalisation on children's experiences of childhood. The proliferation and pervasiveness of sophisticated technologies; increased worldwide interconnectedness through the forces of globalisation and the aggressive targeting of young children with items of popular culture, suggest that discourses of childhood innocence and naivety may be outdated (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 1997 cited in Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009). Robinson & Jones Díaz (2009) argue that the above

channels give children "access to adult information and 'adults' worlds'" (p.55). They maintain that "as these technologies become more integrated into children's entertainment, popular culture and toys, the perceived dichotomy between children's worlds and adults' worlds is *blurred*" (P.172) (emphasis added). However, regardless of the fact that children are increasingly exposed to adult information and adult worlds, traditional modernist perspectives prevail and these serve to obfuscate the fact that children nowadays have access to more sources of information than previous generations and thus have a greater capacity to deal with real-life social justice issues (*ibid*).

In contrast, new and transformative perspectives on childhood and children's learning have particular significance for engaging in global justice education with young children. They allow not only for the possibility of engaging children in global justice education but also challenge teachers and educators to identify strategies and approaches which will enable children to discuss, comprehend and actively explore issues of global justice.

2.3   Inconsistencies in the Literature

The literature contains many inconsistencies regarding the specific age at which children become cognisant of issues pertaining to difference and global justice. It appears that many of these inconsistencies are associated with the research methods used by researchers. Referring to children's understanding of "race" Van Ausdale & Feagin (1996) maintain that "children's abilities have been seriously underestimated by reliance on *techniques*[3] that do not make real-life sense to children" (emphasis added) (p.779; see also Donaldson, 1978). They maintain that when children fail cognitive tests, researchers often deduce that children lack the cognitive capacity to comprehend "race" when in reality it is the test that is at fault. They argue that surveys and long-term observations of children in natural settings

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[3] Techniques include clinical tests such as pictures or doll-choice assessments to obtain information on children's racial identities, brief observations of children's behaviour in controlled settings and third-party reports (parent/teacher) on children's behaviour.

have greater validity and reliability. They assert that "rather than insisting that young children do not understand racial or ethnic ideas because they do not reproduce these concepts on adult-centered [sic] cognitive tests, researchers should determine the extent to which racial and ethnic concepts used in daily interaction and are salient definers of children's social reality" (p.791). Although Van Ausdale & Feagin are referring specifically to "race", it can be argued that this line of reasoning is equally applicable to other concepts around issues of *difference*.

2.4   Children's Constructions of Difference

Educators that espouse traditional modernist perspectives based on developmentalism believe that children under the age of seven are incapable of engaging with or understanding abstract issues around diversity, difference, human rights, social justice, discrimination and prejudice. However, a substantial corpus of evidence suggests that children are cognisant of these issues from a very young age (Brooker, 2006; Ramsey, 1991, 2008a, 2008b; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996; Chafel, 1997; Connolly & Hosken, 2006; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; MacNaughton & Davis, 2001; Quintana, 1998; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996; Milner 1983 cited in Brooker, 2006). Research suggests that children "play a critical and active role in the constitution and perpetuation of social inequalities through their perceptions of the world and everyday interactions with each other and with adults" (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009, p. 5; see also Aboud, 1988; Alloway, 1995; Averhart & Bigler, 1997; Kaomea, 2000; MacNaughton, 2000; Grieshaber, 2001; MacNaughton & Davis, 2001 cited in Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009).

Scholarship stretching back to the 1940s denotes that young children "readily absorb" biased, discriminatory and prejudiced views (Ramsey, 2008b; Connolly & Hosken, 2006; Brooker, 2006; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Clark & Clark, 1947; Aboud, 1988; Goodman, 1964; Katz, 1982; Troyna & Hatcher, 1992; Williams & Morland, 1976; Wright, 1992 cited in Ramsey, 2008b; Milner, 1983 cited in Brooker, 2006).   By the time children start school "their perceptions of difference largely reflect and perpetuate the dominant racialised, gendered, sexualised, classed and body stereotypes and prejudices that prevail in the broader society" (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009, p.4; see also: Palmer, 1990; Glover, 1991; Troyna & Hatcher,

1992; MacNaughton, 1993, 2000; Alloway, 1995; Makin *et al.*, 1995 cited in Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009). Ramsey (2008b) states that educators have observed that children are also capable of recognising stereotyped assertions in books and electronic media and recognising school and community policies and practices that are unjust and/or detrimental to the environment (See also: Pelo & Davidson, 2000; Vasquez, 2004 cited in Ramsey, 2008b).

Research conducted by Glover (1991) found that as young children (2- and 3-years-old) become conscious of differences, they concurrently develop positive or negative feelings about the differences they notice (cited in Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009; Connolly & Hosken, 2006). This in turn can affect their feelings about themselves and others and also their behaviour towards others (Araujo & Strasser, 2003; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009). Thus intervention at this early age is critical. Poissaint asserts that "an in-depth awareness of these issues must begin at the preschool level" (St. Amour, 2003, p.48).

Research conducted by Connolly *et al.* (2002) on 352 children aged three to six years regarding their cultural and political awareness found that by age three Catholic and Protestant children exhibited "small but significant" differences in their preferences for certain people's names, flags and in terms of their opinions of the police and Orange marches. Five to six year-olds displayed differences in terms of preferences for certain combinations of colours and football shirts. The researchers found that children's awareness of the significance of cultural and political events and symbols increased with age. The research demonstrates that children are cognisant of issues of difference and hold prejudices from a very young age

2.5   Children's Constructions of Poverty

Chafel (1997) asserts that there is a paucity of literature pertaining to children's conceptions of poverty. However, the research that exists indicates that young children think about and try to make sense of social justice issues such as poverty and its manifestations. In his research, Leahy (1983) questioned young children about why people are poor. A 6-year-old boy answered: "The poor people don't

have no jobs. They couldn't pay for no jobs because they don't have no money to get a job." The child elaborated on the causes of impoverishment explaining that people are poor "because they live in Africa and nobody gives them no food and they have to eat out of the garbage" (cited in Chafel, 1997, p.361). Although this child's reasoning is somewhat confused, it highlights the misconceptions that many young children have about developing countries such as those in Africa. It also indicates that children readily absorb prevailing social attitudes and prejudices (Ramsey, 1991, 2008a, 2008b).

Ramsey (1990) conducted research on a sample of 93 preschoolers aged three to six years from mixed socio-economic status backgrounds (50% high SES, 50% low SES). The children were required to describe and sort a series of photographs of people of different degrees of affluence into rich and poor. They were then required to justify their categorisations. She found that the children relied on concrete cues but were quite accurate in their categorisations. Most of the children in the study felt that rich and poor people were more different than the same and were evenly divided on whether or not rich and poor people could be friends. When asked "why some people had more money than others," most children were unable to provide an answer. One child suggested that perhaps the poor people "forgot to go to the store to get their money" (p.79).   This suggests that young children have a limited understanding of the causes of poverty. However, these young children could tell the difference between rich and poor people and have a few ideas about the divergence between the groups. Ramsey also found that young children's views about wealth and poverty seem to be shaped by books and other media.

Ramsey (2008a) cites research by Naimark (1983) which suggests that "even preschoolers assume that rich people are happier and more likeable than poor people" (p.228). Similarly, research conducted by Stendler (1949) on children in the first grade found that these children associated wealth with "good," and poverty with "bad", for example, "He's rich because he's smarter " (cited in Chafel, 1997). Engaging young children in global justice education provides the opportunity to explore and challenge such associations and perceptions.

2.6   Children's Constructions of Fairness

Similar to research pertaining to young children's constructions of poverty, there is a dearth of literature pertaining to young children's constructions of fairness. Despite an extensive search undertaken as part of this study, little research was located. However, the research recovered indicates that children develop a sense of fairness and are capable of identifying inequalities from very early ages.

Ramsey (2008b) asserts that "preschoolers readily identify injustices in their immediate world" (p.200). She cites examples of children volubly highlighting incidences they perceive to be unjust such as peers unfairly taking all the Play-Doh or not giving others a turn on the swings.

Research conducted by Killen *et al.* (2001) appraised young children's judgments regarding group inclusion and exclusion and whether young children (35 four and a half-year-olds and 37 five and a half-year-olds) assigned precedence to stereotypic expectations or fairness when invited to make decisions about inclusion in gender stereotypic play scenarios. The researchers found that initial judgments to include others in the activity contexts (choosing a boy or a girl to join the group) were based on stereotypic expectations, especially for younger children. However, when given the chance to "weigh alternative considerations…all children gave priority to fairness over stereotypic expectations in both multifaceted inclusion peer-group contexts" (p.587). Research conducted by Theimer *et al.* (2001) found that most children believe that it is unfair to exclude someone from an activity because of his or her gender or race (cited in Brown & Bigler, 2005).

Ramsey (1991) found that children felt that it was unfair that some people had more money than others (cited in Ramsey, 2008a). Young children in research conducted by Furby (1979) and Leahy (1983) indicated that affluent people should share their resources with poor people (cited in Ramsey, 2008a). Similarly, research conducted by Lerner (1974) on children's understanding of equity and parity found that kindergarteners when working as a team used parity to mete out rewards for tasks performed rather than self-interest and thus could not be accused of being "egocentric" as Piagetian theory suggests.

Research indicates that children's capacity to justify their moral judgments augments during the preschool years (Killen, Breton, Ferguson, & Handler, 1994; Killen & Smetana, 1999; Tisak, 1995 cited in Killen *et al.*, 2001). Children aged aroundthree and a half years old-years old evaluate moral transgressions to be wrong but give fairly simple explanations (e.g., "It's not nice"), whereas by five-years old, they give more complex and detailed explanations (e.g., for hitting: "He would feel hurt just like I feel hurt when someone hits me and so it's wrong to do that to someone else and he would feel very sad").

Shure (1968) conducted research with 80 children (20 four, six, eight and ten-year olds) and 40 adults (college students) to investigate how they perceived fairness, generosity and selfishness in specific situations. Her research instrument included six major story plots each with four situations which were supplemented with photographs. The four-year olds reached 85 to 100 per cent agreement on four of the six items. However, despite similarities in their judgments of the fair solution (to share or take turns is fair), qualitatively, their reasoning seemed different to that of the adults. The younger children were more concrete and adults more explicit in regard to abstract principles.

Research conducted by Brown & Bigler (2004) on children's perceptions of gender discrimination found that children as young as five sometimes ascribed teachers' behaviour to discrimination (cited in Brown & Bigler, 2005). The research located suggests that from an early age children have an understanding of moral concepts such as fairness.

2.7   Children's Constructions of Ethnic and Racial Differences

Racial attitudes are not inherent, but are absorbed as a part of an unconscious, subtle and often unintentional process of enculturation, predominantly but not exclusively in the early years of life (Lynch, 1987 cited in Calder 2000, p.85).

Siraj-Blatchford (1994) asserts that children have "learned positive and negative feelings" regarding ethnic and racial groups from an early age (p.4). Some

researchers affirm that children as young as two-years old are cognisant of racial differences (Glover, 1991 cited in Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009) while others (Ramsey, 2008a; Aboud, 1988; K. B. Clark & Clark, 1947; M. Goodman, 1952; Katz, 1976; Patterson & Bigler, 2006; Porter, 1971, Ramsey 1991b; Ramsey & Myers, 1990 cited in Ramsey, 2008a) maintain that children do not understand the concept of race until they are three or four years old. Milner (1983) asserts that children as young as three are aware of a racial hierarchy that corresponds with adult prejudices. This hierarchy locates white people at the top and black people at the bottom (cited in Siraj-Blatchford, 1994).   Awareness of racial difference whether at two, three or four years influences young children's perceptions of skin colour and has a significant impact on their own preferences in the relationships they instigate and cultivate with other children (Aboud 1988; Katz, 1982; Palmer, 1990; Averhart and Bigler, 1997 cited in Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009). Ramsey (1991) maintains that children's responses to racial differences comprise a composite range of cognitive, affective and behavioural components. In his research, Glover (1991) found that children habitually displayed negative behaviours towards children from different racial backgrounds. This negative behaviour included: never choosing to play with dolls from different racial backgrounds; refusing to hold the hands of children from different racial backgrounds; and always picking same-"race" pictures for art collages (cited in Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2009).

Research conducted by Palmer (1990) found that preschool children were capable of constructing negative judgments on the basis of racial features. In the study, non-indigenous children made negative remarks including "Blackfellas dirty" and "Rack off wog. We don't want to play with you" (cited in Glover, 1991).

MacNaughton and Davis (2001) assert that many post-colonial scholars believe that "othering" is vital to the prolongation of racist ideologies. Their research examined the understandings of 37 four to five year-old Anglo-Australian children of indigenous Australians. They found that the children drew on "othering" discourses to locate Indigenous Australians as different and exotic, creating the cultural binary of "us" and "them".

Research indicates that young children have "clear and often sophisticated understandings" of concepts pertaining to "race" and ethnicity (Van Ausdale &

Feagin, 1996, p.779) and that these concepts are utilised by young children "as integrative and symbolically creative tools in the daily construction of social life" (ibid, p.780). Van Ausdale spent eleven months observing 58 children aged three, four and five years from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in a large preschool. She found that "race" and ethnicity are salient aspects in children's lives and that children as young as three can utilise racial concepts without difficulty. She cites many examples of the young children's racial and ethnic awareness including examples of the children's use of racial concepts to exclude others.

Ramsey (1991) conducted a study on 93 preschoolers aged three to six in a predominately white community in an effort to measure their cognitive and affective responses to racial difference. Tasks were set which required the children to sort a series of photographs of racially diverse children. Both the criteria used by the children to sort the photographs and their preferences were examined. In terms of friend preferences, sex was a more important factor in their positive choices and race in their negative choices. In terms of categorising themselves, race and sex were equally salient. When categorising others, race was more salient than sex. Ramsey also found that older children were more likely to reject the photographs of children who were racially different from themselves. Ramsey maintains that this may indicate that the children are beginning to assimilate prevailing social attitudes.

Research conducted by Ramsey in 1987 found that three-year-olds have persistent, well-defined and negative preconceptions of children from different ethnic and racial backgrounds (cited in Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996). Other research also suggests that young children prefer people "who are like me" over those "who are not like me" (Sigelman, Miller & Whitworth, 1986 cited in Ramsey, 1991; Ramsey & Myers, 1990 cited in Ramsey, 1991) and commonly prefer same-race peers (e.g., Fox & Jordan, 1973; Newman, Liss & Sherman, 1983 cited in Ramsey, 1991). Similarly, research conducted by Katz (1982) found that white children in particular preferred other white children (cited in Ramsey, 1991). Children's attitudes and behaviour towards other children who are racially and ethnically different from them are "complex and contradictory" (p.227 Ramsey, 2008a).

Research indicates that because children begin to assimilate social attitudes at such a young age, recognising and challenging negative suppositions about themselves and others and promoting positive intergroup mind-sets should begin as early as possible and preferably during the preschool years (Ramsey, 1991, 2008b; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994).

2.8   Children's Constructions of worlds beyond their immediate context

Nichols (2007) asserts that until recently there was little academic research pertaining to children's knowledge of and understandings of their worlds and their places in these worlds. Similar to children's understanding of poverty and fairness, there seems to be a dearth of research on young children's understandings of people and places in other parts of the world. Nichols cites research conducted by the International Cartographic Association (ICA) in 2003 which requested children from around the world to submit maps which focused on the theme "Making a Better World for Children". Children as young as four took part. Nichols maintains that the posters submitted by children indicate that "young children are capable of forming, and representing, understandings of the worlds beyond their immediate contexts" (p.127).

2.9   Global Justice Education

Bottery (2006) maintains that "education professionals are at an important crossroads at which they must choose to either embrace a global awareness in order to promote the public good or else retreat into insularity" (cited in Larnsen & Faden, 2008 p.71). Larsen & Fadden (2008) assert that there is a dearth of empirical research on global citizenship education particularly in its implementation in classrooms. Merryfield's (1998) research on teacher implementation of global education found that

> Although there has been considerable rhetoric about the need for global education,
> little attention has been paid to how teachers are actually teaching about the world,

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its peoples, and global issues…We know very little about what actually happens in globally-oriented classrooms (cited in Larsen & Faden, 2008, p.80).

Education scholars avow that the field of global justice education lacks delineation, conceptual clarity and uniformity (Selby, 1999; Kirkwood, 2001; Pike, 2000; El-Sheikh Hasan, 2000; Fiedler *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, Selby (1999) asserts that it means different things to different people. The lack of conceptual clarity pertaining to the meaning of global justice education is compounded by the fact that global justice education is also known as "development education", "the global dimension" and "global citizenship education" (Fiedler *et al.*, 2008). In an effort to clarify the ambiguity pertaining to the meaning of global justice education the following definition succinctly synthesises the most important components of global justice education mentioned in the literature.

> Global justice education is a composite of content and process intended to increase children's *knowledge and awareness* of issues such as social justice, human rights, power, sustainable development, world democracy and world citizenship. It promotes the fostering of *critical thinking skills*, *multiple perspectives, open mindedness* and *empathy*. It furnishes children with the skills and proclivity to *actively participate* in society and to *challenge* injustice, prejudice, discrimination and destruction wherever they are found

> (Tormey, 2003 cited in Fiedler *et al.*, 2008; Moss, 2003; Calder & Smith, 1991 cited in Calder, 2000; Larsen & Faden, 2008; Department of Education and Skills, 2005 cited in Fitzgerald, 2005; Davies, 2006 cited in Larsen & Faden 2008; Fountain, 1990; Irish Aid, 2006).

2.10   Global Justice Education and Young Children

Fountain (1990) asserts that "even in the early years of schooling, children try to make sense" of global issues and concepts (p.1). She provides several examples to support this claim including:

> "Is she going to starve there? I think she should take some food with her so she doesn't die." - A 6-year old's comment on hearing that a classmate would soon be returning to her native country, Ethiopia.

Rather than being egocentric and illogical as Piagetian theory suggests, research by Calder (2000)[4] and Hong (2003)[5] indicates that children while still in Piaget's preoperational stage are capable of logical thought, of taking another's perspective, of recognising problematic situations, understanding the causes of the problems, of predicting the consequences, of taking action and finding ways to solve problems.

Hong (2003) claims that "when the task is familiar, interesting and meaningful to young children and when they have background knowledge and necessary information about the task, they are capable of solving challenging problems and show much more cognitive confidence than adults might expect" (p.152). Crucially, children must be given the space to articulate their own concerns and suggest appropriate action. Hong (2003) also cites research about perspective taking by Borke (1971) and Flavell (1985) which suggests that young children are capable of reasoning about "others' cognition, affection and intention" and research by Perner (1991) and Wellman (1990) which suggests that children as young as three-years old are cognisant of "important characteristics of human desires" (p.152).

Fountain (1990) asserts that in the early years of schooling children are constructing "rudimentary conceptions and misconceptions" about global justice issues including issues relating to poverty, conflict, human rights, environmental abuse, prejudice and discrimination (p.1). Fountain claims that children need to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes around concepts such as knowledge of interdependence, perspective consciousness, state of the planet awareness and awareness of human choices.

Fountain (1990) states that "the daily concerns of small children have parallels on the global level" (p.3). She states that children regularly:

> Call each other names, sometimes gender-or race-related (prejudice)
>
> Exclude others from play for arbitrary reasons (discrimination)
>
> Argue over materials (resource distribution)
>
> Protest that rules are 'not fair' (human rights) (See Fountain pp.3&4 for a more exhaustive list).

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[4] Calder describes how a class of 5-7-year olds set up and ran a "trash and treasure stall" to raise money for victims of a tsunami in Papua New Guinea.
[5] Hong used pictures of problematic moral situations to examine Korean Kindergartners' ability to reason during group moral discussions.

These everyday classroom experiences if dealt with appropriately by teachers can help to cultivate the skills and attitudes which "lay the foundation for later work in global education" (p.4).

2.11 Analysis of the Effects of Existing Educational Initiatives Pertaining to Global Justice Education

Measuring the efficacy of educational initiatives pertaining to global justice education is imperative. Connolly & Hosken (2006) assert that there is a burgeoning body of qualitative research on children's early years that provides "some analysis of the effects" of extant educational initiatives on children's attitudes towards and awareness of issues pertaining to diversity and difference[6] (p.108). However, they maintain that there is a dearth of "thorough and systematic evaluations" on the efficacy of such initiatives. Recognising this lacuna in the literature, Connolly & Hosken appraised a pilot education programme which aimed to augment children's awareness of and respect for diversity through theatre, workshops and associated teacher-led classroom activities[7]. From their findings, Connolly & Hosken caution that it is imperative that those designing educational programmes pertaining to diversity and difference are clear about their intended aims. They assert that educationalists must consider whether they desire the programme to bring about a general change in children's attitudes towards diversity and difference or change in relation to specific attitudes. They found that "it may well be the case that more directed and specific programmes are required that deal with young children's racial attitudes more explicitly and concretely" (p.123).

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[6] Connolly & Hosken (2006) cite qualitative research by the following: Carrington & Short, 1989; Troyna & Hatcher, 1992; Wright, 1992; Connolly, 1998; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001; Brooker, 2002; Lewis, 2003.

[7] The research focused on 6- and 7-year olds in a sample of primary schools in England. The appraisal utilised a semi-structured experimental design to determine the effects of the pilot programme on the children's attitudes and awareness supplemented with qualitative interviews with the participating teachers.

Similar words of caution, but in reference to developing resources as a tool for teaching about diversity and difference, are provided by Robinson & Jones Díaz (2009). They state that

> while our research indicated that the use of resources is seen to be an effective way of introducing diversity and difference, the focus tends to be mainly superficial...there is a tendency to operate in a superficial and "touristic" manner in terms of diversity in which the provision of resources alone is often considered sufficient enough in reflecting and exploring diversity and difference (p.173).

They argue that it is crucial to develop children's critical thinking skills in relation to issues such as sexism, racism, homophobia, racial and cultural differences, monolingualism, inequality and power. They state that "appropriate use of...resources can aid critical thinking, but there is little evidence in our research to indicate that this is a common practice in the field" (p.173). Thus those developing resources for young children around global justice issues must ensure that they include activities that compel children to think critically.

While the research conducted by Connolly & Hosken (2006) and Robinson & Jones Díaz (2009) refers specifically to diversity and difference, it can be argued that it is equally applicable to the wider global justice education field. Global justice education also requires children to engage in critical thinking of challenging issues and careful teacher preparation in relation to the overall objective of a programme and in believing that the children can and should engage with global justice issues in the course of their formal education from a young age.

2.12   Recommendations from the Literature

The literature intimates that when teaching global justice education educators should furnish young children with opportunities to develop: respect for diversity and difference; empathy; critical thinking skills; and multiple perspectives, to participate in co-operative learning and to engage in social activism (Fountain, 1990; Siraj-"Blatchford, 1994; Moss, 2007; Ramsey, 2008b; Calder, 2000; Robinson & Jones Díaz 2009; NCCA, 2009).

2.12.1 Critical Thinking Skills

Robinson & Jones Díaz (2009) assert that "critical thinking is a crucial aspect of social justice perspectives" (p.173). It is often presumed that children: can only think in concrete and immediate terms; are unable to comprehend abstract or hypothetical concepts and are incapable of imaging and connecting with unfamiliar experiences. Literature on developing critical thinking skills with young children however, cited in Ramsey (2008b) suggests otherwise. Ramsey (2008b) states that many educationalists "attest to the positive effects of engaging young children in conversations in which they can explore and challenge their assumptions and the inequities in the world around them" (p.201). She cites research by De Marquez (2002) who elucidates how young children can challenge each other about social justice issues and research by Marsh (1992) who explicates how the children in her racially diverse kindergarten partook in a number of activities that helped them become more aware of injustice and motivated them to take action (e.g. protesting against the lack of African American traffic wardens in the school). Undoubtedly, teaching young children "to see connections with others and to understand the nuances of different social divisions" (Ramsey, 2008b, p.192) can be challenging for educators, however, as the literature suggests, it is possible and extremely valuable.

Children learn through interactions with their environment and the people around them (Brooker, 2006; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994; Ramsey, 2008b). The main method through which they elect to learn is *play* (Siraj-Blatchford, 1994; Ramsey, 2008b). Siraj-Blatchford (1994) citing Lally asserts that play is a "natural motivator" for children (p.73). Play also proffers "a fluid and imaginative sphere in which to introduce and explore issues with young children" (Ramsey, 2008b, p.191). It is therefore a highly useful vehicle through which to explore global justice issues with young children.

Research indicates that the use of picture books, story books, photographs, images, dolls, "persona dolls[8]" drama play equipment, art materials and puppets that reflect the diversity of the community should be used as stimuli for promoting discussion on global justice issues (Araujo & Strasser, 2003; Owens & Nowell, 2001; Ramsey, 2008b; Morgan, 2009; St. Amour, 2003; D'Angelo & Dixey, 2001). Ramsey (2008b) provides many examples including that of Chafel *et al.* (2007) who utilised books to encourage children to discuss issues such as poverty and intergroup resentment and hostility. Moreover, the researchers found that when children were permitted to incorporate their own personal experiences into discussions, they were "more actively engaged and readily generated ideas about how to challenge inequities" (p.201). However, Ramsey (2008b) cautions that care must be taken to ensure that stereotypes are not reinforced. Referring to books on racial equality Clark & Millikan (1986) assert that:

> Young children are vulnerable to stereotypes and bias in books as at this stage they are forming perceptions of themselves and others. Literature should focus on similarities of groups, rather than presenting stories which only draw attention to exotic differences (cited in Siraj-Blatchford, 1994, p.77).

2.12.2 Social Activism

Fountain (1990) states that global education "is ultimately education for action" (p.3). Ramsey (2008b) asserts that research demonstrates that children as young as four-years old can engage in social activism "if the projects emerge from real incidents or issues in their lives; are simple and direct; have a clear, tangible focus; and are geared to the children's experiences rather than achieving a particular outcome" (p.202). This research suggests that opportunities must be made available for children to demonstrate their interest and competence. It also indicates that it is the children who should decide the action to be taken rather than the adults. Ramsey (2008b) cites examples of social activism by children such as that of Vasquez (2004) who describes how her kindergarteners recognised, protested, and in turn

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[8] Persona dolls have a 'story' that provides them with their own unique identity or 'persona'. They are used in conjunction with storytelling to explore equity issues with children and promote joint problem-solving of equity issues the dolls may face (MacNaughton & Davis, 2001, p.84). These dolls have names, family histories, and specific characteristics. They can become a vehicle for introducing and telling stories about feelings regarding differences (Araujo & Strasser, 2003, p.182).

transformed a number of discriminatory school policies and practices (e.g., the kindergarteners were excluded from a bookmark contest; the food at the school barbecue did not include any vegetarian dishes etc.).

2.12.3 Multiple Perspectives and Empathy

Assisting young children in developing empathy and in acquiring and appreciating multiple perspectives is central to global justice education (Banks 2009; Norton 2009 cited in Morgan, 2009). Morgan (2009) affirms that teaching young children to have multiple perspectives "is likely to reduce problems involving prejudice or discrimination and is an important component of early childhood education". In order to foster multiple perspectives and cross-cultural understanding, research indicates that educators should use high quality multicultural picture books, role-play and moral dilemmas (Morgan, 2009; Upright, 2002; Barton, 1986; Barton & Booth, 1990; Clare, 1996; Furness, 1976; Shaftel & Shaftel, 1982; Van Ments, 1999 cited in Upright, 2002).

2.13   Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

Significantly, two of the twelve principles of the recently published NCCA framework for early childhood education *Aistear* (2009) are concepts central to global justice education: *Equality and Diversity* and *Children as Citizens. Aistear* includes guiding principles such as:

> Help me to learn to value social and cultural difference and to recognise that I live in a diverse multi-ethnic society. Help me to learn to recognise and challenge injustice and discrimination and to stand up for myself and others.

> Remember that I too am a citizen. Help me to learn about my rights and responsibilities. Model fairness, justice and respect when you interact with me and others...Model democracy in action...Help me to understand that others may have different views and opinions, and to respect these.

The framework is further subdivided into four themes: *Well-being; Identity and Belonging; Communicating* and *Exploring and Thinking*. The learning goals of each theme make reference to concepts such as critical thinking, multiple perspectives, active citizenship, skill development (including co-operation, responsibility, negotiation, fairness, empathy, and conflict resolution) and state that young children should be taught to recognise and deal with discrimination and prejudice. The guidelines affirm that educators should discuss "important issues with children, for example, a newspaper article that might interest them, or concepts like fairness, power, responsibility, freedom, rights, or prejudice in the context of children's daily experiences" (NCCA, 2009, p.23). These concepts and principals reflect much of the informed practice located in the literature on early childhood education particularly in doing issues pertaining to global justice.

The timely publication of these guidelines and the emphasis they place on issues of diversity and citizenship highlights the importance of developing resources for early childhood educators so that they can foster in young children the knowledge, understanding and skills to become active informed citizens in our local and global communities.

2.14 Conclusion

The proliferation of postmodern and poststructuralist theories of childhood and children's learning have transformed perceptions of children and childhood. These theories have important implications for the provision of global justice education in the early years of schooling and also play an important role in informing successful approaches to global justice education.

Postmodern/poststructuralist perspectives go hand in hand with global justice education. The principles of empowerment, agency and activism which are promoted by proponents of these theories are central to global justice education. Contrary to traditional modernist perspectives of childhood and children's learning, a

plethora of contemporary research studies suggest that young children are capable of engaging with and understanding abstract issues around diversity, difference, human rights and social justice; of appropriating, re-working and reproducing bigoted discourses[9] in the daily construction of social life and of forming, representing and understanding worlds beyond their immediate contexts. Research indicates that children readily absorb the biases and prejudices of their families, peers and the media and therefore do not enter preschool as empty slates. Global justice education is therefore critically important for young children so that they can be given the opportunity to analyse and reflect upon their own prejudices and become well informed, proactive, open minded and caring global citizens.

The importance of global justice education for all children is reflected in the inclusion of concepts central to global justice education in the new early childhood curriculum framework published by the NCCA (2009). These guidelines and other academic literature in the field highlight a range of concepts for educationalists to include when developing global justice education programmes for young children. Such programmes should furnish young children with the opportunities to develop critical thinking skills; multiple perspectives and empathy; to participate in co-operative learning and to engage in social activism. Research suggests that programmes must be clear about their intended aims and tailored to address specific issues. Moreover, evaluation of the efficacy of such programmes is crucial. Educationalists should ensure that new programmes are producing the learning outcomes desired.

As global citizens in their own right, children should be allowed to participate "on the basis of who they are rather than who they will become" (Moss, 2002 cited in Nichols, 2007, p. 119). Global justice education provides children with the opportunity to develop both the skills and proclivity for civic engagement both locally and globally and therefore the advantages of this approach are manifold and far-reaching.

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[9] See Connolly (1998) p.5

Chapter 3   The Research Process

This chapter will outline the research process as it was developed in this study. It will outline the methodological procedures that were utilised for data collection from the purposeful sample. The rationale for selecting the chosen data collection methods, as part of a qualitative approach to research, will be considered. It will highlight how the chosen methods were deemed suitable methods to unearth information and evidence to illuminate the research questions. The analysis of data collected, ethical considerations, biases, validity and limitations associated with this study will be examined in order that the resultant conclusions and recommendations can best be understood.

3.1   The Research Process

The primary objective of this research study was to identify how children engage with issues of global justice in an early childhood education context. It was intended also that the study would also help identify teaching strategies which would support that engagement. As a result, it was hoped that the process and findings would inform the development of appropriate resources for early years education.

This research involved a total of four visits of up to 45 minutes each from a researcher to an early years setting. On each visit, the researcher observed and recorded the teacher teaching a lesson based on materials provided by the research team and observed and recorded the subsequent discussion with the children in the class. The researcher then worked more closely with a smaller group of children, doing a further activity linked to the topic or story previously discussed. The teacher was asked to give feedback on their own thoughts on the lessons and on the discussion with the children. The teacher was also asked to note any impacts or talking points relating to the research topic which arose from the children in the days between each visit. Provision was also made for a follow-up interview with the participating teachers, if they wished to contribute further to the research process.

All activities were recorded using audio recording equipment for future transcription and analysis. The field notes of the researcher also formed part of the data set.

While the primary focus of the research was on the engagement of young children with issues of global justice and how this could be facilitated, the views and experiences of participating teachers provided an important insight into questions of the feasibility, appropriateness and impact of global justice education in early years classrooms.

3.2   Site and Settings

This research was conducted in three settings – pre-school, Junior Infants and Senior Infants at Primary school level– over a four-week period. Each of these settings was chosen as they represent the three most common formal contexts in which children aged three to six are educated in Ireland. Each setting was in a different social context. The pre-school setting was in a third level institution crèche in a large town, the Junior Infants setting was in a semi-rural setting and the Senior Infants setting was in a more rural context. The research required teachers who were willing to teach content relevant to global justice issues and to use a range of active participative methodologies. The teachers in one of the schools had previous experience in development education and global justice education but this was not true of either of the teachers in the other settings. The research project involved 60 child participants and four teachers as co-researchers.

3.3   Choosing a methodology

3.3.1 Understanding the research paradigm

Academic research is carried out according to conventions which define what counts as knowledge, what counts as an appropriate method for looking and what acts as evidence (Brew, 2001). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) define a paradigm as the largest framework within which research takes place. As it is the world view within

which researchers work, whether they consciously acknowledge it or not, Lincoln and Guba (1989) argue that all researchers should be explicit about the research paradigm in which they are operating as this informs all choices pertinent to the research process.

Lincoln and Guba (1989) argue that there is no reality except that created by people as they attempt to make sense of their surrounds. Socially constructed realities are not independent of the observer but are absolutely dependent on him or her for whatever existence they may have. This perspective is reflected in the approach to the development of theory in the two contrasting paradigms. In the conventional paradigm, a deductive approach is most commonly applied. In this approach, the researcher brings a pre-existing theory or hypotheses which he/she wishes to test and dependent on the findings of the research the hypotheses is confirmed or rejected and the original theory consequently revised (Bryman, 2008). By contrast, Eisenhardt (2002) explores how theory is built through an inductive approach, in which the researcher begins with a tentative research question but endeavours to begin with no theory under consideration or no hypotheses to test, difficult as this is. The aim in this constructivist paradigm is to allow the theory to emerge from the contributions of the subjects of the research.

3.3.2 Qualitative Research

Because of the context and social situation of this particular research, it was decided that the use of constructivist paradigm should inform the approach to this research project. This paradigm guides the development of qualitative approaches the aim of which is to understand more deeply the experiences and perspectives of young children with regard to issues of global justice. The approach is process rather than outcome oriented. This methodology allows for the extrapolation of information by talking to people in an open-ended manner in a familiar surrounding. It involves face-to-face collection of data and interacting with participants in their familiar, usual setting. As Creswell (2003) indicated, this approach allows the researcher, having built a relationship previously, to interact with the participants on a human level and

listen to and respond to their experiences. It allows for the collection of rich and textual material.

Connolly (2008) outlines three core premises which should underpin research with children in the areas of gender and race and which are useful in this context of social justice, which is the focus of this study. The first premise is that there is nothing natural or inevitable about the way in which race, gender and childhood manifest themselves in young children's lives but rather they tend to vary as they reflect the particular social, political and economic forces that are at play within any specific context. Secondly, research with children should be predicated on the assumption that children are socially competent and actively involved in the negotiation of their social worlds. Thirdly, Connolly (2008) sees the research process as a product of the relationships forged between the researcher and the research participants. The outcome of the research will be determined by the approaches and perspectives of the researcher and research team as well as the particular responses adopted by the research participants.

3.4   Methods of Data Collection

The research approach was qualitative and - was informed by the 'mosaic' approach to research (Clark and Moss, 2001). Given the age range of the research participants and the purpose of the research, i.e., to inform the development of appropriate resources for early years education, it was decided that the research strategies used would be drawn from existing classroom practices and approaches. This was thought to offer the following advantages:

- It would ensure, as far as possible, that the children were familiar and comfortable with the research strategies. It was felt that this was important in order to maximise access to the authentic voices of the children.

- From an ethical perspective, it was considered important to ensure that the research activities in which the children participated were also in keeping with good educational practice and offer substantial learning opportunities to the participants.

- Given the intended outcome of the research, it was thought appropriate that the research strategies be ones with which teachers -were familiar and which could lead to the creation of effective and sustainable resources and approaches.

- Finally, it was felt that using research strategies that were within the teaching practice of participating teachers would allow for a more meaningful research partnership between the research team and the participating teachers, which would lead to the collection of more meaningful data.

3.4.1 Research Strategies

The principle research strategy used was one of adult-child interaction through dialogue. This occurred in a range of contexts: whole group discussion using Thinking Time/Circle Time or a similar approach, story, drama and the exploration of images through whole group and small group discussion. All whole class activities were teacher-led and observed by the researcher and by the teacher as participant-observers. The field researcher led the small group activities and discussions.

The research occurred over a four-week period. Each week there was a whole class activity, followed by a small group activity. All of the small group activities were designed to encourage children's dialogue and elicit children's perspectives and opinions. The whole class sessions were facilitated by the class teacher and centred on teaching content specifically chosen for this research project. The research tools used were story and photographs and a number of methodologies were used to engage children in dialogue and discussion of the relevant content introduced.

Teachers played an important role in this research - implementing the whole class activity plan and acting as co-researchers in observing the engagement of children with the activities and their ongoing response to the issues and content raised in the research plan. They were asked to record any observations and participated in a semi-structured interview with the field researcher at the end of the four week programme.

3.4.2 Story

It was originally decided to use story as a stimulus to discussion. The story could be used as the focus for a range of activities after the initial reading. It was decided that the chosen story should: be broadly appropriate to the general interest and language level of young children aged three to six; be set in a developing world context and explore themes that are relevant to global justice. The story chosen - *Mama Panya's Pancakes*- met all of these criteria. An attractive picture book, set in Kenya, it tells the story of the trip to the market of Adika, a young boy and his mother Mama Panya. As the story unfolds, they meet a range of friends and characters that, much to Mama Panya's concern, Adika invites to dinner later that evening. As each character is invited, Adika responds to Mama Panya's pleas that she can only afford to buy food for themselves with the catchphrase: "We have a little bit and a little bit more". The story ends positively as the characters invited each bring something for the dinner pot and everyone has enough to eat. The story and powerful illustrations reflect positively Kenyan landscape, culture and family values but there are underlying themes of hunger and poverty which offered rich potential for exploration with young children.

3.4.3 Photographs

The photographs chosen for use in this research were selected specifically to: prompt discussion on the themes of the wider world, food and poverty; enable children to identify similarities and differences between their lives and children in other places; appeal to children's sense of the familiar; offer positive images of the developing world and allow children to explore local and global dimensions of justice issues. Photographs were sourced from Trócaire education packs, *Watoto, Children from Around the World* and *Maji, Water Pack* and a range of other sources. Care was taken to ensure that photographs which illustrated poverty in the developed world were also included to provide balance and challenge possible stereotypes that the children might have had. The photographs used in this research study are included in Appendix 3.

3.4.3 Research Plan

The following is a synopsis of the research plan. The full plan is attached in Appendix 1. The methodologies and approaches used to encourage dialogue and discussion are outlined under each week.

Week One: The whole class session focused on the telling of a story - *Mama Panya's Pancakes* by the teacher. The story telling was followed by general recall questions and discussion. This was then followed by a small group discussion on the story led by the field researcher. Using the illustrations of the story, the children were asked to imagine, through the use of a silhouette figure, that they were in the scene and were asked to describe what they could see, touch, hear, and smell. The children were then asked to stick their choice of a smiley face or a grumpy face on illustrations contained in the storybook that made them happy or sad.

Week Two: The whole class activity was a Circle Time discussion which began by reviewing the issue of food as it featured in *Mama Panya's Pancakes*. The teacher went on to lead a discussion in which children identified the foods they liked, why food was important and whether all people had enough to eat and drink. The small group activity involved children using smiley faces/ grumpy faces to indicate whether a range of ambiguous images were fair or unfair (cf Photographs A to C Appendix 3)

Week Three: Having read and displayed the photo story *Cecelia* from the Trócaire Education Resource, *Watoto*, *Children from Around the World,* the class teacher then went on to use a Cecelia doll and using teacher- in- role technique, encouraged the children to ask questions of Cecelia about her life and where she lived. In the small group afterwards, the children were asked by the researcher to place the images from the photo story in order according to how similar the images were to their own daily experiences

Week Four: The teacher led a circle time discussion in which children were asked to suggest what was happening in a number of images relating to poverty in Ireland

and in the developing world (cf Photographs A to D Appendix 3). In the small group discussion, children were asked to draw what might happen next in one of the images, discussed in the previous whole class setting.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers involved after the four classroom sessions were completed. These interviews took place in two of the settings- setting 2 and setting 3 (c.f. figure 3.2). In setting 2, two teachers were interviewed as one of the teachers implemented the classroom activities outlined in the research plan contemporaneously with her children who were in a parallel class in the same school.

3.6   Data Analysis

The process of qualitative data analysis takes many forms but it is fundamentally a non-mathematical analytical procedure that involves examining the meaning of people's words and actions. Qualitative research findings are inductively derived from the data.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994)

The commitment of the qualitative researcher prior to data analysis should be to ground all analysis and conclusions directly in the evidence collected (Denscombe, 2007). The qualitative researcher does not have hypotheses they seek to confirm or disconfirm. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) point to the paradoxical nature of the qualitative researcher's task. On the one hand the researcher must be acutely sensitive to the experiences and meaning systems of others and at the same time be aware of how one's own biases and perceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand. Similarly, Cohen et al (2007) point to the need for the researcher to exercise great caution and awareness given their previous roles as research designer and interviewer, and their responsibility of setting the codes and categories for analysis. A critique of qualitative research is that it can be highly subjective. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that all researchers bring a perspective to

what they are studying. 'What distinguishes the qualitative researcher is disciplined analysis' (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

A grounded theory approach informed the data analysis strategy in this study. 'Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed' (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, pg 273). The attraction of grounded theory is that the researcher starts with the data and through a constant process of analysis and review, a theory emerges from the data (Cohen et al, 2007). Given that the researchers were aware of the influence of the pre-determined research questions on the research process and data collection process, a system was devised to ensure that the process was as inductive as possible. The data was reviewed by four members of the research team working independently and through close analysis of the data, emerging themes were identified. A colour code system was then applied to the data based on these emerging themes, in order to allow issues and evidence of most interest under these themes to emerge.

Table 3.1   Emerging Themes

Emerging Theme	Reference Colour
Awareness of the wider world	
Local and global diversity	
Understanding Poverty	
Emerging Attitudes and dispositions	
Sense of justice and fairness	
Effectiveness of strategies	

3.7   Selection of Participants

Eisenhardt (2002) draws a contrast between the sampling strategies needed in small scale qualitative case studies (inductive based) to hypothesis testing studies which rely on statistical sampling.   While the cases may be chosen randomly, random selection is neither necessary nor even preferable (Eisenhardt, 2002). As Robson (2002) observes, the reason for this is that case studies opt for analytic rather than statistical generalisation. They develop a theory which can help researchers to understand other similar cases, phenomena or situations. A purposive sampling strategy was therefore used to identify early childhood education settings for participation in the study.

> In purposive sampling, often a feature of qualitative research, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs.
>
> Cohen et al (2007) P.114

Denscombe (2008) advocates that participants in case studies need to be identified on the basis of key attributes and according to key criteria. Voluntary participation was a key criterion for participation in the study. Participants were invited to volunteer to take part in the study. Principals and teachers received comprehensive written information on the project prior to agreeing to take part. Parents of children involved were also informed in writing about the project and gave written permission for their children to be involved. Prior to each research session, the children were told in appropriate language of the aims and purposes of the research and assented verbally to being involved. They were also given the opportunity to withdraw from the process at any time should they have wished to do so.

The fact that they volunteered may presuppose that the participants had some interest in the area of the study. Criteria were drawn up prior to the selection of candidates to ensure that on balance the group represented what Denscombe et al (2007) P.20 refer to as 'typical instances'.   Criteria were also set that the range of school placements would be broadly reflective of the range of schools in the Irish

education system and that the researchers would have the likelihood of engaging with a variety of different early years education contexts.

Figure 3.2 Research Settings

Setting 1

Setting 1 was a senior infants class in a medium size primary school in an established urban area close to a large city centre. The children come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The children in the class were all girls aged between 5 and 6 at the time the research took place. A small number of the children in the setting were from an ethnic minority background. The class teacher had not previously been specifically involved in development education work.

Setting 2

Setting 2 consists of two junior infants classes in a medium sized primary school in a rural area on the outskirts of a large city. The children come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. There were 10 boys and 10 girls in the class in which the researcher worked. The teacher in the other junior infant classroom in the school carried out the teacher activities as directed in the research plan and contributed to the evaluation of the programme in the school. The children were all aged 4 and 5 at the time of the research. There were no children from ethnic minority backgrounds in the group.

Setting 3

Setting 3 was an early childhood education setting, located in the crèche of a third level campus located in a large town. The crèche serves staff and students of the third level institution who generally leave their children for the working day. There were 12 to 13 children in the whole group activities and four or five children in the small groups. Two children were from ethnic

minority backgrounds. There were six/seven boys and six girls aged between three and four years.

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

This research project undertook to ascertain how young children engage with issues of global justice and fairness and to identify strategies, which would promote that engagement. Like all studies of this nature (qualitative, small in scale, short time-frame) its findings are subject to limitations in that they are indicative rather than definitive and warrant further exploration. This is particularly true in relation to children's engagement with issues of global justice as the level and quality of understanding and engagement varied between individual children and across the three settings in which the research took place. However, the degree of triangulation with regard to the responses of children, teachers and researcher observation in relation to some of the strategies increases the degree of confidence with which findings can be articulated in relation to the research questions.

As outlined in the previous section, the data was analysed and emerging themes identified for Research Question 1. For Research Question 2, the strategies used became the categories for analysis. Table 2.1 lays out the themes/categories as they relate to each research question.

Table 2.1: Themes and Categories

Research Question	Themes / Categories
How do children engage with issues of global justice in an early years' context?	Awareness of the wider world Diversity and identity Understanding poverty Emerging attitudes and dispositions Sense of justice and fairness
What strategies support that engagement?	Story Images Participatory activities and discussion

4.1 Young children's engagement with issues of social justice

Calder (2000) and Hong (2003) provide useful indicators of children's engagement with social justice issues. Can they demonstrate logical thought, take another's perspective, recognise problematic situations, understand the cause of problems, predict consequences, take action and find the way to solve problems? To a greater or lesser extent, children who participated in this study demonstrated capacity in each of these areas. This section explores and discusses children's responses regarding those dimensions of global justice education deemed relevant to the study undertaken.

4.1.1 Awareness of the wider world

Robinson and Jones Diaz (2009) argue that children increasingly have access to adult information and adult worlds and that this blurring of the distinction between adult and children's worlds has influenced their understandings and perceptions of issues which previously would have been seen as being in the domain of adults or older children. The children who participated in this study demonstrated that they already had some ideas, presumptions, and prior experience which influenced the way they understood issues. It became apparent that it was only when adults were aware of these prior experiences and understandings that children's level of engagement could properly be understood and appreciated. In Setting 3, for example, the interpretation of the children that the girl in one of the photographs (Photograph C, Appendix 3) was sad because she wanted to go home perplexed both the teacher and researcher until the teacher recalled the theme of the Trócaire campaign six month previously.

> Well I didn't understand because a lot of them kept saying the girl was sad because she had no home but there was nothing about the home in the picture. The girl was just sitting on her mum's knee at the water, there was nothing about that. But then another parent said to me that on the previous Trócaire box it was all about saving money for the little girl's home – this was last Lent. Now I didn't know that.

> (Teacher, Setting 3)

It appears that their previous engagement with the story of a black child had influenced their interpretation of the subsequent images featuring black children in an African context and had also strongly influenced their emotional response to the picture.

> So we think now that that was why a lot of them knew about that and they were thinking that little girl might be a similar little girl that had no home to go to. But that was what made them really sad, that she had no home. Rather than having no shoes, or no water, or no anything, it was having no home seemed to bother her, yeah, bother them.
>
> (Teacher, Setting 3)

This realisation that children came to the research process with pre-existing ideas and understandings, about Africa in particular, was also commented on by the teachers in Setting 2.

> Another thing I noticed was the amount, of not prejudice, but the stereotypes that are already present in their minds, like at this age
>
> (Teacher 1, Setting 2)

In this case, the teacher prioritised the role of the home in creating an association between poverty and Africa.

> A lot of mine said 'I saw that on the television' and you know that parents have spoken about poor people in Africa and maybe they have a little bit of an idea that they never had food or they don't have food.
>
> (Teacher 2, Setting 2)

The importance of family and home experiences was also exemplified by the contribution of an individual child, Helen, to the final whole class discussion in Setting 2. It became evident that the family were subscribing to a child sponsorship scheme in Africa and that the rationale for this had been made clear to the children of the family by the parents. Helen's description of life in Africa draws heavily on this rationale.

45

In Africa, nobody can get no food, they have no sheep, no cows…we have to help the people in Africa

Helen (Setting 2, Class Session 4, Researcher's Observation Notes)

Although this was an isolated incident in the context of the overall study, it highlights how the increasing prevalence and popularity of child sponsorship schemes may provide some children with increased awareness of the wider world, including Africa; it may also instill in them an essentialist view that Africa is poor and that we have the means and responsibility to provide solutions. This essentialism was evident in other conversations across the research settings and is explored further in Section 4.1.3.

There was evidence in each of the research settings that children already had some awareness of a world outside Ireland. In Setting 2, China was used by many children in both class and focus group discussions to denote anywhere outside Ireland. At the beginning of the research process, for example, some children understood the story to have taken place in China (Setting 2, Discussion 1). Descriptions of location and place, however, became more nuanced as the sessions progressed and in later discussion sessions, children more readily nominated Africa as a location in the context of the story and images discussed. In Setting 1, awareness of the wider world was facilitated through the presence of children from the Filipino community who declared their background to the other children. This had prompted some awareness of and interest in the Philippines and in what was happening there amongst the rest of the class (cf 4.1.2).   In Setting 3, there was a more limited prior awareness of the wider world in evidence and perhaps, as is evident in this conversation with one of the children Alan, an emerging conception of different places and of near and far.

Researcher: And where's he going to bring the water, Alan?

Alan: To Africa.

Researcher: He's going to bring it to Africa. Is he in Africa there in the picture, do you think?

Alan: Yeah.

Researcher: How do you know he's in Africa?

Alan: Because he came a long way to get there.

Some of the children's responses to the images in the *Mama Panya* story suggest the kind of over-generalisations from which stereotypes emerge. Helen (Setting 2), for example, claimed to know that the story was based in Africa "because it looks like a jungle". The initial response of children in Setting 1 to the Mama Panya cover, which shows a happy image of a village family, suggests that even a positive image of rural life in Africa could prompt associations with poverty. In this instance the children had not yet been introduced to the context of the lesson and had merely seen the researcher place the book on the desk in front of them when the comment "Look it's stories about poor people" prompted general agreement (Researcher's Observation Notes Setting 1).

However, children's sense of other places was more often framed in the context of their own experience of Ireland or home as places where there was enough to eat and drink.

> **Researcher:** And do you think there's anybody in Ireland who has to get up early in the morning and then go down to the well with a bucket and then fill the bucket and carry the bucket all the way back to their house?
>
> **Children:** No.
>
> **Researcher:** So why do you think these people are doing it?
>
> **Child:** Because they don't live in Ireland.
>
> **Researcher:** Where do you think they live, Aaron?
>
> **Aaron:** In Chinese….or maybe in Africa
>
> (Setting 3, Discussion 2)
>
>
> **Helen:** I would say, 'Mammy, Daddy, just take me back to Ireland, will you please?'
>
> **Researcher:** Why would you want to go back to Ireland?
>
> **Helen:** Because there's more food.
>
> (Setting 2, Discussion 2)

Overall, the findings in this study in relation to children's awareness of the wider world are consistent with post-modernist perspectives that children are cognisant of

the wider world from a young age (Brooker, 2006). This is reflective of previous research findings (Ramsey, 2008b) that children come to formal learning with well established perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices in relation to the wider world, consistent with those that prevail in wider society. The evidence from this study would suggest that charity campaigns are influential in shaping children's view of Africa in particular. The impact of campaign messages which dominate discourse around Africa in the public realm seem in some cases to pre-empt the children's more positive immediate engagement with the images and issues met with during this research process.

 4.1.2 Diversity and identity

The diversity among children in the classroom can present significant opportunities to help children think about and articulate their experience of difference. Two of the class groups who participated in the research included children of ethnic minority backgrounds. In the non-school setting, the researcher and teacher both observed that this diversity did not make a significant impact on how children responded to issues or engaged in discussion with the other children in the group. Although the teacher indicated that the children with international backgrounds may have been initially conscious of difference, this had become much less apparent to her as the children settled into their education setting.

> We have one child who's from Lesotho and we have one child who's from Italy and we have two children – you didn't meet them actually – but they're from Turkey. But children I find that no matter what country they come from when they come here, after they're here for a while, they don't really think about their other country very much. They generally don't. They just think about wherever they're living now, they come into crèche, they do this with their friends. They tend not to talk about their own country very much.
>
> Teacher (Setting 3)

Previous research has found that young children are conscious of difference and can develop positive or negative feelings about the differences they notice (Glover, 1991, Connolly and Hosken, 2006). Interactions in Setting 1, which included the two

children from ethnic minority backgrounds (Marcia and Clara), represent both the challenge and opportunity that diverse classrooms present for teachers engaging in global justice education. In early discussions of illustrations from *Mama Panya*, Marcia had identified herself as being similar to one of the girl characters in the story. "She looks like a Filipino, like me" (Setting 1, Discussion 1). Firstly, this would suggest that Marcia's Filipino identity was significant for her and secondly, the reason why she might have felt similar to a Kenyan girl is of interest. Although the comment arose from a discussion about the prettiness of the girl's hair, further conversation, discussed here under would suggest that the potential for children of Asian heritage to identify specially with children of African heritage may be significant.

Marcia's self identification as Filipino prompted the discussion below which highlights the opportunity that diverse classrooms present in making children more aware of wider world contexts and indeed their families conscious of pointing out connections to children as they arise in the media or in day to day events.

> **Orla:** And you know what? There was a storm in the Filipinos and they had to walk in the rain and they couldn't-
>
> **Marcia:** Filipinos don't have storms.
>
> **Child:** They do.
>
> **Marcia:** No.
>
> (Setting 1, Discussion 1)

During a later activity children were asked to select the photograph that was most unlike their day. The white Irish children in the group all chose photographs that were more obviously different to Ireland. These children chose the images of the street scenes with different shops and wandering goats and sheep. Marcia and Clara, on the other hand, chose what ostensibly was a more unlikely photograph – that of a posed family shot.

> **Researcher:** Marcia, why did you pick the picture of Cecilia with her mummy and daddy?

Marcia: Because she's far away.

Researcher: How do you know… why do you think it looks far away?

Marcia: Because we don't live there. Because they're not the same. All of the people there is the same colours.

Researcher: Clara, is that why you picked that picture as well, because the people look different?

Clara: Yeah.....She [Marcia] does look like that one

(Setting 2, Discussion 1)

One interpretation of the conversation above suggests that Marcia and Clara had already internalised a view of Ireland as a place where white people live and that anywhere with only black people must be far away and essentially different. These findings correspond with the acceptance in the research literature that young children have already established clear understandings of race and difference (Robinson and Jones Diaz, 2009) and that children draw on discourses of "us and them" in relation to people who look different (MacNaughton and Davis, 2001). It also raises the possibility that questions of identity and belonging had already become issues for the two children and that, as suggested by Araujo and Strusser (2003), this had begun to affect their feelings about themselves.

Diverse classrooms present opportunities for global justice education in early childhood in relation to the potential for greater awareness of and interest in the wider world, among all the children in the class. However, given the extent to which children are conscious of difference, and, particularly in the case of children from ethnic minority backgrounds, this study suggests that the potential impact of teaching materials and activities on children's own sense of identity and belonging must be considered as an important factorin planning for global justice education.

4.1.3 Understanding poverty

The Right to Food and Water

Children who took part in the study appeared to be able to identify the needs of people in the stories and vignettes and on some occasions made direct links with poverty. Mama Panya's dilemma of having just enough food for herself and Adika seems to have been understood by at least some of the participating children and is neatly summarised by Marcia below. This will be discussed again later in relation to the effectiveness of strategies used in this research process.

> The friends just have food for them because their mother can't give all the food away.
>
> (Marcia, Setting 1, Discussion 1)

The children drew on their own previous learning and experience to identify why food and water were important. The Circle Time discussion conducted by the class teacher with each whole group on food, in which children identified and discussed the reasons why food is important, further influenced perceptions of unrelated photographs in the later focus group activity with the researcher.

> Researcher: Why do you think they're happy Ailbhe?
>
> Ailbhe: Because they go searching for food
>
> (Ailbhe, Setting 2, Day 2)

The children in each setting identified a range of uses for water, including "to wash your hands to get all the little germs off", "so they can get big and strong", (Alan, Setting 3), "to drink it", (Sean, Setting 3), "having a bath or shower, washing clothes and drinking" (Setting 2). In addition the youngest children in the study were able to use the words 'hunger' and 'thirst' in relation to themselves and others.

> Researcher: Why do you want to go and have pancakes?
>
> Liam: Because I'm hungry.
>
> Researcher: Why are you holding the water?
>
> Liam: Because I'm thirsty
>
> (Setting 3, Discussion 1)

In exploring the food that was on sale in the market place in the story of *Mama Panya*, the younger children, as might be expected suggested a limited range of fruit and vegetables, and generally those with which they were familiar, including strawberries and carrots. Older children in the study made suggestions such as melons, pineapples and oranges.

The previous experiences of children proved to be an important factor in their engagement with ideas of poverty and need. The study suggests that their understanding of food and water as needs and their own familiarity with the concepts of hunger and thirst enabled them to readily engage with and recognise the central worry for Mama Panya i.e. not having enough for everyone to eat. This concurs with the contention of Chafel et al (2007) that children are more actively engaged when they have the opportunity to incorporate their own personal experiences into discussions.

> Researcher: The boy looks sad.
>
> Ciara: Because he has no food
>
> (Ciara, setting 2, Discussion 2)

> Emma: I wouldn't be happy if there was… if I was in there and there was nothing to eat I wouldn't. I would be saying, 'Mammy, I want something to eat'.
>
> (Emma, Setting 1, Discussion 2)

Although a connection between poverty and money was not always apparent in relation to the children's responses, there were several indications in the discussion of the *Mama Panya* Story and in the discussion of certain photographs that children in each setting could see the link between poverty and lack of basic needs.

> Researcher: So why do you think they brought more food?
>
> Child: So that the people could be more rich maybe.
>
> (Setting 1 Discussion 1)

> Teacher: Why do they look sad?
>
> Child: They might not have food in their house… they might not be able to shop…

(Girl, Setting 2, Class Session 4, Researcher Notes Session 4)

The photograph of Kenyan boys playing football (Photograph A, Appendix 3) also prompted a useful discussion on why they were not wearing shoes. A number of children specifically identified this feature as a negative aspect of the photograph. There was a sense from the level of self-identification and discussion, that shoes were recognised as a need by the children in the study.

Because you never go outside with your shoes not on.

(Mary Lou, Setting 1, Discussion 3)

The children in Setting 1 were able to identify reasons why shoes were needed with Orla surmising that "a little bit of stone might go in" (Setting 1, Discussion 4) and another child suggesting that there was a danger that there could be a nail there that they might not see (Setting 1, Discussion 4).

There was a range of reasons offered by the youngest children in the study as to why the boys were not wearing shoes. These included: "Because they don't have any" (Donna, Setting 3), "Africans don't wear shoes" (Alan, Setting 3), "Because maybe, they lost their shoes" (Alan, Setting 3). None of the younger children explicitly identified being poor as a reason why the children in the picture did not have shoes. In contrast, children in the other settings were able to make the possible connection with poverty that the lack of shoes represented.

Researcher: …. Why do you think they're not wearing shoes then?

Ailbhe: Maybe they can't have money and they can't buy them

(Setting 2, Discussion 2)

Researcher: So why do you think the boys are playing football in their bare feet?

Mary Lou: Because they're poor and they don't have shoes.

(Setting 1, Discussion 4)

It was notable that only in the senior infant setting did the children use the language of poverty and wealth. For younger children it appears that there is a conceptual understanding of people not having enough but that use of terms such as "poor" and "rich" develops later. The word "poor" was frequently used in the correct context by children in the senior infant setting, in contrast to the absence of the word in the other two settings. While this observation supports the findings of Ramsey (1990) that children have a limited understanding of the causes of poverty, it also suggests that their understanding is an emerging one. While there are qualitative and developmental differences in children's understanding of poverty within and between settings, even the youngest children in the study showed evidence of an emergent conceptualisation of poverty.

> **Researcher:** And why do you think Mama Panya only had two coins?
>
> **Child:** Because she was poor.
>
> (Setting 1, Discussion 1)

> **Child:** Maybe she can only buy a tiny bit because she only has two coins and she won't be able to make that much.
>
> (Setting 1, Discussion 1)

Poverty was more regularly and consistently understood by all children as the denial of, or lack, of basic needs such as food and water rather than as a lack of money. Although some children in each setting again had an understanding of the importance of money, this was more in evidence among older children. Alan, one of the youngest children in the study, responded in a way that was more typical of the responses of the older children than that of his own peer group.

> **Researcher:** They're going to have to go back to the shop. They might go to the market do you think? Remember Mama Panya, remember the photo I showed you? They went to the market. They might go there, okay. And what will they give to get the food, to get the rice?
>
> **Alan:** Money, but they don't have any money.
>
> (Setting 3, Discussion 2)

Alan's certainty that the people in the story and in the photographs didn't have any money was also echoed in the junior infant setting.

> **Researcher:** In the shops, yeah. That they might have shops to buy them in.
>
> **Child:** But they don't have no money to buy them.
>
> (Setting 2, Discussion 2)

One expectation of the research team and of the teachers was that the children might have some experience of seeing people begging or collecting money on the streets and have some prior understanding of visible poverty in Ireland. However, this proved not to be the case. In the context of looking at a photograph of a child begging (Photograph B, Appendix 3), children offered a range of reasons for what was happening in the photograph. However, across the settings it became apparent that the observation of children begging on the streets of towns and cities was not a conscious experience of the children in this study.

> I mean when you look at the photograph you immediately see, you know, the small child begging for food. They didn't see him at all, he was just sitting down waiting for his mum to get money from the bank, you know. That's all they saw. And I tried asking questions but they didn't, they just took it that he was sitting down waiting for his mum...
>
> (Teacher 2, Setting 2)

As has already been noted, there appears to be a dearth of research in relation to working with children around issues of poverty (Chafel et al, 2007).The evidence from this study suggests that exploring the issue of poverty with children through the lens of basic needs rather than a focus on relative wealth or finance, as suggested by Ramsey (1990), offers an experientially based starting point for children. Doing so may offer rich opportunity for the development of young children's conceptual understanding of poverty and the beginnings of a deeper understanding of issues facing people living in poverty locally and globally.

4.1.4 Emerging attitudes and dispositions

The extent to which content and tasks are meaningful to children is an important determining factor in the potential of children to engage with global justice education (Hong, 2003). The strategies and approaches used in this research process allowed children the time and space to articulate their own concerns and emotional responses to global contexts and issues of social justice. These responses are an indicator of the extent to which the story, photographs, discussion topics and scenarios were meaningful to the children in this study.

Throughout the study and research settings there is ample evidence of the expression of feelings and emotions, concern and empathy for those in need. In general the capacity of the children to empathise was most evident in their ability to describe how characters in the story and people in the photographs might be thinking or feeling. The strategy of "smiley faces" in particular was very effective in eliciting the language of empathy and perspective in children and this will be further discussed in section 4.2.2. The extent to which children recognised emotions depended on the context and the photograph used, but many were able to recognise that Mama Panya was worried, speculate if children and adults in photographs were feeling sad, tired or happy and relate their own experiences to the context of children who featured in the photographs or stories. This is probably best illustrated in Stacey's rationale for placing a smiley face on a photograph of a Kenyan girl-Cecelia – holding a teddy bear.

> Because she loves her teddy bear and she loves snuggling with him. And if she's going to school she could get tired of walking. And if she was the lamb she doesn't have anywhere nice to sit. And if she was here she doesn't have any of her teddies around her. And she does have, here she has a cosy place and she isn't tired and she has her teddies and she likes sitting down with her teddies.

> (Stacey, Setting 3, Discussion 3)

Across the research settings, children were able to connect with the feelings and the context of the characters in the story and in the images. This connection was grounded in the personal experiences of children and based on familiar scenarios and contexts rather than on a larger global sense of justice and fairness.

> **Researcher:** No? Does anybody see any sad picture? Donal, do you see a picture that might make you sad? Anything?

Donal: There's none of pancakes for all the people.

(Setting 2, Discussion 1)

Researcher: They don't. Now would that make you put down a happy face or a sad face that they have no shoes?

Ailbhe: A sad one because then they get all the stones under

(Setting 2 Discussion 2)

This ability to empathise with and recognise the feelings of others, grounded in their own experiences would seem to offer a reasonable starting point for global justice education in the classroom. This was also recognised by one of the participating teachers.

Researcher: What do you think that (strategy of working with "Cecelia puppet and picture) does in terms of the children's empathy? Were they beginning to empathise with Cecelia?

Teacher: I would think so, yes absolutely. Because even the questions they were asking, I mean, you know, they were asking her questions even that had nothing to do with the picture, you know, like about their own lives. They were obviously thinking about what do I do and asking Cecilia like, you know, questions about their own lives, just identifying that way.

(Teacher 1, Setting 2)

Children's empathic engagement with the dilemmas and scenarios with which they were presented elicited altruistic responses from the junior and senior infant groups. Some of those responses related to giving money while others were more practical and focused directly on meeting the perceived needs of others. In their capacity to empathise, to take the perspective of other people and to offer logical solutions to perceived problems, the children in the study exemplified emerging characteristics identified by Calder (2000) and Hong (2003) as indicators of children's engagement with issues of global justice.

Ailbhe: Now I have two piggy banks at home and I would get some money out of two of them if they were real I would give it to them......

Researcher: Right and if you gave them the money, what would you like them to do with it?

Aaron: Buy shoes.

(Setting 2, Discussion 2)

Amy: If it's raining I would give them a raincoat with a hood

(Setting 1, Discussion 4)

4.1.5   Sense of Justice and Fairness

In the last discussion in the senior infant setting one of the children offered a summary of what she felt were some of the messages she received during the research project.

Mary Lou: Because some people don't have houses and they don't have shops to get money. And they don't have much water and they don't have even to carry money and they only have those clothes and they don't have a bed to sleep and they have to sleep on the ground.

(Setting 1, Discussion 4)

If a number of children developed an understanding that some people face hardship and have less than others in the world, either before or during the research process, what was much less apparent across the three settings was any developing sense of justice or fairness, in relation to global contexts. While other research has shown that children can identify unfairness in their own milieu (Ramsey, 2008b, Klien et al, 2001, Theimer et al, 2001), this research study was concerned with more global contexts. In this respect, it would not be possible to find that children portrayed a sense of justice and fairness in relation to the global issues and contexts they encountered during the research study. In the three research settings, it was only with direct and explicit prompting that children responded with language relating to justice and fairness. In most cases, with the youngest children in particular, this prompting was not sufficient to elicit a response which would indicate a sense of justice and fairness and where responses would indicate such, it is difficult to say

whether these are an accurate indicator of children's conceptions or are merely as a result of prompting by the researcher.

> **Researcher:** Do you think it's fair that you can go home and you can turn on the tap and there's water and then other people can go home and they have to go and queue every day?
>
> **Clara:** Yes
>
> **Researcher:** That's fair, is it?
>
> **Clara:** Yes
>
> **Marcia:** No
>
> **Orla:** No
>
> **Researcher:** What's not fair about it Orla?
>
> **Orla:** That's because then they will feel sad

However while conceptions of justice and fairness, may not be particularly evident, as discussed in section 4.1.3 the capacity of children to recognise lack of basic needs, recognise the hardship of others and to recognise feelings of worry and insecurity were all apparent in this research study. This provides an important starting point for global justice education. Furthermore, it suggests that young children are not "egocentric" as Piagetian and modernist views would suggest. These traits and capacities are more consistent with post-modernist views of childhood and suggest that children can, given the necessary support, engage with issues of justice. Teachers in two of the settings had quite divergent opinions regarding the capacities of children in this regard, which may have arisen from the age of the children in their class but could also point to the teachers' own understanding of the capacities of children. In the contribution from the teacher in Setting 3, the critical significance of children's own experience (Hong, 2003) is acknowledged. A post-structural understanding of childhood informs the contribution of the teachers in the junior infant setting, however, who seems confident of the potential of young children to engage with concepts of justice and fairness in the wider world, given the appropriate approaches and sufficient time to actively engage in exploration of the issues.

I think it was very hard for them to understand 'why' – the why of why they had no money and why they had no food. I don't think a lot of them grasped that, I really don't think so because most of them here would have sufficient of everything. And I think they didn't grasp that so well, that part. I don't know how that can be done on a different way.

(Teacher, Setting 3)

In contrast to the crèche teacher however, the junior infant teachers were much more confident that this sense of justice and fairness could be developed further in the children, through deeper and more consistent engagement with the type of resources and strategies used in the research process.

As to the justice issues, I think it would take more work, more in-depth work, possibly in smaller groups – maybe the way you did it you got more out of them. But when in a whole class, like I could see a couple of people getting it and really, you know, starting to understand but a lot of them, I don't know, maybe it's their maturity level or was it just that there was a whole class and it was distracting. But a lot of them, I'm not sure that they fully understood the unfairness.

(Teacher 1, Setting 2)

4.2   Effectiveness Of Strategies

In identifying strategies which promote children's engagement with issues of social justice, two issues need to be borne in mind. Firstly, arising out of the literature review conducted for this research study, a number of criteria have emerged in evaluating strategies aimed at promoting children's engagement with issues of global justice in early childhood education settings. The literature suggests that resources and approaches used:

- Should allow space for children's own concerns, personal experiences and solutions (Hong, 2003 and Chafel et al, 2007)

- Build on children's own experiences and background knowledge (Hong, 2003)

- Address conceptions and misconceptions about global justice issues including issues relating to poverty and human rights, prejudice and discrimination (Fountain, 1990)

- Encourage children to think critically (Connolly and Hosken, 2006)

- Where relevant, explicitly and concretely deal with young children's racial attitudes (Connolly and Hosken, 2006)

- Ensure that stereotypes are not reinforced (Ramsey, 2008b)

Secondly, the context in which the strategies were designed and implemented was a research context and, in relation to the timing and pacing of lessons and inputs, the level of content and methodological approaches, this might differ significantly from the normal teaching context. However, this was acknowledged by the participating teachers and the potential impact of the research context was considered by the teachers when assessing the merits of the various strategies.

> I thought the content was very good. Some of it was a bit too long. The way I taught it for the purposes of the research isn't the way I would teach it in the normal course of events. I would have split them up into much shorter sessions. Like the story I would have split in two; the photographs I would have broken it up into…, done it over a fortnight instead of doing it as a lesson. But content-wise, what was there was very good. Just in terms of how I taught it, I would do it differently if I wasn't following the plan.

> (Teacher 1, Setting 2)

As outlined in section 3.5, the two main purposes of the research determined the use of a mix of strategies. Strategies were needed which would be effective in achieving the first research goal of exploring children's level of engagement and equally be effective in addressing the second goal of identifying teaching strategies which could be effectively used by classroom teachers in early childhood settings. In general, it was felt by the teachers involved that the whole class strategies chosen were successful in engaging children and would be effective if used in the normal teaching context.

> I think the methods used were all effective. I mean story-telling is an obvious one for infants; the photographs – fantastic; Circle Time worked very well; teacher in role – it was just phenomenal how much they went for it. All the methods are good, they all work. It's just a matter of cutting down and focusing the content I think, not necessarily cutting it down, but spreading it out over, you know, five 20-minute sessions instead of one 40-minute. Because, I mean, even if it's the best resource in the world, the best teacher, the best methodology, they're not going to listen for 40 minutes. They're just not capable of it. So I think the methods suggested are all

very, very effective, but it's a matter of focusing and cutting the content, editing it and spreading it out over a longer period of time maybe.

(Teacher 1, Setting 2)

4.2.1 Story

There was consensus among the teachers interviewed that the story - *Mama Panya's Pancakes* - used in this research project was very suitable for young children. Although there was concern that the story may have been too long, the teachers were quick to suggest approaches and strategies that they would use to enable children to engage with the content and message of the story. These included "splitting the story in two" ,"including a bit more background at the beginning" (Teacher 1, Setting 2), "stopping on one page and talking a lot about one page, reading two or three pages a day instead of a story" (Teacher, Setting 3)

> Well stories always work very well. It's a very long story as an infant story, length-wise it's probably more suitable for first, second class who can concentrate - if you want to do it all in one story-telling session. But content-wise, the fact that it was a child and the pictures are fantastic, the amount of work you could do without ever telling the story, just looking at a picture is phenomenal in that book.
>
> (Teacher 1, Setting 2)

Regarding the main concepts of the story, it was clear that most children had an understanding of the main events of the story and understood the key dilemmas encountered in the story. This comprehension became more apparent to researchers and teachers after two or three readings and engagement in a number of strategies and teaching approaches. These will be explored in greater detail below.

> They did respond to it, they definitely responded to it and they did understand the concept of only having two coins which would buy enough food to make enough pancakes for Mama Panya and Adika. They did understand that, and they understood that that was not enough money to buy enough food for all the people that Adika invited. But they definitely did get a grasp of that, that a small amount of money will buy a small amount of food. They can understand that.
>
> (Teacher, Setting 3)

The ambiguous ways in which Adika's actions in the story could be interpreted is another attractive aspect of this specific story and provoked discussion and different

opinion among the children in both whole class discussion and in the research activities.   Despite the happy conclusion to the story, some children still interpreted Adika's actions as selfish. This possible interpretation of the story was succinctly summarised by Orna (Setting 1): "Well like if he didn't invite all the people they'd have enough" . As explored in section 4.1.4, some children were not only able to identify Mama Panya's frustration and anxiety but were also able to see Adika's actions as the immediate cause of this frustration.

> **Researcher:** You think she might… it doesn't have to be a happy one, if you think it should be a sad one. Why do you think it should be a happy face?
>
> **Child:** Because she don't know that he's going to invite all the people.
>
> (Discussion 1, Setting 1)

Using stories that deal with familiar objects or routines helps children see links between their own lives and the lives of others in different places (Bates and Pickering, 2010). As a result, the children are better placed to investigate things that are different from their own experiences. Despite the location of the story, it was apparent that among the most appealing aspects of the story for children were the elements of the familiar to which they could relate their own experiences and contexts. The central plot device of mother and child going to buy food together and of the people they meet on the way was seen by one teacher as an important experience to which children could relate.

> But I think the part of the story that they really enjoyed was Mama Panya and her son Adika. I think they liked that idea: it was the mother and the child going off to do something together. I think that was something they really liked.
>
> (Teacher, Setting 3)

One significant difference between life in Africa and life in Ireland that adults might identify, and which was clearly illustrated in the story, - eating outdoors - was not commented on by any of the children during the research study. It became apparent in one setting that the children drew on their own experience of barbeques and in fact found this an appealing and attractive part of the story. "They brought more food and they had a lovely little barbeque or tea party" (Child, Discussion 1, Setting 2).

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Another aspect of the story that seemed to appeal strongly to children was the idea of community and the fun aspect of people coming together to eat and have a good time. The story of Mama Panya featured enough content which was appealing to the children and was relevant to their own experiences, much of it positive, which added strong value to its use in this research study.

4.2.2 Photographs and Visual Images

The use of visual images in the form of photographs and illustrations from the *Mama Panya* story was a critical teaching and research methodology in this research study. Of importance here was not only the type, quality and content of photograph and visual material used but also the approaches used to help children find and express meaning in the images they experienced. In general, visual images were found to offer great potential as a starting point for engaging children in learning about global justice issues.

Teacher 1 in Setting 2 made an apt observation about the Mama Panya story when commenting that "the amount of work you could do without ever telling the story, just looking at a picture is phenomenal in that book". Strong visual images offer children a way into exploring and engaging with story but also offer the teacher and researcher an opportunity to listen to and ascertain children's level of engagement and understanding in ways that more direct comprehension questions may not. From the responses of children to review questions of the Mama Panya story, in the excerpt below, one might assume that the children had not properly engaged with the story or had not properly identified the feelings of the central character or the dilemmas they faced.

> **Researcher:** We'll see what it is now in a second, okay. He was clever? So do you think Mama Panya was happy with Adika during the story?
>
> **Children:** Yeah.
>
> **Researcher:** All during the story she was very happy?
>
> **Children:** Yeah.
>
> **Researcher:** Do you think so?

Children: Yeah.

(Setting 1 Discussion 3)

However, later in the same conversation, it became very clear that the children had engaged more fully with the story and were able to identify the key themes and messages. This had occurred without further reading of the story or prompting from the researcher.

Researcher: Why did you think that was a sad picture?

Marcia: Because her face is sad.

Researcher: Her face is sad. And why do you think Mama Panya is sad in that picture, can you remember?

Marcia: Because the boy wants some pancakes.

Researcher: Okay. And why would that make her sad do you think?

Marcia: Because she can't make many pancakes, just one.

Researcher: Why did she only make one pancake Sarah Louise?

Mary Lou: Because she doesn't have much money.

(Discussion 3, Setting 1)

This conversation became possible through using the smiley/sad faces approach and enabling the children to identify for themselves illustrations or aspects of illustrations that they found positive or negative. Asking them to articulate reasons for their choices and involving other children in the subsequent discussion, opened up a rich dialogue which previously had not been possible through using more direct questioning strategies. In addition, the researcher was able to ascertain the extent of children's understanding of concepts such as not having enough to eat or share because of lack of money. Across the research settings the use of smiley faces proved effective in eliciting children's attitudes and opinions on a range of photographs and visual images from the story.

One advantage of using the "smiley faces" approach is that in trying to ascertain children's understanding one does not have to factor in the impact of the teacher's or researcher's input in terms of language or other visual or contextual clues to the same degree as in using other approaches.

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4.2.3 Effectiveness of photographs

The photographs chosen for use in this research were selected specifically to prompt discussion on the themes identified in the activity plan: to enable children to identify similarities and differences between their lives and the lives of children in other places; to appeal to children's sense of the familiar; to offer positive images of the developing world and to allow children to explore local and global dimensions of justice issues. In general, the collection of photographs proved to be very effective in achieving these objectives and offered the potential to be used in further research and teaching contexts. As many of the photographs had previously been piloted and published in Trócaire educational materials this may have been expected but it is still important to acknowledge the suitability and effectiveness of many of the photographs used. This was also recognised by the teachers, particularly in relation to the collection of Cecelia images from the *Watoto* pack.

> And the picture resources are fantastic because she's the same age as them and while obviously there are differences, there's huge similarities there as well that they were able to recognise and, you know, move on from and develop.

> (Teacher 1, Setting 2)

A number of the other photographs were also effective in promoting discussion. Selecting and choosing photographs, that are open to different interpretations, offers rich avenues for discussion and eliciting perspectives and opinions of young children. This has already been illustrated and discussed in relation to Photograph A in 4.1.3. However the experience of using other photographs, particularly that of the child begging on the street, discussed in section 4.1.3, illustrates that in choosing resources for children, care must be taken in relation to making assumptions about children's experiences. The changing nature of Irish society in terms of its wealth possibly meant that in this instance a once common sight on city streets might fortunately now be not as familiar a scene as it was in recent memory for adults.

> Well I don't think they learned anything from the photos about begging or anything like that, I really don't feel that they learned a whole lot. I don't think they fully understood that. Definitely not.

(Teacher, Setting 3)

This need to be conscious of the changing nature of society was also apparent in children's discussion of the image of water queues (Photograph E). While many children were able to identify what was happening in the photograph and show empathy for the situation depicted as evidenced below, some children wondered why the people did not go to the shop to get drinking water, suggesting perhaps their own dependence on bottled water (Researcher's Observation Notes, Session 2).

> **Researcher:** So Ailbhe, why do you think they all look sad in this picture?
>
> **Ailbhe:** Because the water is taking too long.
>
> **Researcher:** Yeah, they have to wait too long. Do you think that's fair that some people have to wait that long for water every day?
>
> **Children:** No
>
> **Researcher:** Why not Adam?
>
> **Adam:** Because then they get tired of waiting. They do, they get tired of waiting.

The image of the child begging, however, raises another important issue in relation to choice of illustrations and photographs. The research team had deliberately chosen a small number of images of poverty or 'need' that were located in developed countries. This was prompted by concerns about reinforcing stereotypes and simplistic associations. The response of some children to the cover of the Mama Panya book (c,f 4.1.1) supports this approach. While the images chosen may not have provided the best examples, particularly in relation to children's experiences, the underlying principle remains a valid one.

As well as "smiley faces" and general discussions of similarities and differences a range of other approaches were used to help children engage in discussion and critical thinking around the issues in the photographs. Enabling children to look at a range of photographs and helping them to choose a photograph according to variable criteria proved to be very effective and generally provoked lively and positive responses both in teacher-led classroom activities and in the small group discussions which ensued. An important factor in eliciting responses from children is the language used by the teacher/researcher in questioning children. When

exploring the images of the Kenyan child, Cecelia from *Watoto, Children from Around the World* for example, directing children to identify pictures which were most like or unlike life in Ireland prompted a limited response (Setting 2, Discussion 3). Asking children however, what was most like their own day prompted a range of answers. This open-ended approach to using photographs seems to encourage children to draw on their own experiences and perspectives and to think critically, as illustrated by the children's responses in section 4.1.3. The silhouette activity in which children were asked to imagine themselves in the image was also thought to be effective in this regard.

> Well I thought the silhouette was a fantastic thing and I've not seen that used before and I will definitely use that myself because the children really did think completely differently once they were that person in the area that they put themselves. And they answered differently as well. They really were thinking and they were smelling and all that. So I think that was a really, really effective thing and I haven't seen that before and I really thought that was very good.
>
> (Teacher, Setting 3)

In summary, it was found that during the research process, there were a number of factors which determined the ultimate effectiveness of photographs and visual images and associated approaches as a teaching and learning strategy. These include: the degree to which images can be interpreted, the degree to which they reflect children's experience or not, the intention of the teacher in using the image, the context in which the images are used, the language used by the teacher and the approaches used to help children engage with the content of the image.

4.2.4   Classroom Activities

The main focus of this discussion on strategies and approaches is on those that were used during the small group discussions facilitated by the researcher. The teachers used approaches with the whole class which were not used in the small group and responded well to these when interviewed later. The teachers in general found the Circle Time discussion to be a productive methodology and were surprised

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at the ability of young children to engage in discussion, offering their own perspectives and alternative insights.

> Just the way they spoke and their willingness to speak, particularly in the Circle Time, their willingness to speak and the comments they made. Like some of them were, for 4-year olds, you know fairly insightful, so far as a 4-year old can be you know.
>
> (Teacher 1, Setting 2)

The Cecelia doll was found to be very effective in engaging children in a discussion on the similarities (as opposed to the differences) between their lives and Cecelia's life. The doll was seen by one group of teachers to be particularly valuable in enabling the children to empathise with Cecelia.

> For my class anyway, the thing that worked absolutely by far and away the best was Cecilia and the pictures first of all, but even more so the puppet. They absolutely loved it. I've actually been asked a couple of times when is she coming back. And when I was reading the lessons, reading 'teacher in role doing the puppet' I have to admit I was a small bit sceptical about it,
>
> (Teacher 1, Setting 2)
>
> They absolutely fell for it, they absolutely loved this, meeting her. And again the amount of, like you could get weeks out of that, literally weeks worth of lessons. She was by far and away the best.
>
> (Teacher 2, Setting 2)

Connolly and Hosken (2006) argue that those developing resources for young children must ensure that they include activities that compel children to think critically. The evidence from our research is that both in terms of content and teaching approaches, children were enabled to engage in critical thinking and problem solving through the use *Mama Panya*, photographs and supporting strategies and methodologies.

Chapter 5   Conclusion

5.1   Overview

The key focus of this research was to explore the issues which relate to delivering global justice education to young children. Dimensions of this included current thinking of the nature of childhood and children's learning, the content and approaches which are appropriate in early childhood education settings, current policy and practice in Ireland and the perspective of teachers and practitioners in the field. Given the context of a new framework for early childhood education, *Aistear*, and Trócaire's commitment to this sector in recent years the project team intended that the research would inform the future development of educational resources and supports by Trócaire. This development would be underpinned by an enriched understanding of how young children in Irish contexts engage with global justice issues in educational settings.   The third purpose of the project was to provide a frame of reference on which to design programmes in initial and continuing teacher education.

The research sought to examine the following research questions:

- How do young children in early childhood education settings engage with issues of global justice?

- What approaches and strategies best support that engagement?

Chapter One introduced this research study, provided a rationale for the selection of the topic and an outline for the structure of the report.

Chapter Two provided an overview of current literature associated with perspectives on early childhood and children's learning. It identified two broad conceptions and asserted that there is body of research supporting post-structural theories of children which states that children are capable of engaging with issues related to global justice if properly supported. However, it also found that research in the specific area

of global justice and early childhood is still limited, particularly in the Irish context and that traditional conceptions of children as naive, innocent and in need of protection still prevail in some instances. Importantly also, a number of dimensions of education for global justice were identified in the literature review – these include global awareness, respect for diversity, critical thinking, and dispositions relating to justice, fairness and action.

Chapter Three outlined the research methodology used . It provided the rationale underpinning the choice of method. The procedures of data collection were detailed, as were particulars of data analysis. This chapter also addressed such issues as bias, ethical considerations, validity and limitations.

Chapter Four presented the data and analysed and discussed the findings. This was done on a thematic basis, presenting and discussing the themes as they emerged under each research question. It found that children to varying degrees could engage with concepts connected to global justice, including awareness of the wider world, diversity and identity, and poverty. The beginnings of dispositions that would be important to foster in relation to global justice were also in evidence. There was however, a wide degree of variance in this finding among the study group. The report found that the research project was successful in identifying a number of strategies and approaches which could be used to good effect in early childhood settings.

Chapter Five concludes the research by reviewing the research findings. It seeks to address the research questions set out in this research study. Recommendations arising from this research process are presented. The significant implications for further study in the research areas are also outlined.

5.2   Conclusions

The first question addressed the issue of children's engagement with issues of global justice in an early years context. Children in this study were found to be able to demonstrate logical thought and the ability to think critically and this was in evidence

in relation to the consideration of a range of content, in all three research settings. They can draw on their previous experience to understand issues and identify similarities and differences between their own experiences and that of others.

It was found that some children were already aware of the wider world. In most cases, the wider world was understood in the context of being outside of Ireland or being different to Ireland. There was significant evidence that children had already begun to form stereotypical ideas of Africa in relation to poverty, either from the media, the home setting or school. Some children demonstrated a tendency to form absolute ideas. Some of these absolute ideas related to poverty, black people and Africa and seemed to remain so despite the immediate experience of positive images – however, it is acknowledged that this was in the context of a short time period. The children who participated in this study regularly demonstrated the capacity to empathise with others through recognising and reflecting on the feelings of others. Their own experience of different emotions was an important factor in identifying the emotions of others in different contexts and situations.

In relation to poverty, the most common understanding among children in this study was poverty as the lack of basic needs such as food and water. Children in this study recognised food and water as needs for themselves and others and were able to discuss and identify problems posed by insufficient food and water.

However, children's awareness of specific places became more nuanced as they were exposed to teaching content, family content or diversity or people in their own local environment. Diversity in the classroom can contribute to this awareness of the wider world, as children's consciousness of other places is heightened, and connections are made for them in school and at home. Children of African or Asian heritage may bring different perspectives to those who are from the majority ethnic group and may receive and understand material differently.

In summary, a number of important factors were identified which could influence children's understanding of issues of global justice. These included children's own experiences and the degree to which they can identify these in the experiences of people around the world, previous formal learning, the influence of the media, particularly coverage of disaster and famine and advertising campaigns by

development organisations, family environment and parental influences and finally their own ethnic or family identity.

The second question sought to identify strategies which support children's engagement with issues of global justice. The research project was successful in identifying content in terms of images and story which would appeal to children's sense of the familiar, introduce them to new worlds and contexts and offer ideas and scenarios which had an element of complexity and challenge. The approaches used to help children explore this content were designed to allow them to articulate their own perspectives and ideas and respond to the ideas and perspectives of other children. They enabled children to see issues and scenarios as complex, identify problems and offer situations. The synergy between the content with which children were engaging and the approach used to engage children in critical thinking of the content was an important consideration. A number of strategies and approaches were identified as offering considerable potential for teachers who wish to explore issues of global justice with young children. These include the use of appropriate picture stories set in developing world contexts, a balanced range of photographs, methodologies such as teacher in role, ranking, "smiley faces" and Circle Time discussion

5.3   Summary

While there are a number of significant positive findings from this study, which are consistent with the research findings of similar studies, it was would not be possible to find that children portrayed a sense of justice and fairness in relation to the global issues and contexts they encountered during the research study. The research findings are consistent with post-structural theories of childhood which hold that children are capable of independent thinking, agency, and are aware of what is going on in the wider world. Such theories would support the premise that children can engage with the social justice themes encountered during this research study. This was the strong conviction of the teachers in the study who felt that children could engage with the concepts given sufficient time to experience, discuss and reflect on the ideas involved. Through this research study, a number of significant starting

points have been identified which can form the basis of a programme to develop and support children's thinking in relation to global justice. These include:

- Children can identify basic needs and can discuss and explore consequences if basic needs are not met.

- Young children demonstrated altruistic tendencies and are familiar with charity campaigns. This altruism can provide an opportunity to explore the variety of ways this could be done and why one way might be more appropriate than others.

- A number of approaches have been identified in this study which enable children to articulate and express their own ideas and perspectives and discuss these with their peers independently of direct teaching. With appropriate facilitation and support, young children can articulate their own concerns and emotional responses to social justice issues.

- Photographs and stories have been identified which appeal to children's sense of the familiar while introducing them to other peoples and perspectives.

- Children are capable of seeing another's perspective and recognise feelings of sadness, anxiety and concern in other people. This ability provides the opportunity to explore issues from the perspective of those affected and also the chance to identify possible solutions.

- The power of negative imagery and the association of all African people with poverty needs to be addressed through a deeper and sustained exposure to balanced and varied depiction of the wider world and its people.

It is envisaged that the findings of the research will provide a basis for the development of a programme on global justice education for early years by the partners, Trócaire and St Patrick's, Drumcondra, which engaged in the research. It is also hoped that the findings will be of interest to educators generally and in

particular to those engaged in curriculum development and delivery for early years.

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XXV	Appendix 6	Informed Consent Forms