Exploring Restorative Practice – Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Restorative Practice is emerging as a solution to concerns about classroom management and indiscipline in recent times. Restorative Practice focuses on the need to restore relationships where there has been harm or conflict. This exploratory study attempts to explore post primary school teachers' perspectives on the use of Restorative Practice. It is hoped that this research will provide important information for educators and those who work with young people in planning, implementing and reviewing, the place of Restorative Practice in the post primary schools. Possible benefits of this research include enhancement of practices and knowledge in terms of teaching and learning and creating a positive school culture.

The literature review primarily focused on the development of Restorative Practice from the Restorative Justice movement in the Criminal Justice System. The literature review explores what both Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices are. It identifies the different methods of implementing both practices and illustrates the many uses of Restorative Practice in the school setting.

Four semi structured interviews were conducted with teachers who implement Restorative Practice on a regular basis. The interviews were analysed using Thematic Analysis and key themes where identified. The research found that, overall, participants were of the opinion that Restorative Practice has many benefits for the post primary school. Additionally, strong links between Restorative Practice and a decline in bullying figures was identified. Recommendations include the need for increased training in Restorative Practice for young people and teachers and the allocation of time to train staff in the practice.

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1.0 Introduction and Rationale

1.1 Introduction

Teaching, learning and a positive school experience for everyone is only possible when everyone co-operates in a climate and culture of respect. In the post primary setting, one of the biggest challenges to this positive experience for both students and teachers is classroom management. Restorative Practice (RP) in recent years has been seen as a way to 'solve' the issues surrounding classroom management and create an ethos of respect and care in a school. RP has existed in many cultures for generations: The New Zealand indigenous people, the Maori, have always recognised the importance of building and maintaining relationships, and it is hardly a coincidence that one of the world's leading writers in this area is Wendy Drewery, based at the University of Wailkato, in Hamilton, New Zealand. RP has emerged from the Restorative Justice (RJ) movement in the criminal justice system. Rising interest in RP has been fuelled by an increase in the number of people being imprisoned, and the belief that the victim is often forgotten (Zehr, 2002). Over time, RP has filtered into school systems, often as a response to increased behavioural problems and rising numbers of suspensions/expulsions. In relation to RP, there are three people/groups involved in conflict; the person who caused the hurt, the person who was hurt, and the community affected by the action (Mc Cold and Wachtel, 2003). McCold and Wachetel (2003) comment on how the community can encompass the family and the wider local community. Research suggests that restorative schools address issues rather than punishing students, and strive to create communities of care (Hopkins, 2004). RP attempts to address the needs of all three groups by repairing the damage caused, with the offender recognising that they have to take responsibility for their actions and, most importantly, make amends. I believe that our society has failed to equip some of our young people to deal with the stresses of everyday life, and I am sure that RP offers a framework for conflict resolution that only brings positive results.

RP in schools focuses on repairing the damage done to relationships and people rather than punishing pupils (McCold and Watchtel, 2003). The teacher tries to build relationships and use certain strategies to manage conflict in situations. RP has its challenges, for example, lack of willingness on the part of the student to engage with the process or lack of consistency across the school in carrying out the practice (Mc Cluskey *et al.,* 2008). Often, as a result of RP, it emerges that the root cause of students' challenging behaviour lies outside the classroom, for example, stemming from students' home and/or wider community environment (Zehr, 1990).

The skills gained through the RP process should help students deal with relationships in the future, be it relationships with family and friends and/or professional relationships.

The primary research site for my study is St Mary's School (not real name). It is a co-educational secondary school in County Donegal, in the North West of Ireland, with an enrolment of 1069 pupils (Sept 2017). The school strives to build positive relationships with both staff and students. The primary researcher is a religion and history teacher in the school. The research participants are also teachers in the school, and implement RP skills and practices where possible. There are a number of teachers who have received training in restorative practice.

1.2 Rationale

There is little research in Ireland on the use of and the effectiveness of RP at post-primary level. In the post primary educational sector, the studies that do exist tend to focus on how to implement RP on a whole school level, but they do not highlight the shortcomings. There have been studies and pilot projects on the use of RP in the primary and post primary setting in England and Scotland (McCluskey *et al.* 2008(a); Hopkins (2004); Mc Cluskey *et al.* (2008)(b)) but limited studies have taken place in Ireland. The above studies advise teachers how to implement RP but offer little advice on the shortcomings of the practice or what to do when met with the various challenges RP presents. There is a clear need for the development of RP in Ireland with the Department of Education and Skills, having released little or no suggestions on its place in the educational setting.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the current attitudes of teachers in second level schools towards Restorative Practice. The researcher will examine the attitudes of teachers towards RP.

The research objectives are:

1. to establish teachers' perspectives on the meaning of Restorative Practice and on whether, and how it can be implmented on a whole school level.

2. to ascertain whether Restorative Practice works in all cases and to identify the principal difficulties faced by those who implement it.

3. identify the benefits Restroative Practice would has for the wider school community.

2.0 Literature Review and Critique

2.1 An Introduction to Restorative Justice

To fully understand RP one must first understand its origin and the philosophy in which RP is grounded in. RP has its roots in the RJ movement that emerged in the criminal justice system in the 1970's (Newburn, 2017). RJ can be described as both a 'philosophy and a model' (Whyte, 2009, p. 19). In this context, the philosophy refers to restoring the health of the community, repairing the harm done, meeting victims' needs and emphasising that the offender must contribute to this reparation process (Hanser, 2013). The model of RJ, on the other hand, refers to the three key actors; victim, offender, and community. The modern concept of RJ is completed in a collaborative manner that includes practices such as conferences and circles (Wachtel, 2013).

There are many definitions of RJ as both a philosophy and a model. The most common definition, cited in many journals is the definition developed by Tony Marshall (1999). Marshall refers to RJ as 'a process whereby the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future' (Marshall, 1999, p.18). The key word in this definition is 'resolve collectively'. All the parties will meet in order to attempt to address why the offence occurred and discuss how to move on. Marshall's definition is a collective approach to dealing with an offence. It is collective as it includes all stakeholders: the victim, the offender and the wider community.

The United Nations 'Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes' (2006) is widely used in the criminal justice system and has been used as a template in the development of RJ programmes worldwide. The Handbook states that RJ is 'based on the idea that criminal behaviour not only violates law but also injures victims and the wider community (Dandurand and Griffiths, 2006 p. 8.). This is similar to Marshall's understanding of RJ in that it recognises that criminal behaviour has an impact beyond the violation of criminal statutes. It ultimately impacts on the victims and the wider community. The United Nations believes that 'parties in a conflict ought to be actively involved, resolving the conflict and mitigating its negative consequences' (Dandurand and Griffiths, 2006, p. 6).

John Braithwaite is an Australian criminologist who has been working in the field of peace building, crime prevention and RJ for the past twenty years. Braithwaite's theory of reintegration and shame management developed out of his interest in the topic of RJ. He states that RJ should heal those hurt by crime and restore the relationships (Braithwaite, 2016). Braithwaite, similar to Marshall, also takes a stakeholders approach, stating that, the wider circle of benefit is also evident in the way RJ can restore communities. Braithwaite's definition seeks to heal and repair the damage caused to the victim.

Howard Zehr is another leading writer in the field. Zehr's contribution to the understanding of RJ is that it is based on the idea that the criminal justice system, and in particular the youth justice system should be viewed through and alternative lens. (Zehr, 2002, p. 13).This means that, instead of punishing the offender, the offender is afforded the opportunity to repair the damage caused themselves and speak directly to the victim. Wright draws on Zehr's analysis of RJ and concludes that RJ 'puts restoring the harm done to people and relationships over assigning blame and punishment onto those involved' (Wright, 1999). The key concept, then, is the restoration of harm. From the above definitions, it is clear an objective of RJ is to repair and restore the relationships that have been damaged.

Dignan (2005) argues that Marshall's definition is too restrictive. Specifically, Dignan (2005), argues that the definition provided by Marshall 'restricts the scope of restorative justice to criminal justice and, consequently, overlooks less formal procedures and contexts'. It can be argued then that RJ is not purposeful in crime prevention or in community projects. This restricts the scope of the process and ultimately undermines it core principles. Dignan also states that Marshall's definition is quite vague in that it fails to clearly identify pertinent stakeholders (Newburn, 2017). As Marshall (1999) fails to identify the stakeholders, we are left to ponder who has a role in the process and who benefits from it. Marshall's definition also forgets to mention that RJ is not appropriate in all circumstances (Newburn, 2017).

2.2: Principles/Values of Restorative Justice/Practice

From the definitions provided by Marshall (1999), Dandurand and Griffiths (2006), Braithwaite (2016) and Zehr (2002), it is possible to identify three main themes attaching to RJ: (1) the accountability of the offender; (2) the inclusion and voluntary participation of all

the stakeholders; and, (3) the reaching of an outcome that is fair for all involved in the process. These common themes have a number of core principles/values attached to them.

Accountability

When we speak of accountability, we are referring to the offender acknowledging the crime they have committed. Offender reintegration is a key component of accountability. According to Wachtel (2013), accountability is about formal and informal responses to crime and wrongdoing, formal in the sense that the offender must take responsibility for their actions, and informal in that they apologise to the victim. It is essential that the offenders acknowledge the crime they have committed and try to correct and repair the harm they have done. If they refuse to do this, RJ becomes void. In the area of juvenile crime, RJ offers the offender an opportunity to make amends and enables them to be welcomed back into society. There is general consensus that, when an offence occurs, there rises an obligation to repair the harm inflicted upon the victim. Victims and communities should have their losses restored by the actions of the offenders making reparation, and victims should be empowered as active participants in the juvenile justice system. The aim of the RJ process is allowing the offender to acknowledge what they have done and thus is able to be reintegrated into the community in which he caused the harm (O'Mahony, 2002). Newburn and Crawford (2003), similarly state that an offender, through taking account of their actions becomes more powerfully aware 'of the disapproval of their actions by significant others in their lives'. This is important as offenders realise the harm they have caused and thus try to use the process as a means of repairing the harm done.

Newburn (2017), a leading academic in the area of criminology, has focused on John Braithwaite's theory of reintegrative shaming. In the past, part of the retributive system of punishment was public shaming. This shaming caused a stigma to develop. Shaming has been very much associated with the old 'punitive' style of criminal justice (Newburn, 2017). John Braithwaite (1989), in his publication 'Crime, Shame and Reintegration', states that punishment is only purposeful 'when it is delivered in circumstances where authorities are perceived to be legitimate, respected and where offenders have some form of stake in society and are concerned about how they are viewed by others'. From this, the idea of reintegrative shaming has emerged. All writers in the area of RJ identify this as a major benefit of the restorative system of justice. 'Reintegrative shaming' can be defined as: 'disapproval conveyed through shaming' and 'accompanied by forgiveness' (Newburn, 2017). Thus, this form of shaming increases the likelihood that the offender will respond positively, and generates

feelings of guilt and embarrassment which will deter future offending (Newburn, 2017). However, there are writers who disagree with Braithwaite's theory. Marshall (1996) for example, argues that reintegrative shaming does not take into account the victims' interests (Marshall, 1996). It is clear that the offender needs to take account of their actions to be reintegrated back into the community.

Voluntary Participation

The second key principle consists of two components which are very much intertwined and, as a result, are considered as one; inclusivity and voluntary participation. Inclusion refers to the involvement of all the stakeholders in the process. By including all those involved, the primary stakeholders can 'best determine how to repair the harm done by an offense' (Wachtel, 2013). The primary stakeholders are: the victim, the offender and their families. 'Choice and control' are important elements in the process (Whyte, 2009). This choice and control is part of voluntary participation; the choice to participate in the process. The stakeholders have the control to come to an agreeable resolution to the conflict. A key part of the process is handing control over to the stakeholders and encouraging them to take control and responsibility for their feelings and actions (Whyte, 2009). It has been argued that the involvement of the person who inflicts the harm and the victim is 'essential', and both need to be aware of the balanced system of restorative justice (Bazemore and Umbreit, 1995). The balanced approach to RJ is an important component of participation (Bazemore and Umbreit, 1995). The victim needs to feel safe and the offender must not feel stigmatised by the process (O' Mahony *et al.,* 2002). This is what makes RJ unique compared to the conventional justice system. The victim gets the opportunity to explain what happened but also explore their feelings and working with all stakeholders, they can come to a solution that is accepted by everyone. By engaging in this way, the process is balancing the rights and responsibilities of all the stakeholders. By building relationships within the community, it is proactive (Wachtel, 2013). What is most interesting to note is that most writers focus on the value of including all stakeholders and they clearly outline how important these are to the entire process. In relation to voluntary participation, if the victim does not wish to take part in the process, this must be respected. The victim should be afforded the opportunity to withdraw from the process at any time (O'Mahony et.al, 2002). The offender has the right to withdraw from the RJ process if they wish (O' Mahony, 2002). However, if there is persistent refusal on the part of the offender, then it is clear that the process will not work and alternative systems must be put in place (O' Mahony, 2002).

Reaching an Acceptable Resolution

The final principle of RJ is reaching an outcome that is viable for all stakeholders. Some of these outcomes can include community service and the developing of empathy. RJ can be seen as a success, when the outcome of the process is the offender understanding the harm they have caused to the victim. RJ is a positive and proactive approach that sees crime as a 'violation' to the community and those involved. One of the aims of RJ, in the context of the juvenile justice system, is for young offenders to develop empathy and understanding of the harm they have caused (O' Mahony, 2002). It is a holistic approach that gives those harmed, a chance to have their voice heard, as well as listen to the voices of others.

2.3: Expanding the Paradigm: Restorative Practice in the School Setting

The principles of RJ have now expanded beyond the criminal justice system into the educational system, in the form of RP. Belinda Hopkins is a leading writer in the area of RP in the educational setting. Hopkins uses the definition developed by Wright (1999) and describes RP as an approach to deal with challenging behaviour in the educational setting. Hopkins describes how RP must involve the whole school community; she speaks of this being a 'child centred approach' (Hopkins, 2004). Hopkins is also influenced by the work of Howard Zehr (2002). Drawing on his work she comments how in certain circumstances, retributive punishment is the incorrect process and other methods should be sought. Zehr (2002) identifies the main difference between RJ and RP. RJ is usually introduced after the problem has occurred and is intended to prevent a reoccurrence (Zehr, 2002). In contrast RP expands on the effort of primary prevention and is introduced before the problem has occurred (Zehr, 2002).

Primary prevention is a feature of both RJ and RP, whereby prevention can be introduced before the problem has occurred. Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) describe RJ in the school setting as: "Restorative Justice in the school setting views misconduct not as school-rule breaking, and therefore as a violation of the institution, but as a violation against people and relationships in the school and wider community". (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001, p. 183). This definition draws on the previous work of Braithwaite (1989) and Zehr (2002). It places the main focus on the harm that was inflicted on the victim. It is interesting to note, that all stakeholders are included in this definition also that is, the victim, the offender and their relationships with the wider community.   In the educational setting, there are many

stakeholders in the process, for example, teachers, pupils and parents (Mc Cluskey *et al.,* 2008). It is evident that RP is holistic approach to education, which is inclusive of the whole school community. There has been a clear shift from retributive punishments in schools to RP (see Appendix 1).

The Restorative Practices Development Team at the University of Waikato agree with the shift from retributive punishments to RP and they provide a clear understanding of what restorative practices focus on "Every person, no matter who they are or what they have done, has a right to be treated as a person who has personal dignity, and who deserves to be cared for' (Drewery and Windslade ,2003, p.4). RP must involve all students and the entire school community. When implemented in a successful manner, RP can achieve 'a positive school culture and environment (Kiddle and Alfred, 2014). Reconciliation and restoration are central components of RP (Kiddle and Alfred, 2014). In many descriptions and definitions the authors refer to 'restoration through cultivation of connection, communication, affect, understanding, collaboration and reconstruction of relationships' (Carter, 2013). RP places emphasis on 'behaviour intervention over harm' (Carter, 2013). In the school setting, it can be viewed as both formal and informal education and the main theme in both is 'intervention' and 'restoration' (Carter, 2013).

Macready (2009) states that RP attempts to promote a context that addresses the following questions (1) How may we respond to actions that are hurtful or harmful for individuals and for relationships?' and (2) How may we create a school climate where there is a good sense of social connectedness combined with respect for all individuals?' (Macready, 2009). This also shows the double action of RP; it is both proactive and reactive. As stated by Blood and Thorsborne (2005) it is a 'practice that maintains high standards and boundaries at the same time as being supportive is experienced as firm and fair'. RP allows for the engagement of all stakeholders in the process, it promotes a climate of tolerance and respect.

2.4 Why is Restorative Justice used in the School Setting

The discourse around RP in schools first emerged in the 1970's with the emergence of peace education. This was seen as a framework that opposed the conventional style of education. Writers such as Feire (1982) and Postman and Weingartner (1971) were critical of the conventional style of education that ignored the rights of the individual in favour of covering a curriculum. Hopkins explains, with the emergence of peer mediation and circle time in the mid-1980s, a new way of thinking about discipline came about (Hopkins, 2004). Hopkins also states

that the mid-1990s seen a rise in alternative approaches to discipline, that respect the victim (Hopkins, 2004). The aim of many RP programmes was to develop well rounded individuals with self-esteem and communication skills that would be able to deal with conflict issues as they occurred (Hopkins, 2004). RP first began to be used in the late nineties in response to many discipline issues emerging in schools (McCluskey *et al.,* 2008).

RP can be described as an innovative approach to deal with the challenges in relation to behaviour that can happen on a daily basis. In Ireland, the Department of Education and Science released, in 2006, a document titled 'School Matters', in which it outlined the challenges that disruptive behaviour can present. Some of the recommendations from this study in 2006 have since been addressed, an example of this is the clear link between discipline issues and mental health. It emphasises the need to address the mental health of young people. This need has been addressed with the introduction of the new Wellbeing course to Junior Cycle in 2017. The Department state that there must be a high level of care and support within a school so that a student can reach their full potential (Department of Education and Science, 2006). The study recommends that interventions such as RP can be used to limit discipline issues in the classroom. It asks teachers to explore new ways of dealing with disruptive students, talking to the student, instead of giving punishment is suggested. RP can play an important role in solving these issues. An interesting finding in the 2006 report was that the government acknowledges that those schools availing of the Delivering Opportunity of Education in Schools (DEIS) initiative may have significant discipline issues (Department of Education and Skills, 2006). This is the case as the students attending these schools are predominantly from disadvantaged backgrounds and any attempts to encourage the students to fulfil their educational path are greatly supported (Department of Education and Science, 2006). In comparison a project piloted by the Scottish Executive in Glasgow in relation to RP acknowledged the links between educational disadvantage and disruptive behaviour (Mc Cluskey *et al*. 2008). The Scottish authorities noted the disengagement amongst pupils in second level schools and the rising reports of violence in schools. RP, in many cases, seems to address these issues through inclusiveness and through providing victims with a voice (Mc Cluskey, *et al.* 2008). Both Belinda Hopkins (2002) and Mc Cluskey *et al.* (2008) recognise the need to acknowledge the complexity of the world in which we live. The complexity of the issues surrounding challenging behaviour cannot be underestimated. RP can be used as prevention and, as stated previously, is usually deployed prior to the problem occurring instead of after it has transpired. When the problem has occurred, it is an intense process and the focus is on rebuilding the

relationships and on accountability (Alfred and Kiddle, 2013). One of the benefits of RP in schools is a higher retention of students at school (McCluskey *et al.* 2008)

Additionally, in a study compiled by the University of Ulster focusing on various schools in County Donegal and in Youth Reach Programmes, it was discovered that RP helped in the 'reduction in behaviour management methods which exclude and an increase in approaches to discipline that include young people' (Campbell *et al.,* 2013). Both Hopkins (2004) and the study compiled by the University of Ulster talk about the need for a change in culture in schools. The University of Ulster study concludes that it is through 'culture, relationships and socialisation that young people mature, develop respect and become responsible adults' (Campbell *et al.* 2013). It was also noted that RP should not be used as an alternative sanction (Campbell *et al.* 2013), instead, RP should be used alongside the code of discipline already in the school. RP should be used as a method for the offender to learn how their actions are impacting on others (Campbell *et al.* 2013) and thus restore the relationship.

2.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Restorative Practice

It must also be noted that there are some implications for RP in schools. Belinda Hopkins has carried out numerous studies and has completed significant work in relation to Restorative Practice. She is a firm advocate that the skills students learn in the process they can carry with them throughout their lives (Hopkins, 2004). Her work draws on the empirical work of Howard Zehr (1990) in relation to RP in schools. Zehr (1990) commented that at the centre of RP, is the characteristic of respect. Hopkins often refers to this throughout her work. Both writers recognise the advantages and disadvantages of the process. They both contended that, if the process is carried out properly, the challenging behaviour in a school decreases. A major critique of their findings is that their findings, in some instances, cannot be applied to today's world. We live in a very different world now, the rise of social media and cyber bullying can present many challenges to the discipline in schools. Their findings are satisfactory but in today's world, it can be viewed as dated.

Mc Cluskey *et al.* (2008) support the view that RP can work in schools. The data collected from the study in Scotland identified that, both student and staff morale in primary, post primary and special schools increased. Additionally, academic attainment figures also increased and exclusion declined (Mc Cluskey *et. al.* 2008). It is evident that it is a transformative approach to discipline and challenging behaviour. RP has many benefits for those in the educational setting.

These practices encourage a centre of collaboration and co-operation between all stakeholders within a school (Drewery and Winslade, 2003). Hopkin's (2004) offers many ideas as how to implement it in the school but focuses little on training. In recent times, there have been many initiatives across the United Kingdom and Ireland to implement RP. Mc Cluskey *et al. (*2008) focus largely in their paper on 'The Scottish Restorative Practice Project' that was implemented in 2004. The schools employed the strategies outlined such as conferencing and circle time. It was interesting to note that this project included primary, post primary and special schools. This gives the researcher a broad spectrum of settings and situations on which to focus. 'The Scottish Restorative Practice Project' was a pilot project and has many similarities with the project implemented in New Zealand by the University of Waikato. The study had a large sample size of both teachers and pupils. It was disappointing to discover the low success rate for RP in second level schools. The primary and especially the special schools recorded a high success rate and a change to the manner in which challenging behaviour is dealt with (Mc Cluskey *et al.* 2008). The findings in the second level schools were 'patchy' and the study acknowledged the diverse approaches to discipline in this sector (Mc Cluskey *et al.* 2008). It was interesting to note that both Zehr (1990) and Mc Cluskey *et al.* (2008) note that there is little short term gains to be made in the process, it is a long term approach to discipline issues. It needs to be embedded into the day to day running of the school and in policy documents if the approach is to succeed (Hopkins, 2004). Many researchers argue that there needs to be a wider debate over the rationale behind these practices and deeper assessment of their effectiveness (Cameron and Thorsborne, 1999).

2.6 Methods of Restorative Justice/Practice

From the literature on RJ, it is clear that common methods of RJ include: (1) Conferencing and Family Group Conferencing; (2) Circle Time and (3) Mediation. This paper will focus on, these three methods as they are the most common and most applicable to all settings. Proactive approaches in the second level classroom can be seen by measures such as role modelling, pastoral care structures and curriculum based programmes such as Social Personal Health Education (SPHE). The responsive approaches can be identified as setting clear expectations and holding meetings to repair relationships. Within schools, RP can include mediation, conferencing and healing circles.

<u>Conferencing</u>

A conference is a meeting of those who have been affected by a certain incident, along with school personnel and a facilitator; everyone sits in a circle and tries to resolve the issue (Hopkins, 2004). This is the most common method used in the educational setting and it draws upon the Family Group Decision process and seeks to include all stakeholders in the process. Its aim is to show how people can resolve their issues when they are provided with a 'constructive forum' in which to do so (Wachtel, 2013). An advantage of a conference is that it gives the victim the opportunity to confront the offender and explain how they feel. The facilitator must follow careful script (Wachtel, 2013). These scripts are usually influenced by Braithwaite's (1989) theory of 'reintegrative shaming' (Whyte, 2009). Conferences are usually held in rather informal settings (Whyte, 2009). Conferencing has taken many forms in different countries. It first developed in New Zealand in the form of Family Group Conferencing (Crawford and Newburn, 2003). A family group conference in New Zealand 'drew upon the Maori traditions of involving extended family and community members in conflict resolution' (Whyte, 2009). In New Zealand, restorative processes' such as family group conferencing are used 'for all medium and serious offending' (Whyte, 2009).A study in Glasgow based on FGC conducted by Dutton and Whyte (2006), illustrates this. The study was aimed at young people aged fifteen and younger who had been involved in first or minor offending. They engaged in the RJ process. It found that 73% were not referred for offending compared to 68% of the comparison group (Crawford and Newburn,2003). The study found that in certain instances, FGC can be successful and is a purposeful method of RJ. In some cases, the facilitator of the process must stick to a script when engaging in the process. This allows for each participant to have an equal voice and time when engaging in the process (O' Mahony, 2002). A family group conference sees the family take ownership of the process, having been briefed by social workers on the resources that are available to them (Wachtel, 2003). Following this, the family are given some alone time; during which all family members have the opportunity to take ownership for their actions. It is then hoped a resolution will be agreed. Both Whyte (2009) and Watchel (2003) value this as a practice; they agree that it conveys the respect held by in the criminal justice system have for families. This practice also empowers families and ultimately leads to families functioning better (Merkel-Holguin *et al.* 2003).

In the United Kingdom, conferencing usually takes the form of police based conferencing. This has been used in the context of youth crime in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland and has been successful in many instances (O'Mahony, 2002). As conferencing is one of the main methods of RJ there can be broader implications around its implementation. A prime example of this is the form of referral. Those in the policing system must assess if the crime can be punished with a caution, a diversion from court or is it a court sentencing (Whyte, 2009) The success of RJ in youth crime can be effected by the allocation of time (Whyte, 2009). In any RJ process, time is of importance, therefore lack of time can hinder the successful outcomes. The above issues can make it challenging to measure the success rate of conferencing.

Conferencing is applicable in the school setting also. This is a whole school approach as RP focuses on repairing the relationships damaged in an incident of negative behaviour (Hopkins, 2004 p. 115). It encourages all the members of the community to meet and come to a resolution to the problem. There are a number of guidelines that must be followed in relation to a conference. All stakeholders must be involved, including key personnel from management and behaviour support staff (Hopkins, 2004, p. 115). It is recommended that seating be organised before the conference and the facilitator has briefed the participants about the process prior to the conference (Hopkins, 2004, p.116). The purpose of a conference is to establish 'what harm was caused, what was the wider emotional context' and what needs to be done to repair the harm (Hopkins, 2004, p.116). A restorative conference can be described as intense intervention and can also be viewed as a way to prevent harm (Ashley and Burke, 2009). Similar to an RJ conference a script can be followed and everyone is afforded equal time to speak (Hopkins, 2004, p.118). It seeks to come to a solution that will benefit the entire school community.

The facilitators in most cases, in the school setting, are teachers or trained personnel such as guidance counsellor and the school chaplain. Teachers can intervene on a low level in the area of prevention. In more serious cases, trained personnel such as school management, guidance counsellor or chaplains can provide circle time or a conference. It is interesting to note that students can take ownership of the process. Although teachers initiate the process, students can ultimately change the course of the process and help formulate an outcome (Carter, 2013). An example of students taking ownership is visible through peer mediation. Conferences should be used in cases of a disruptive student and any incident the affects the day to day running of the school.

<u>Healing Circles</u>

The second method of RJ is circle time. This is the most versatile and modern method of RJ. It is also most commonly used in the youth justice system. It is a practice approach that seeks to build the community reactively (Wachtel, 2013). It can create an atmosphere of safety and quality, a forum within which everyone is afforded the opportunity to speak. Circles can be used in many different ways and in many different settings, within an organisation or a community. A common feature of circle time is one person speaking at a time indeed sometimes a 'talking piece' is used to help organise the circle time (Wachtel, 2013). This concept has its roots in ancient indigenous practices. The benefit of circle time is the participants listen before they speak. It is interesting to note that the circle does not always need a leader. In some instances, however, the circle time and conference formats can merge and the circle leader elects to follow a script. Whyte also refers to this in his work but calls the process 'healing and sentencing circles'(Whyte,2009). A sentencing circle has been used in indigenous communities also. This involved all those affected by the crime, as well as a judge and persecutor. The judge would then impose an agreed sentence. In modern day justice, circle time can incorporate some of the above structures.

In the school setting, circle time is often useful with larger groups. It provides the opportunity for a group of people to gather together in a 'safe supportive and enjoyable way and to grow together as a team' (Hopkins, 2004, p.134). Trust is an important characteristic of 'circle time' (University of Waikato, 2003). A trained facilitator encourages those involved to 'share information, points of view and personal feelings' (Ashley and Burke, 2009). Another key feature of the circle is a 'talking piece, this is an object that allows the person in possession the opportunity to speak without interruption. This allows for the opportunity for everyone to listen (Ashley and Burke, 2009). Circle time encourages respect and understanding and it empowers all parties involved (Ashley and Burke, 2009). Whether it is a problem solving circle or a healing circle, they provide the opportunity for students to 'build trust, mutual understanding and shared values and behaviours' (Mirsky, 2004). Students take ownership, listen and attempt to solve issues within their own circle of friends or class group (Mirsky, 2004). By participating in circle time, participants are allowed to develop their 'social, moral and emotional skills' (Hopkins, 2004, p134). Circle time can be used in cases such as when there is a class dispute, or when a teacher is struggling to bond with a class group or when a class group are not bonding themselves.

<u>Mediation</u>

The third method is victim offender mediation. This was first established in Ontario by Mennonite Central Committee workers in 1974 (Whyte, 2009). Mediation is simply the bringing together of the victim and the offender at a meeting, facilitated by a mediator. The aim of mediation is to discuss the crime, the harm and how the issue may be resolved. Unlike conferencing, mediation does not have to follow a script. In fact, mediation sometimes does not even involve face to face contact. Instead, in some instances the mediator can act as an intermediary (Whyte, 2009). This form of RJ has also been in the youth crime sphere, it was first used in the UK in 1979 (Marshall, 1999). As time went on, a number of flaws became apparent. These included the voice of the victim being ignored and the mediation being used in cases of youth crime, where punishment should have been imposed (Whyte, 2009). In recent years, more emphasis has been placed on mediation by those in the youth crime prevention sector and in the criminal justice system. There is strong links between mediation and conferencing as there are many similarities between these methods, including the key principles of inclusion and accountability.

In the school setting, a peer mediator is someone who 'supports people' and tries to find a 'way forward that is mutually acceptable' to all involved (Hopkins, 2004). It is evident that the link to RP is the attempts to restore the relationship and support people. In the school setting mediation can be identified as a way of resolving disputes between two students (Ashley and Burke, 2009). This must be facilitated by a trained mediator, in most cases this could be a teacher or a guidance counsellor. The aim of mediation is to teach students how to peacefully resolve conflict (Ashley and Burke, 2009). Peer mediation is another form of mediation and RP. It is usually viewed as a way of resolving and managing difficulties after they have occurred (Alfred and Kiddle, 2011, p.15). A peer mediator may be a student who has received the required training and encourages the parties to come to a mutually acceptable agreement (Alfred and Kiddle, 2011, p.15). The advantage of mediation is that it can keep many minor incidents from escalating into a much more serious incident (Ashley and Burke, 2009). Hopkins argues that mediation can be used between peers, staff and between students (Hopkins, 2004, p107).It teaches both staff and students 'life skills, provides leadership' and also alternative sanctions as opposed to suspension (Ashley and Burke, 2009). Mediation is best applied in cases of bullying or isolation.

3.0 Implementation and Evaluation

This chapter will focus on the chosen methodology for this study and will offer a rationale for the selection of this methodology. This chapter will outline the purpose and use of Thematic Analysis, and discuss the ethical issues relating to the data collected.

3.1 Research Objectives and Background Information

The data collection includes interviews with members of staff that practice RP. This will give the reader a rich insight into how RP is practiced in second level schools and the success rate of it. Interviews were used to ascertain the attitudes of teachers towards RP. By conducting the interviews, the researcher hoped:

1. to establish teachers' perspectives on the meaning of Restorative Practice and on whether, and how it can be implmented on a whole school level.

2. to ascertain whether Restorative Practice works in all cases and to identify the principal difficulties faced by those who implement it.

3. to identify the benefits Restorative Practice has for the wider school community.

There are four interviewees for this study. These four particpants practice RP on a daily basis and all four have received some level of training in the area. Teacher A is a music teacher and has completed training in RP in her undergradudate degree. Teacher B is a science teacher and having recently completed her Professional Masters in Education, she completed a mudule titles 'Mediation Skills for Second Level Teachers', witihin this module, RP was addressed. Teacher C works as the school chaplain and has attended inservices in the school and has trained other members of staff in the practice. She uses RP on a daily basis, especially in incidents of bullying. Finally, Teacher D works as the Home School Liason. She has completed a Postgraduate Dimploma in Restorative Practice and has also attended a master class on RP. Teacher D also uses it on a daily basis when dealing with conflict with teachers, parents and students.

The audience for this paper is aimed at those in the educational field, those with an interest in youth crime and justice and finally those who have an interest in the holistic development of a student. School is much more than just attaining grades, it is about equipping students with the skills and knowledge that they can use in an ever channging world. This study aims to highlight

how benifical RP can be for students when they encounter conlfict. By carrying out such research, it is hoped the audience will have an indepth knowledge of RP as a concept and a practice. This study should highlight the advantages but also the shortcomings of the practice and illustrate how RP can be applied to a variety of settings. The audience should note that this is a localised study, involving only one secondary school, therefore the results are not necessarily transferable to other school context. Despite this limitation, it is expected that at least some of the findings are capable of generalisation. The primary research site is a post primary school in County Donegal. This study does not reflect teachers perspectives on the practice from other areas in the educational setting such as YouthReach or primary schools. Previous studies have shown that; primary schools have a higher success rate (Mc Cluskey *et al.* 2008). Another limit of this study is it focuses' soley on teachers' perspectives. It does not take students' or parents perspectives' into account. The chosen methodology is semi structured interviews with selected members of staff who practice RP on a daily basis. The interviews were then analysed through Thematic Analysis.

3.2 Methodology

The chosen research design is that of a qualitative study. Qualitative Research by nature is a method of observation rather than numerical data gathering (Babbie, 2014, p. 221). Qualitative Research is used across many academic fields and 'refers to the meanings, concepts definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things' (Berg, 2004, p. 195). Qualitative research traditionally examines data that is narrative (Yin, 1994). A qualitative study allows the researcher to gain a deeper insight into opinions and attitudes in relation to a topic. The many varied qualitative approaches are amendable and accessible to those in the educational sector (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). These approaches can include interviews, focus groups, surveys, document analysis and questionnaires. Qualitative approaches allow the researcher to gain true perspectives and opinions on internal issues in an area (Cohen et al 2007). In relation to qualitative research, validity is a principal that is essential. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) comment on some the essential characteristics of qualitative research such as:

- The natural setting is the principal source of data.
- The researcher is familiar with research and its formalities
- The data obtained is descriptive
- Participant validation is essential.

- Exploring meaning and intention are essential.

In relation to RP, qualitative approaches are appropriate as the principal researcher will carry out an in depth analysis of attitudes and practices of teachers in relation to restorative practice. Many previous studies on this topic have used qualitative studies as the researcher to have a rich level of data collected (McCluskey *et al.* (2008)(a), Hopkins (2004), Macready (2009), McCluskey *et al.* (2008)(b), Campbell *et al.* (2013)).

The research instrument that was be used is an interview. There are different types of interviews. The three main types are; structured, semi structured and unstructured (Gibbs,2013). Focus groups are also a form of interview. In all cases with an interview, the researcher has to be careful of interview bias (Gibbs,2013) A structured interview only uses the interview questions and tends not to stray beyond the questionnaire tool (Gibbs, 2013). A semi structured interview uses a list of questions or themes and they can vary from interview to interview (Gibbs, 2013). An unstructured interview is informal and has no structured questions but the researcher has a clear idea of the content being explored (Gibbs, 2013). Semi Structured interviews were chosen as the data collection tool, as an interview is a flexible method of data collection because, it enables multi-sensory channels to be used such as verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard (Cohen et al. 2007). Typically an interview will have a high response rate (Oppeheim, 1992). A semi structured interview was chosen as the methodology because of its flexibility and it allows the researcher to ask probing questions. A semi structured interview will facilitate easy organisation and analysis of data (Cohen et al 2007). The questions asked in the interview (Appendix 2) had to be consistent with the research questions (Saunders et al., 2011). As this was a small scale research project, a semi structured interview was the ideal method (Drever, 1995). The use of semi structured interviews allows various topics to be discussed and the phrasings of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion (Bryman, 2008). An advantage of using semi structured interviews is it allows for a more thorough examination of what people say (Heritage, 1984). This aided the researcher in gaining a rich data collection.

The questions asked were:

1. What in your understanding of the concept of Restorative Practice and how did you come to learn about it?
2. Have you received formal training in it?

3. When and how do you implement Restorative Practice in school?
4. What do you believe to be the advantages and disadvantages of Restorative Practice?
5. Can you think of a time when Restorative Practice did not work? Why, in your opinion didn't it work in this instance?
6. Are you of the opinion that Restorative Practice benefits the wider school community and fosters healthy relationships between students and staff? Please elaborate.

The open ended questions used will allow the participants to give a personal response (Creswell, 2012).It gives the participants, the opportunity to reflect and discuss cases they may have experienced. Semi structured interviews provide more beneficial results when the sample size is relatively small because it allows for thematic analysis of the qualitative data received (Alvarex and Urla, 2002). It is important that the researcher acknowledges the purpose and nature of the interview and links it to the research aims.

3.3 Sampling

The sample size for the data collection was quite small. The four participants are all teachers in a second level school and practitioners of RP. This study is aimed at those who wish to further their knowledge on RP or assess its strengths in the second level school. Some might argue that, due to the small sample size, the study is quite limited. However, the data collected was rich and allowed the researcher to gain a deep insight into the area of RP. The researcher was allowed to engage in focused, conversational, back and forth communication with the participants (Arksey and Knight,1999,p.5).

3.4: Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations must take place throughtout the study. This is essential in educational research in particular, where, an ethical approach is not just a case of needing to cover anonymity or consent(Atkins and Wallace, 2004). It is advisable that the researcher questions their actions to determine if their actions are ethical or not (Atkins and Wallace, 2004). As the researcher begins their study, respect must be given to the research site and to those that particpate in the study. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) has clearly outlined the key concepts of educational research. In their document, they outline, Voluntary Informed Consent, Openness and Disclosure, Right to Withdraw, Children, Vulnerable Young

People and Vulnerable Adults, Incentives, Detriment Arising from Participation in Research, Privacy and Disclosure as they key principles of ethical research (BERA, 2011).

The principles of voluntary particpation, informed and signed consent and anonymity were treated with the utmost respect. The pinciple of data collection and security was also treated with respect. It is important that the participants are made aware of all information relating to the research and that all participation must be voluntary (Streubert and Carpenter, 2010). All research participants were furnished with an information sheet and a consent form, ensuring that consent obtained was voluntary and informed (Appendix 3&4). The particpants in the research were all given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time up until the data had been analysed.

Often, anonymity is essential to the research process in order to ensure the collection of rich data. The research site was anonoymised and called St. Mary's School. The participants are referred to throughout this research as Teacher A,Teacher B, Teacher C and Teacher D. It was important during the data collection process that individual students or groups were not identified from the information the particpants provided in answer to questions posed in the interviews. When a participant did use a specific example, he/she was advised to refrain from using the real name of the student/students involved, referring instead to an individual student as Student A or Student B etc., and to groups of students as Group X or Group Y.etc. There was no risks posed to those taking part in the student. The data collected was hand written and recorded on an audio device. The data collected is stored in agreement with relevant data protection legislation and in accodrance with LYIT's Guidelines for Electronic Data Storage.

3.5 Implementation

The researcher met with the research participants in order to explain the purpose of the research, provide information relevant to consent and distribute an Information Sheet (Appendix 3). A Consent Form was also distributed to participants (Appendix 4). The Information Sheet was retained by the particpants and the Consent Form was returned to the researcher prior to commencement of the data collection stage of the research process. A pilot interview was held prior to data collection. The interviewee was another practitioner of RP within the research site. Researchers use pilot interviews to ensure that the researcher has an opportunity to assess the validity of the questions, the timing of the interview and the participants' ability to understand the questions (Kvale, 1996). Amendments and adjustments were made following this pilot process. The pilot interviewee spoke about the development of a whole school initiative for

RP. After analysing the data, the researcher decided the inclusion of a question on the concept of whole school RP.

3.6 Trustworthiness (Reliability and Validity).

Reliability and validity are central tenants of trustworthiness and an essential part of any academic research. Reliability can be defined as 'an agreement between two efforts to measure the same trait through similar methods' and validity is the attempt to measure the same trait through different methods (Hammersley, 1987). The research site for this study St. Mary's School (not real name), the principal researcher is aware that she is an 'insider researcher' as she teacher in the school. Those interviewed are colleagues of the researcher. An 'insider researcher' is someone who has a 'direct involvement or connection with the research setting' (Rooney p. 6, 2005). This can make objectivity a real issue for the researcher.

Guba (1991) has highlighted four principle trustworthy concerns the one needs to address regardless of their research model. (1) The Truth Value Concern; that is how one can establish a true assurance in their findings. (2) Applicability Concern: How can a researcher establish the importance of their findings and how to apply them to other settings and findings. (3). Consistency Concern: How can one know if the findings would be the same with other participants or settings? And (4) Neutrality Concern: Do the findings come solely from participants or was there bias? with anonymity and safeguarding private information, some of the above concerns will be avoided. Some steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study was a pilot interview with a non-interviewee, any issues relation to questions or validity will be addressed in this session. Another method to ensure validity of the study, was discussing the findings of the interview with a neutral colleague. By discussing the findings, a deeper level of analysis will happen (Krefting, 1991). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state how discussing the findings with a neutral colleague, will ensure the researcher is fully committed to the study. The researcher may meet many challenges when trying to ensure that the research is reliable and valid. The research design for this study has attempted to take the necessary steps to ensure reliability and validity is met.

In relation to qualitative data collection, engagement with the participants and their in depth responses helps to ensure there is a sufficient level of validity and reliability (Agar, 1993). To help to ensure validity in this study, a pilot interview was held with a colleague who had also engaged in Restorative Practice. The feedback received helped to make additional amendments to interview questions.
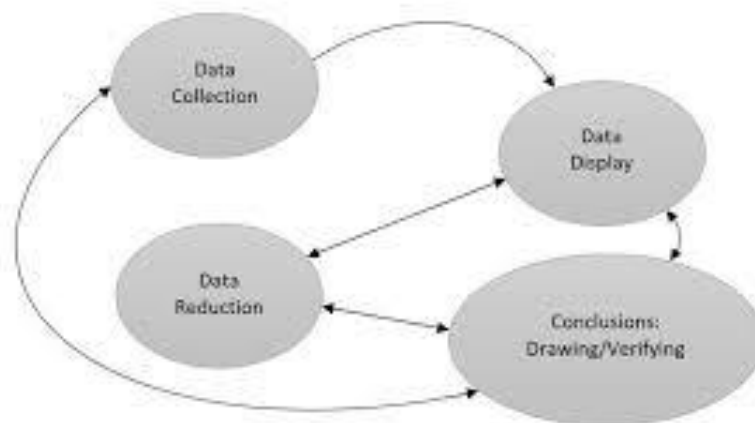
3.7 Data Analysis

The chosen method for data analysis is Thematic Analysis. This involved the researcher looking at the similarities and differences between the responses under certain headings such as; methods of RP, time etc., (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A Thematic Analysis is a method for identifying and interpreting patterns across qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2014). A thematic analysis attempts to 'identify patterns and themes within qualitative data' (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke note how it is a flexible method rather than a methodology (Braun and Clarke, 2006). When one gets to the latent level of analysis, they can draw 'assumptions and conceptualisations', this analysis that goes beyond just summarising the work (Braun and Clarke 2006). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) offer the reader a rich insight into how to compose a thematic analysis and they comment on its effectiveness for many themes in education (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the steps to complete a thematic analysis are as follows: Familiarising yourself with your data. This involves the researcher reading over their transcribed data and becoming familiar with what was recorded. Secondly, generating initial codes, this involves reading over the data and coding similar material. Thirdly searching for themes, at this stage themes should be emerging, therefore the researcher should start to identify these themes. At the next stage, they review the themes and ask if all information is relevant under each theme. Following that stage, the researcher defines and names themes. Finally, after reviewing the themes and data the researcher produces a report based on these themes.

This type of data analysis is highly flexible and allows for varied research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2014). This type of analysis can be used with focus groups, interviews, diary and document analysis and qualitative surveys (Braun and Clarke, 2014). Braun and Clarke (2014) argue that it can be used to 'interrogate the hidden or latent meanings in a dataset, the assumptions underpinning and its implications'. Attride-Stirling (2001) also offers a design for Thematic Analysis that predates the framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis is broken down into three sections: (1) reduction or breakdown of text and stage; (2) Exploration of text and stage; (3) integration and exploration. The advantage of the above process is that the researcher is able to 'unravel the mass textual data and make sense of others' sense making, using more than intuition' (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The value of this process is

the power of exploratory and explanatory research; this cannot be achieved without methodological rigor at all stages of the data analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

A previous method developed by Miles and Huberman in 1994. It consists of four stages or 'stems'. These stems can be identified as: data collection, data reduction, data display and data conclusion –drawing/verifying. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that these themes must reflect the bulk of the data. They also comment that data that contradicts other data must also be explored. By the end of this process the researcher should have clear themes and data sets that reflect the research questions. This method is illustrated in the figure below:

(Miles and Huberman, 1994, pp. 10-11)

The data analysis methods of (1) Braun and Clarke; (2) Attride-Stirling and (3) Miles and Huberman all generate initial codes to form the data. This helps to organise the data and make patterns (Boyatzis, 1998). The limitation of thematic analysis is that the codes are usually identified by one person. They must, therefore, be discussed with other researchers, in order to ensure academic rigor. This is not always feasible, often reliability check does not establish that codes are objective. Sometimes two people can apply the same subjective perspective to the text (Loffe & Yardley, 2004). Krippendorff (2004) comments on how academic rigor is evident in thematic analysis if new perspectives on the studied phenomenon have been gained. If this is achieved, it is clear the researcher has not just scanned through the data but interpreted and challenged the data received.

After an in depth study of the above three methods; Braun and Clarke's (2006) model was chosen as the data analysis design. It was chosen for the following reasons: (1) It works with a

wide range of research questions and allows the researcher to generate themes at an early stage. (2) It can be used to interpret different sets of data such as focus groups, interviews and document analysis. As the chosen form of data collection was semi structured interviews, it was applicable. (3)It can work with large and small data sets and despite the sample size being quite small, Thematic Analysis worked very well (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun's and Clarke's model was easy to follow and give clear guidelines on how to analyse interview data, it is a common form of analysis in the teaching and learning sector (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). As this is a small scale study; generating themes from the interviews could be achieved easily. The researcher conducted the interviews and recorded the interviews on a recording device as well as taking notes by hand. The researcher read the data to become familiar with it and then began to generate initial codes. Following Maguire and Delahunt's (2017) recommendation, each transcript was carefully coded. These codes were compared and reviewed and, at the end of this step, some new codes were generated. The next step involved themes being generated. The codes and data set were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Following the recommendations of Bree and Gallagher (2016) the themes were carefully reviewed. The spreadsheets clearly display the evolution from raw data and codes to defined themes. The themes were also distinguished on two levels; semantic and latent. The semantic themes were data that did not go beyond anything the participant had stated. Latent themes focus on the underlying assumptions and ideologies. The latent themes that emerged were as follows: (1) Maintaining healthy relationships; (2) Time and Training; (3) Methods of RP and (4) Inclusion and Engagement and Whole School Involvement.

3.8 Evaluation

Theme 1: The Importance of Maintaining Healthy Relationships

The first dominant theme that emerged was the importance of maintaining healthy relationships in life. A relationship can be defined as 'the way in which two or more people or things are connected' (Carter, 2013). At the centre of restorative practice is the value of respect. It is through this culture of respect that healthy relationships are maintained. A school must 'foster communities of practice that give primacy to the individual, dignity, worth and talent to every member of these communities' (Campbell *et.al* 2013). Teacher A commented on how RP is 'a positive approach to restore relationships' and Teacher B similarly states it 'repairs relationships' and helps 'build bridges'. It was found that it is an effective tool between teachers and pupils and also with students amongst their peers. RP is an effective practice with

behaviour management and also solving conflict between peers. It helps develop a school where healthy relationships are promoted and where, according to Teacher C, promotes the concept that 'everything is solvable if you take time to sit down and talk about it'. The words 'repair' and 'restore' appear frequently in the responses of the interviewees.

All the candidates identified that RP can be used between peers and also between the student and the teacher. Teacher C stated that, as head of year for third years, her role often involves introducing the practice to resolve 'disruptive' behaviour in the classroom. Teacher D identified one scenario where there was disruptive behaviour within a class and, as a result, there was a break down in a relationship between a teacher and a student. The student felt that the teacher was picking on them, whilst the teacher claimed she was just encouraging the student and trying to keep them focused. Teacher D organised a restorative practice meeting between both parties involved. It was clear that the relationship had become strained. The teacher bought into the idea whilst the student did not seem to engage as well with the whole process. Despite, the reluctance of the student to engage with the process as fully as the teacher, the relationship was restored after a number of meetings. Teacher D identified that student came to the understanding of the teacher's feelings. The student thus has a greater respect for both the teacher and the subject. From this data it is evident that the practice can be used with students and to repair the student – teacher relationship. The participant commented on the effectiveness of RP, particularly when both parties are willing to engage. RP, then, facilitates the development of a culture of respect in the school.

All participants identified one of the advantages of RP as being the development of a caring school and the fostering of healthy relationships. Teacher D made reference to how it promotes 'open and honest relationships', whilst Teacher C mentioned the fact that it gives students the skills 'to manage a conflict in any relationship'. Teacher A made reference to the 'rekindling of a friendship' and, similarly, Teacher B talked about how RP can repair any relationship that may have been damaged. Teacher B reflected on how getting to the 'root' of the issue is needed to progress. This practice of getting to the 'root' of the issue is the cornerstone of peace making in our society (McCluskey *et al.* 2008). It is worth noting that all participants were unanimous about the importance of getting to the 'root' cause of the conflict. Thus, it is clear that the fundamental unifying value of RP is that, as humans, we are happier and more likely to make a positive impact on our behaviour when those in positions of power do things with us, rather than to us or for us. As Teacher D states; 'it is a two way process'.

It was found that there was a myriad of relationships that can be restored. These can range from 'interpersonal relationships' to relationships within a community (Carter, 2012). The values of respect and peace making are the core values of RP (Carter, 2012). Everybody is governed by their relationships with others (Hopkins, 2004). It is vital, as educators, that we give students the skills to deal with and manage these relationships. Teacher A explained 'relationships are guided by mutual respect and understanding' and 'damage mutually impacts on relationships and community'. Often, students do not have the skills or knowledge on how to deal with these issues, thus if we educate students about RP, they may overcome these problems (Wachtel, 2005). It is clear that the restoration of relationships helps to create a happy and vibrant school. The relationships can be amongst peers or between students and teachers. It was found that when these cases are resolved there is a decline in disruptive behaviour and bullying behaviour, especially in junior year groups.

Time, Training & Skills

RP is a process that can be very time consuming. To organise an RP conference or circle time can take a lot of preparation and organisation. Additionally, the outcomes of RP may not become apparent overnight; rather they emerge and develop over a longer period of time. Hopkins stresses the importance of time in the success of this process. She speaks about the importance of prioritising it and assessing the importance of the issue (Hopkins, 2002). The shortage of time can apply to two areas; firstly the shortage of time in relation to dealing with issues in a restorative manner; and secondly, the shortage of time in relation to teachers scheduling time to receive the necessary training and support to implement the process successfully (Hopkins, 2002).

The interviewees identified time as a major disadvantage of the process of RP. This indicates that the participants struggled to either finish the process or to get time to receive training in it. They all acknowledged the great work that RP can do, however, all of this may fall short if there is not enough time allocated in schools for the process. Teacher C spoke about when two children fall out; 'The parents think it can be solved overnight'. Teacher C stressed how this is not the case. According to Teacher C, the restoration of a relationship takes time, sometimes a lot of time. Similarly, Teacher A and Teacher B both stated that all the hard work could be made redundant if time to conduct RP is not properly organised. Similarly, Teacher D identified time as a major disadvantage of the process. Teacher C stated that when the issue is between

two students, where bullying or isolation is alleged, several restorative meetings must take place in order for the issues to be solved. Teacher B commented that with the busy school schedule, sitting down with a student for an hour is not always realistic. Teacher A stated that time is a constraint to which pupils and teachers are subjected. Moreover Teacher A stated that time devoted to the RP process is lost when students fail to act on what was agreed during the process.

All the interviewees expressed a wish to engage in more training in the future. Both Teacher A and Teacher B stated they learned about the practice in their undergraduate degrees and should more training arise in the future, they would avail of it. Teacher C received training in RP through an inservice in school. Teacher C explained how the principal was passionate about it and thus staff wanted to learn more about it. It appears from discussion with the above interviewees that there is a lack of formal training in RP. McCluskey *et al.* (2008) assert that there is a need to develop a conceptual framework that can be developed across post primary schools. In their study on the implementation of the process in Scottish schools, it was discovered that there was no clear outline of what is involved in the process. In their pilot scheme, training was offered to teachers by the Scottish Education Board; following this a much broader framework was developed by teachers and the Scottish Education Board. It was quite distinct from previous frameworks developed in England and Wales. The framework encompasses prevention, response and intervention and in some instances reparation. The staff that engaged in the training admitted to the time consuming element of the process but acknowledged the success rate with particular practices such as conferencing and circle time (McCluskey *et al.* 2008).

It is clear that with the correct training and time set aside, RP can have many benefits. Teacher D was the most trained in the area of RP, having completed a post graduate certificate with the University of Ulster in 2012. Teacher D also attended a master class in RP, they organised and participated in training sessions in the school in which he/she teaches. Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB) secured funding from the European Union, under the Peace III format, to develop RP in schools in Donegal. Using Action Research, Teacher D, took three cases from within the school and implemented RP in those cases. At the same time, a whole system approach to embedding RP in Youthreach, Youth Work and Schools in County Donegal was being developed by Donegal ETB. From this study it was advised that all ETB schools, take time to train staff and developed a code of behaviour that includes RP as a form of mediation (Campbell *et al.* 2013). It is evident from the interviewees that time is a major issue. When

time is used correctly to deal with the process and train staff, RP can have excellent benefits for a school. It helps to develop a culture change where everyone is included and retributive punishment is not used.

Inclusion, Engagement and Involvement of the Whole School

A central tenet of RP is the inclusion and engagements of all stakeholders (victim, offender and the wider school community) in the process (Hopkins, 2004). All the participants identified this as an important aspect of the process. When asked: What is your understanding of RP and how did you come to learn about it?, Teacher D responded saying: 'it is a tool which assists the development of positive relationships within the school'. Teacher D added it creates a 'culture of respect, where conflict and negative behaviour is addressed effectively'. Teacher C commented that it is about 'restoring relationships between students or adults that have become disjointed'. Teacher B spoke about how we build a culture where instead of punishment, we work to get to the root of the problem and solve it'. Teacher A agreed with the above and said it was about developing techniques to deal with these issues. All the interviewees identified that inclusion of stakeholders was an important issue. Both Teacher A and Teacher B stated that the inclusion of all stakeholders, and the promotion of dialogue between them, can assist in resolving issues between peers and also between students and teachers. Teacher B states that mediation and dialogue are important in RP, it is vital that everyone gets an opportunity to express how they feel.

It was interesting to note that both Teacher B and Teacher D explained RP works better with junior students, and that these students are often more honest during the process. Teacher B stated that, through her teaching, she found that senior cycle students preferred retributive punishments and were not, generally, willing to engage in the RP process. This finding supports McCluskey *et.al. (*2013) study in the Scottish education sector where it was discovered that, there was a higher RP success rate at primary school level. According to Teacher D, those students who have engaged with RP at junior level tend to keep it up at senior level, and often act as role models for younger pupils. Teacher C stressed the importance of parental involvement in the process, acknowledging that there has to be a culture change in the education system, namely a move away from retributive justice. Traditionally, parents have favoured retributive punishment to deal with discipline issues. However, in some instances, especially where two students have fallen out, the issues are complex and, as a result RP is more appropriate to resolve these issues. Teacher C identified one instance in which the

students themselves agreed to take part in the process but the parent refused to allow their child to participate in the process. This incident related to isolation and bullying and, in this instance, because of the parental refusal, it was referred to senior management. Another scenario, identified by Teacher D, described a student who disengaged with the whole process. The student became disengaged with the process and would not take ownership for her own actions. She had fallen out with a larger group of friends. The student only told their side of the story to their parents and, subsequently, the parents withdrew the student from the process. In this case, the issue was not solved and, due to this lack of engagement the process failed. It is evident that the involvement of all stakeholders must be voluntary. This corresponds with Whyte's (2008) analysis of Restorative Justice. If a student is not willing to engage, they must not be forced into the process. This is best summarised by Ashley and Burke (2009) where they state inclusion is the main tenet of RP in schools (Ashley and Burke, 2009, p. 11). RP is seen as a more 'inclusive' and 'supportive' process than other discipline processes' (Ashley and Burke, 2009, p. 11). This inclusive nature can be seen in the creation of school rules. Instead of a teacher enforcing school rules, the students are given the opportunity to explore and determine how to create a positive learning community (Ashley and Burke, 2009, p. 12). By students taking ownership of their actions and their role in the school, a culture of respect and care can be fostered in a school. Teacher D commented that RP creates 'open and honest relationships where we all talk to each other rather than about each other, in a respectful way'.

Inclusion also extends as far as whole school involvement. Both Carter (2013) and McCluskey *et al.* (2008) emphasise the need for each school to develop a whole school framework in order to make RP a success. Teacher A stated that RP gives the teacher a greater confidence in dealing with conflict issues and also how it creates a more caring school and thus makes school a better experience for all. Teacher B voiced concern about the fact that not all staff are willing to engage in the process and how, in some instances, RP is not respected by both staff and students. As mentioned previously, parental involvement has a major role in the success of RP as a discipline approach in schools. If there is not parental buy in, into the process then the practice becomes redundant. Both McCluskey *et al,* (2008) and Macready (2009) acknowledge that there must be a diverse approach to incorporating RP in the post primary setting. There is a need for strong links to be developed and maintained between the senior management, pupils, pastoral care team and parents in order to fully implement RP. Many in the field of discipline and school management are interested in how, and to what extent, RP can support the day –to-day issues arising in schools. Teacher D stated that, through her role in the school, she believed

RP assisted greatly in resolving minor issues such as small disagreements between students and that these kinds of issues are addressed quickly using RP, with the offender afforded the opportunity to reflect on how their actions are impacting on other students in the classroom. Teachers B, C and D all commented that there is room for the development of RP in many schools. Teacher D, for example, spoke about the fact that there is scope, within the new Junior Cycle subject known as 'Wellbeing', for educating students about the concept of RP, within this subject, the students will learn how to develop skills of empathy, coping and conflict management skills.

Methods of RP

From the data collection and analysis, it was interesting to discover the varied practices and skills gained from RP. As stated previously, RP can have many benefits in terms of cultivating a caring, inclusive school environment. The skills students and practitioners gain from RP will benefit them in many situations in life. All the interviewees agreed that it gives pupils the opportunity to take ownership over their actions. Teacher B felt that students who partake in RP feel they have an onus on them to repair the relationship. As stated previously, Teacher C emphasised how students can develop empathy. The victim is able to take ownership of their own hurt and, by using 'I' statements such as 'I don't like it when', they are not accusing the other person but allowing them to see the situation from their perspective. Teacher D asserts that RP creates a safe space for pupils and teachers to speak and reflect on their actions without anyone getting shamed. In this case, everyone gets a voice. Teacher D says, in her experience, RP has reduced bullying cases and 'I'm sorry' carry more weight, it is not just words. RP creates a climate of tolerance. In the cases of teacher/student dispute, both Teacher A and Teacher D claim that RP creates greater respect and automatically the student is better behaved in the classroom.

There are many varied practices among the interviewees. Teacher A identified that organisation is essential in the success of RP. Teacher A usually begins by getting the parties involved to write down their feelings and to reflect on this. Teacher B, similarly, from the beginning tries to get to the root of the problem. The use of an RP conference worked well in some scenarios with Teacher B, however circle time had limited success. Teacher C, who performs the role of chaplain in the school, mostly uses RP in bullying or isolation cases. In some cases, Teacher C has used RP with teacher and students however, she felt that it was not always successful because the teachers were not always willing to engage. By using an RP conference, it allows

for structured engagement of both parties, Teacher C felt that the use of 'I' statements allowed for a two way conversation and a period of reflection for both parties. Both Teacher C and Teacher D felt circle time worked better with larger groups and that two facilitators was best practice. With large groups, conflicts are resolved and the teacher can continue to teach the class. Sometimes, Teacher D would meet with a class group once every few months and conduct circle time, in order to ascertain whether there were any issues and to try to gather the student voice with a view to resolving these issues. This data shows that conferences work better with teacher/pupil disagreements and bullying issues. Circle time works best with large class groups where behaviour is a major issue. This correlates with Mirskey (2014) who states when she states that circle time has immense powers to break down barriers and provide students with an opportunity to build trust and mutual understanding between themselves and teachers. It also allows them to see that they are a community with shared values; it prepares them for the future where in certain careers discussion and debates will be a feature (Mirskey, 2014).

From the interviews conducted, it is clear that restorative conferencing is the preferred method of implementation. When all parties are engaged, it can have a high success rate within a school. RP has the power to create a caring and tolerant school. It allows students to learn social responsibility (Macready, 2009) and lead to a transformative approach in dealing with behaviour management (McCluskey *et al.* 2008). All interviewees stressed the importance of training all staff and passionate about RP. Teacher A and Teacher B voiced concern that some may see it as another 'toolbox' in the area of discipline. McCluskey *et al,* (2008) also acknowledge this but, their pilot study shows that some staff said that even with the most challenging pupils, it can work. There is clear evidence from the data collected that the skills gained by pupils and staff in relation to RP are vital for dealing with conflict. There is clear evidence of the potential development of RP within many schools.

4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The research found that, overall, RP has many benefits for young people in today's society. The strong links between RJ and RP were highlighted throughout this paper. Additionally, all the interviewees acknowledged the skills gained throughout the process and highlighted the importance of teaching young people to be empathetic towards each other. The literature also highlighted the links between RP and bullying. It showed by teaching young people to talk to each other and understand the harm caused, can reduce bullying in many cases. The excellent use of restorative conferences and circle time was also highlighted. It is proposed that these practices should be maintained and strengthened.

The research did highlight a number of areas within the practice that require investigation in order to improve RP as a practice. There are a number of recommendations that are suggested. This includes an improved framework that could be developed on how post primary schools could implement RP on a whole school level. The most recent publication on school discipline and behaviour was in 2006. There is now a need to reassess how schools deal with classroom management. It is proposed that there is a move away from retributive punishment to a more restorative approach. It is suggested that all members of the school body are included in RP; staff, students and parents. It is recommended that the Department of Education and Skills asks schools to incorporate RP into their existing Code of Behaviour, perhaps making it a legal requirement. If this was the case, RP would become part of every schools disciplinary approach and would help to promote healthy relationships between all members of the school community.

There is a lack of training opportunities for staff, therefore; adequate training needs to be provided so that staff and pupils can engage in RP in a positive way. It is recommended that the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) would train teachers in RP and offer refresher courses throughout the year. This opportunity of continual professional development would help support the promotion of RP in society. Another suggestion is that every teacher training course at third level, should offer RP as a module or as part of a module based on discipline approaches. It is also recommended that each school applies adequate time for the practice, all the participants seen time as a major issue in the success of the practice. Perhaps, one SPHE class every month, at both junior and senior level, could be used for circle time and teaching the students the skills of RP. It is also suggested that training could be provided for families and family networks in order to develop the practice in the local

community and to mirror what is happening at school. Outside agencies such as Helping Hand or Family Mediation Services could collaborate with schools in the promotion of mediation and RP as an alternative way to teach young people and their families on how to deal with conflict. Sporting bodies and other community groups could also collaborate in this venture. RP is a community effort and by collaborating with other community groups, the school places itself at the centre of promoting RP in that area and thus creating a happier and healthier community.

Regarding the development of RP in curriculum subjects, it has been suggested that it is developed within the subject of wellbeing. There is scope for RP to be linked in with communication and friendship skills. At senior level, RP could be promoted through SPHE and mental health programmes promoted by the Health Service Executive such as the 'Mindout' programme. This programme has a section that focuses on communication skills and overcoming conflict, RP could be included in this section. It is also recommended that the use of restorative language amongst staff could be developed. This would ensure the school reflected the preferred culture and is used to encourage respect and collegiality amongst all members of the school community.

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Appendix 1- Shift from Retributive to Restorative Justice*:*

Retributive Justice	Restorative Justice
Misbehaviour defined as breaking school rules or letting the school down.	Misbehaviour defined as harm done to one person/group by another.
Focus on establishing blame or guilt on the past	Focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs and exploring how to meet them in the future.
Adversarial relationship and process-an authority figure, with the power to decide on a penalty, in conflict with wrongdoer.	Dialogue and negotiation-everyone involved in communicating and cooperating with each other.
Attention to rules and adherence to due process-we must be consistent and observe the rules.	Attention to relationships and achievement of mutually desired outcome.
Accountability defined in terms of receiving punishment	Accountability defined as understanding impact of actions, taking responsibility for choices and suggesting ways to repair them.

Adapted from: Zehr, H. (2002). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice,* Intercourse, PA, Good Books.

Appendix 2 – Semi Structured Interview Questions

7. What in your understanding of the concept of Restorative Practice and how did you come to learn about it?
8. Have you received formal training in it?
9. When and how do you implement Restorative Practice in school?
10. What do you believe to be the advantages and disadvantages of Restorative Practice?
11. Can you think of a time when Restorative Practice did not work? Why, in your opinion didn't it work in this instance?
12. Are you of the opinion that Restorative Practice benefits the wider school community and fosters healthy relationships between students and staff? Please elaborate.

Appendix 3 – Participant Information Sheet

<u>**Participant Information**</u>

<u>**Title:**</u> Exploring Restorative Practice – Teachers' Perspectives

<u>**Name of Researcher:**</u> Irene Brennan

<u>**Introduction and Aims:**</u>

Teaching and learning and a positive school experience for all can only happen with a shared determination to operate in a climate and culture of respect. In the second level setting, one of the biggest challenges to this positive experience for both students and teachers is classroom management. Classroom management refers to a whole variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students on task and productive in a class. Discipline has evolved and changed in recent years. There has been a shift from retributive practice towards restorative practice. This shift towards restorative practice is a positive development in that it is a better model for addressing challenging behaviour.

Restorative Practice is an innovative approach to offending and/or challenging behaviour in which repairing the harm done to relationships and people is placed over and above the need for assigning blame and dispensing punishment. Restorative Practice in schools looks at repairing the harm done to people and relationships rather than punishing pupils. The teacher tries to build relationships and use certain strategies to manage conflict in situations. Restorative Practice approaches in the second level classroom can be seen in measures such as role modelling, pastoral care structures and curriculum based programmes such as Social, Personal, Health Education. The responsive approaches can be identified as setting clear expectations, holding meetings and putting in place clear sanctions. Restorative Practice has its challenges such as certain students not having the capacity to engage with the process or when there is a lack of consistency across the school in carrying out the practice. Often, through the Restorative Practice process, it emerges that the root cause of students' challenging

behaviour lies outside the classroom, for example, stemming from students' home and/or wider community environment. The skills gained through the Restorative Practice process should help students deal with relationships in the future, be it relationships with family and friends and/or professional relationships.

The purposes of this research are: (a) to establish teachers' perspectives on the meaning of Restorative Practice and on whether, and how, it can implemented on a whole school level; (b) to ascertain whether Restorative Practice works in all cases and to identify the principal difficulties faced by those who implement it; and (c) to identify the benefits of Restorative Practice for the wider school community.

The information will then be analysed and, where feasible, will be used to inform and review discipline approaches in Carndonagh Community School.

Procedures:

The researcher will meet with each participant prior to the interview seperately. At this first meeting, the researcher will furnish each participant with this Information Sheet, which outlines the nature and purpose of the research and other matters pertinent to the research process. This Information Sheet will be retained by participants. In addition, the researcher will provide each participant with a Consent Form in order to enable participants to provide their free and full consent to participate in this research. Participants who provide their consent to participate in the research must sign the Consent Form and return it to the researcher before 15th January 2018. On receipt of signed Consent Form, the researcher will schedule a suitable time and date (between 15th and 19th January 2018) on which to conduct the interview [one interview, conducted separately with each participant]. The interview will be recorded on a recording device and hand written notes will also be taken.

Confidentiality and Data Protection:

Participants will be referred to as Teacher A/ Teacher B, etc. Participants will be advised – at the outset of the interview process (and throughout, if necessary) – to ensure that individual students or groups of students are not identified, or identifiable, from the information provided in answer to questions posed. Where specific incidences/examples are being discussed, participants will be advised to refrain from using the real name(s) of the student(s) involved, referring instead to an individual student as Student A, etc., and to groups of students as Group

X, etc. All data will be collected, processed, and stored in compliance with relevant data protection legislation and compliance with LYIT's Guidelines for Electronic Data Storage.

Voluntary Participation:

You have volunteered to participate in this research project and signed a Consent Form. If you wish to withdraw from the project you must inform the researcher immediately in writing. You may withdraw from the study up until the data has been transcribed or before the 2nd February 2018.

Discontinuation of the study:

You understand that the researcher may discontinue the study at any time without your permission.

Permission:

This project has Research Ethics Approval from LYIT.

Further Information:

You may find more information about the research project or answers to any questions or queries you may have by emailing XXXXX

Participant Consent Form

Title: Restorative Practice – Teachers' Perspectives

Name of Researcher: Irene Brennan

Supervisor Details: Dr. Sharon Mc Laughlin, Department of Law and Humanities in Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

Sharon.mclaughlin@lyit.ie.

Declaration: I _____, acknowledge that:

- I have been informed of and understand the purpose of the study
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions
- I understand that the interviews will take place between the 15th and 19th January 2018. I can withdraw from the study up until the data has been transcribed or before 2nd February 2018. .
- I understand there will be no penalty encountered if I do withdraw from the study
- I understand that my participation is voluntary
- I consent to the publication of results
- I understand that the interview will be hand written and audio recorded
- I understand that in this study I will be referred to as 'Teacher A etc'.
- I must not refer to the real name of a student or group of students, referring to them as 'student A/student B' and 'Group X and Group Y'.
- I understand that all data will be collected, processed and stored securely
- I agree to participate in the study as outlined to me

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 5 -Pilot Semi Structured Interview:

Researcher: Pilot interview with Teacher X held on the 12th January 2018. This is a pilot interview based on Teachers' Perspectives on Restorative Practice. You are very welcome to the interview. Are you ready to begin?

Participant: Yes I am.

R: Let's begin. Question one: What is your understanding of the concept of Restorative Practice and how did you come to learn about it?

P: Well restorative practice is a concept based around restoring relationships and the harm done to people. It can be used instead of giving a punishment and gives both the victim and the perpetrator the opportunity to have their voices heard. It aims to repair the relationship and thus allow everyone to move on. I learned about it when I was completing my undergraduate course in teaching.

R: Have you received formal training in it?

P: I have not received any formal training in it. As I stated before it was part of a module on discipline that I completed in my undergraduate studies. I have not got the opportunity to complete any cpd on it.

R: When and how do you implement Restorative Practice in school?

P: I try my best to implement it as often as possible. I implement it when two students may have fallen out and try to repair the relationship. I would hold a restorative practice conference and meet with them separately and then together to try and get them to resolve the issue. I also sometimes use it when there may be a disagreement between me and a pupil, perhaps when they may say I am picking on them but in fact I am just pushing them on.

R: What do you believe to be the advantages and disadvantages of Restorative Practice?

P: There are a myriad of advantages and disadvantages to restorative practice. The advantages include it promotes healthy relationships in the school between students and staff and students. It also gives students the skills they will need in life to deal with conflict and try and resolve the many issues they might face in life.

A disadvantage is if you want to do it properly it can take a lot of time and hard work. They students might not always be as enthusiastic in taking part and some students I find, do not have the ability to reason and make logic of the harm they might be causing.

R: Can you think of a time when Restorative Practice did not work? Why, in your opinion didn't it work in this instance?

P: Well one instance comes to mind when it did not work. The case involved a time when two students had fallen out. I tried organising a meeting with the two students and when it happened I had not done enough preparation to try and deal with the issue. Thus the meeting lacked structure and I just felt it did not work the way I had planned. The relationship has since been repaired.

P: Are you of the opinion that Restorative Practice benefits the wider school community and fosters healthy relationships between students and staff? Please elaborate.

R: I definitely agree that it fosters healthy relationships. I see that when it is implemented there is definitely a more vibrant and happy environment in the school. There is a more positive school experience for all. Students now know to treat each other with respect and as well as that treat all staff with respect. Conflict is dealt with in a calm and confidential manner but one must remember it takes time and patience. It is a great practice if the whole school gets on board with it and can be very effective in dealing with bullying.

R: Have you anything else to add?

P: No I think that is all. Thanks.

Appendix 6 – Interview with Teacher A

Participant: Teacher A

Date: 15th January 2018.

Researcher: Interview with Teacher A on the 15th of January 2018. Ok so thank you teacher A for coming to the interview. My interview is on restorative practice-teachers perspectives. So we will begin…What in your understanding of the concept of Restorative Practice and how did you come to learn about it?

Participant: Ok for me restorative practice is all about creating a em more positive approach in the school by em maybe focusing on a variety of techniques and strategies to repair the relationships of the students. Em so like in school instead of punishing the students for breaking a rule in the classroom, maybe the teacher would eh hope to use like different em questioning skills or methodologies to solve the issue. And eh I would have learned about restorative practice when I was in training to become a secondary school teacher in college.

Researcher: Have you received formal training in it?

P: No, not really since I was at college but I would hope to in the future.

R: When and how do you implement Restorative Practice in school?

P: Em, so it is practised maybe like all the time without me really knowing it. Em I would implement it by getting all the students or parties involved. Em so by maybe meeting before class starts or after the class or even to organise a meeting when suits both parties. Then maybe discuss it with the victim and the offender separately or together or even get them to write down their thoughts or feelings on a piece of paper and get them to come to me with them and then maybe discuss it together and see if and when the two parties come together and get the issue resolved.

R: Lovely, thank you. Very good so next question. What do you believe to be the advantages and disadvantages of Restorative Practice?

P: Ok so starting with the advantages of restorative practice so maybe try and solve the problem and em maybe the whole thing of rekindling the friendship between the students and

those involved and maybe getting the whole school community or the whole class group to focus more so on their studies or on their upcoming tests or maybe get them involved in an extra curricular activity to bond. "to make them bond, yeah, very good".

And then the disadvantages of the restorative practice would be: it takes up a serious amount of time. Both on the teachers behalf and even for the students to give up a lunch time to meet with the teacher and try and get the issue resolved and even like when you do meet them and try and resolve it sometimes the students really don't act on the issue and don't try and resolve it at all.

R: Ok very good, thank you. Can you think of a time when Restorative Practice did not work? Why, in your opinion didn't it work in this instance?

P: Well in many cases it does work for me but eh there are definitely different times that it like you would run out of time or even for example I had a time there was a class test happening em and I just maybe at times like you forget about it straight away and then you might be put under pressure and come up with the wrong solution to the issue and then you come up with resulting with the wrong outcome and it might affect the students.

R: "in the future yeah, very good". Are you of the opinion that Restorative Practice benefits the wider school community and fosters healthy relationships between students and staff? Please elaborate.

P: Ok so, it would em reduce the tension in the workplace or in the school community between both the teaching staff and student body of the school and then another one would be eh it would give the teachers a greater confidence em maybe in managing a difficult situation when it may arise in the school or academic year.

Researcher: Very good, thank you very much for participating in the interview teacher A.

Participant: Thank you, no problem.

Appendix 7- Semi Structured Interview with Teacher B

<u>**Participant:**</u> Teacher B

<u>**Date:**</u> 16th January 2018

Researcher: Interview with teacher B on the 16th January 2018. Hello Teacher B you are very welcome to the interview. This interview is on restorative practice are you ready to begin?

Participant: yes.

<u>*R:*</u> What is your understanding of the concept of Restorative Practice and how did you come to learn about it?

<u>*P:*</u> Well I first heard about restorative practice in my PME course, we done eh a module on it and basically em what I understand about it is where we build relationships or restore relationships between peers or between peers and students rather than placing blame emphasis on punishments or condemning the problem or situation we come to the root of the problem and try to establish what caused it and repair it.

<u>*R:*</u> Have you received formal training in it?

<u>*P:*</u> Em no not any formal courses just the module I done in the PME in DCU course.

R: And what was the module called?

<u>*P:*</u> It was called mediation skills for secondary school education.

<u>*R:*</u> When and how do you implement Restorative Practice in school?

P: I would implement it when conflict is involved whether that be in my class or outside the classroom between peers or between myself and a student. It is really important when I implement it em dialogue and communication is essential I find to restorative practice. In order to solve a problem I need to sit down with whoever is involved and listen to the issues not to interpret from here say like what he said and what she said, to establish what exactly happened em and sometimes I think it is better to have the two students. If its between two student so that one person isn't getting in their point of view across another. So when I understand a

problem I can then ask them how they would resolve it and more importantly they can establish what went wrong and they find a solution themselves and it builds nearly ownership and responsibility in themselves and also resilience for future conflicts.

R: What do you believe to be the advantages and disadvantages of Restorative Practice?

P: Em the most important advantage is it definitely does repair relationships. I find that if you sit down with a student or two students you hear them and they hear you, there is very much a lot of dialogue and democratic views, it like everyone is involved in it and there is no dictatorship or authoritarian approach. Also em like I said before ownership and responsibility, everybody takes ownership whether that be me in my part in a conflict or the students.

Em disadvantages I don't feel that the approach is always respected particularly by older students. I find that they find its quite juvenile and they don't always respect it. Em also time constraints. Its not always realistic to sit down for an hour sometimes these conflicts can't be resolved within an hour, sometimes and to give that time can be very difficult. Em also you could spend an hour with a student or longer and then they go out and they read something on social media or students say something and it undoes your work completely so there are a lot of disadvantages to it also.

R: Can you think of a time when Restorative Practice did not work? Why, in your opinion didn't it work in this instance?

P: Em yes I can had a particular student, a female student and she was very disruptive and eh disrespectful, not only for myself but for a number of teachers also. Em so one day I had enough she was quite disrespectful in the class and I kept her back after the class during the breaktime and I wanted to discuss what was on em and what was causing this behaviour. She said that she felt that she was being picked on or isolated like separated from the rest of the class, she was only being picked on for talking. Em I basically well I disagreed but I might just ask her how did she think that we would solve this problem and she said that if other people were talking even in respect herself and if they talked to her she wouldn't talk to them but if they did talk they would also get punished or get a note. So I agreed to that and we came to an arrangement and this was how it was going to go on that she wouldn't be talking anymore blah blah blah and when the class came back I explained this to them and they are agreed right ok. Now what happened as a result was the class nearly took it as an attack more so than anything even though me and another student had discussed it they didn't see it that way. They seen it

as another additional restriction that I was putting on them and didn't respond well to it. What I did feel responded better was, well the student proceeded to even further talk out of turn and nearly to get other students in trouble with herself. I went to her tutor she had a strong word with her and her parents would be involved. This seemed to work quite well but what really solved it and solved the problem and conflict between us was a new seating plan. They got new seating orders, they were in pods so they were with other students but I separated her from students she got on quite well with and I found this worked very well. I found that I know it worked well was because during a parent teacher meeting which she attended with her parents she admitted that the change that had come over her in the class her work had improved, her behaviour in class and her attitude was due to being separated from her peers not because of a conversation we had had or because of restorative practice but because specifically she had been separated from her peers and therefore she felt that she was contributing to the class a lot more positively.

_R:_ Are you of the opinion that Restorative Practice benefits the wider school community and fosters healthy relationships between students and staff? Please elaborate.

_P:_ Em yes I definitely do but I do think it is limited so I would always start with restorative practice in any conflict situation or issues that one might have. Em, try and solve the problem and build bridges to overcome these problems and I really do think it is important to sit down and listen to a student as long as they are willing to talk and discuss it back with you. I feel that if the student feels that they can talk to you then you are automatically building a relationship with them and then therefore you are positively or benefitting the school community. Also students can talk to eachother, therefore things are not bottled up. Em so I do think it has a positive effect on the school and the community but like eh as I said previously I think older student don't necessarily always respect this and sometimes they just respond better to a more structured approach em you set the rules down, you said what the consequences were and backing up the consequences and sticking to your approach or your classroom contract sometimes just works better than talking. Sometimes they would just rather see actions than words.

Appendix 8 – Semi Structured Interview with Teacher C

<u>**Participant:**</u> Teacher C

<u>**Date:**</u> 16th January 2018

<u>*Researcher:*</u> Interview with teacher C on the 16th January 2018. Hello Teacher C you are very welcome to the interview. This interview is on restorative practice are you ready to begin?

<u>*Participant:*</u> yes.

<u>*Researcher:*</u> ok so first question.

1. <u>**What is your understanding of the concept of Restorative Practice and how did you come to learn about it?**</u>

<u>*P:*</u> So Restorative Practice for me is about restoring relationships between students or adults that have come to be disjointed.

<u>*R:*</u> Ok and how did you come to learn about it?

The vice principal maybe ten years ago would have been the first person that mentioned it to me when I was beginning to come involved in anti bullying stuff.

<u>*R:*</u> Very good.

2. <u>**Have you received formal training in it?**</u>

<u>*P:*</u> We did an inservice here in the school in it.

<u>*R:*</u> Did you do any other training in it?

<u>*P:*</u> No.

3. <u>**When and how do you implement Restorative Practice in school?**</u>

<u>*P:*</u> I do a lot of restorative practice work, well, firstly, among my year group because I am head of year for 3rd years. So if there is any disagreements between themselves; boys between boys, girls between girls or sometimes between a student and a teacher. Then I have to and do introduce restorative practice as a way of solving these issues.

R: Ok, do you ever find it works between older students or even between staff and students?

P: Definitely, if the teacher is again willing to take on board the viewpoint of the student and in the meetings when its all done safely and confidentially, it works very well between adults and students as well.

R:

4. **What do you believe to be the advantages and disadvantages of Restorative Practice?**

P: The students are learning that conflicts can be solved peacefully and respectfully. Eh you are allowing them to reflect on their hurt, come up with a plan about how it can be healed and then implement that plan, so its like you are giving them a solving problem approach and you are putting it into action.

R: Very good, are there any disadvantages of it, do you ever feel it there are negative aspects to it?

P: It takes time, and another disadvantage is if especially if its two children that have fallen out and maybe there is exclusion or isolation or maybe they are alleging bullying, the parents think that this needs to be solved overnight and it cannot be solved overnight, it takes time.

R:

5. **Can you think of a time when Restorative Practice did not work? Why, in your opinion didn't it work in this instance?**

P: The only one time where I say it did not work and this is me doing this for ten years is when a parent refused point blank to let her daughter to take part in the meetings.

R: What was her reason for this? Was it just she didn't agree with it?

P: We had been working with this group of girls and this particular student, if I call her student A, had come to this school here because she isolated by her friends in the previous school. Throughout the meetings it emerged that she had been physically rough with this new group of friends, pushing them about, pulling them back by the bag and then they began to isolate her and in the meetings when this all came out as the real reason why they had all fallen out, her

mammy felt no we are not doing this anymore and we had to stop. It went to senior management and we were told to stop.

R:

6. Are you of the opinion that Restorative Practice benefits the wider school community and fosters healthy relationships between students and staff? Please elaborate.

P: Definitely, definitely because you are teaching the kids that do you know what everything is solvable if you sit down, you take time, em and talk respectfully. That you know: 'I don't like it when', you are not accusing people of what they do on you, your statements are a lot of I statements e.g. I felt hurt when. So they are taking ownership of their own hurt and the other person is not feeling accused and they are allowed to see things. Stand in their shoes, empathy I suppose they are getting the skill of empathy.

R: what way do you do restorative practice? Like circle time?

P: I start first of all, I interview each person individually, so you spend maybe half an hour talking through their side of the story, note all that down. At that stage, the child is going to say to you 'there is no way I am not having anything to do with them or sitting in a room with those people'. And if you are talking about one against maybe four or five I would leave that a couple of days. I would bring them back, review the situation and see how everybody is feeling now. Would you be willing now to sit with student A that you have fallen out with student B, would you be willing to sit down. Very often when the tide has gone in and out a few time they say yeah. So you might start with two and you will have two meetings with those and then maybe that might filter out to the bigger group then, which it usually does. At the start they say nah I am not sitting down with all them but if you do it really slowly and in stages and that's the way I do it. Its more restorative meetings than circle time and in and when I have more than two I always bring in another teacher because in the past before, a parent came in here and said 'ah you said and you accused' and I take all the notes and everything is all written down and the kids see what I write down and I show it to them at the end of the meeting and say is this a true account of what we talked about? When you have another teacher there it acts as back up and protection as well.

We have also done circle time before from the restorative point of view where we have had a very bold second year class and when it was all drawn back it was really one teacher. The

students felt that the teacher hated them so they were deliberately going in everyday to push her buttons and drive her mad. And then through the time that we spent with them over the couple of weeks it emerged it was actually only two that was leading the group. So when you ask them to do that exercise where you ask them where do you see yourself in this class academically or behaviour wise. Who are the people that are behaving well in this class and you ask them to line up and then you say does anybody feel that somebody is where they shouldn't be and they don't be long pointing out because they like justice done. Again you got to get the teacher on side to do things like, this was a very weak class and the teacher had been putting up notes and notes on the board that they were struggling to take down so that teacher took on board and said well do you know what maybe I am giving them too much written work and they have to change too. It's a two way conversation.

_R:_ That's a great insight. Is there anything you would like to add?

_P:_ No thank you.

_R:_ Thank you for your time.

Appendix 9 – Semi Structured Interview with Teacher D

Participant: Teacher D

Date: 19th January 2018

Researcher: Interview with teacher D on the 19th January 2018. Hello Teacher D you are very welcome to the interview. This interview is on restorative practice are you ready to begin?

Participant: yes.

Researcher: ok so first question. What is Restorative Practice and how did you come to learn about it?

Participant: I would regard Restorative Practice as a tool which assists the development of positive relationships within schools, allowing pupils and staff to create a culture of respect and where conflict and negative behaviour is addressed effectively.

Donegal VEC/ETB at the time secured funding under Peace III to develop RP in schools in the county. I had previously been involved in peer mediation and I suppose it was a natural progression so I got involved in the project.

R: Have you received formal training in it?

P: Yes I have completed a post graduate certificate with the University of Ulster in 2012 and I would have also attended a master class in RP and I would have organised training within the school and I would have attended those training sessions as well. In the Certificate the modules covered rp – the theory and a module on developing practical techniques. It was very much hands on in that we would have been facing scenarios and gone through the scenarios with the group of about 12 teachers from all over Donegal and also we would have taken on two or three cases and used action research with those children to work through the process of rp with them.

R: And how and when do you implement Restorative Practice in school?

P: Well I suppose there are two main ways the first one is conflict resolution. This would mainly be with students and it would be used where there has been a damage or breakup in a relationship or friendship and we would work with the to try and repair that relationship and in

doing that allow them to take responsibility and deal with unacceptable behaviour. There would be lots of issues around bullying, cyber bullying, girls in particular falling out.

Then then other way would be circle time which I would use sometimes with classes. That would work in two ways. Sometimes it would just be going in and working with classes where there maybe an issue if they are not getting on with a teacher or if the class as a general or as one group are misbehaving I would work with them that way and try and gather their student voice but also just sometimes if I am doing something like S&S with a group, I might just go in and do a touch base with a group and I would use circle time for that as well.

I think junior students tend to be more honest and willing to give it a go and are more aware of their voice and are willing to use their voice and therefore they will engage more with circle time. I think with senior students they tend to not engage as much in lots of things. They do not be as verbal in their communication; it is very much a learned technique. However I would find if you are working with a senior student who you would have worked with as a junior student, then they have an awareness of how either circle time or rp works. They know the advantages of doing it and are more willing to engage in it and set themselves up as a positive role model within the group so that will work very well.

R: And what do you believe to be the advantages and disadvantages of restorative practice.

P: I suppose the main advantages would be conflict is dealt with in a very effective way. It also means that students will develop conflict management skills, which they carry with them throughout their lives. It gives everybody a voice and an opportunity to speak and it also means it is a safe space for children and the main advantage in schools is that it works and it's a very effective technique.

The disadvantages then would be that it can be time consuming and that you need to make sure that you have parental buy in as well as student but in.

R: Can you think of a time Restorative Practice did not work and why did it not work in this instance?

P: There has been a few times. Typically when it does not work, the one that comes to mind is where a student felt, it was reported by the parent that their daughter was being bullied and isolated within a class. So there was a session with four or five girls and this one student. What ended up happening was it was the students own behaviour that was causing the issue but they

were not willing to take responsibility for that behaviour. So they were willing to point the finger at the other girls and not point what they were doing wrong and wasn't willing to listen to what the student had to say to them around their own side, so their involvement in it and then what happened was the student went back and fed their version of events to the parents and the parent withdrew the student from the process.

R: Was the issue solved at any stage?

P: Well the situation I suppose you would describe as being ongoing as in that nothing has changed. There is still a breakdown in that relationship and that friendship has not been repaired.

R: Are you off the opinion that restorative practice fosters healthy relationships in the wider school community and fosters healthy relationships between students and staff. Please elaborate.

P: Yes. RP allows for the development of a caring school which is based on positive respectful relationships. It creates a climate of tolerance. A climate where talking about unacceptable behaviours happens and taking ownership of our behaviour happens. It means that 'I'm sorry' carries more weight. Its not just words. It allows us to listen and more importantly to hear what each other is trying to say. It fosters partnerships, ideally it creates open and honest relationships where we all talk to each other rather than about each other in a respectful way.

I have used it in an instance where there was a serious and ongoing issues with behaviour and in particular with a student in a class. The students take on it was they were behaving that way because the teacher did not like them and the teacher was picking on them. The teacher was off the opinion that they had to constantly be at this student to get the work out of them. While the teacher may have been picking on the student, they felt justified because the student wasn't working but it was more a breakdown in an understanding in what each other was wanting. So I arranged a wee restorative meeting with both of them. I would have explained beforehand what was going to happen and when they met, we just faced each other and went through very basic rules, that I would do with very small groups as in; we use 'I' statements and we talk 'to' each other, one person at a time, don't talk about anybody not in the room, those type of things. So what ended up happening in that situation was, the teacher bought into the whole idea, they explained that it was a practical subject, that the student was not achieving their full potential because they were not constantly on task and the student then realised, that because they were

convinced the teacher did not like them, they then realised that actually well this teacher only wants whats best for me and once the teacher had that opportunity in a room, to say it to the student. The student had no choice but to actually hear what exactly was being said and it was pointed out to them that their relationship was repaired and that student actually went on to take that subject for the leaving cert and this would have happened in maybe 2nd or 3rd year, so it worked. Otherwise they would not have done that subject and it would have been a shame if they didn't. Once that was done there was a greater respect and automatically the student had a higher level of respect for the teacher because they realised they were not out to get them and they were picking on them in the strict sense of the meaning and only for their own benefit.

_R:_ Yes only to push them on. Have you anything you would like to add?

_P:_ I suppose I would add that I feel that restorative practice is something that perhaps all schools should look to develop. Perhaps as part of wellbeing in the new Junior cycle, there is scope for it there in relation to developing coping skills, conflict management skills which I feel students would be able to use themselves and reduce the amount of bullying and stress and anxiety to young people around breakdowns in relationships.

_R:_ Thank you very much.

_P:_ no problem.

Appendix 10 – List of Abbreviations

Delivering Equal Opportunities in Schools (DEIS)

Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)

Restorative Justice (RJ)

Restorative Practice (RP)

Social Personal Health Education (SPHE)

Thematic Analysis (TA)

United Kingdom (UK)

United Nations (UN)