A Report on Children in Crossfire’s Continuing Professional Course for Teachers

Report by Dr Alan McMurray

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<th>Northern Ireland</th>
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Freire (1996) sees the motivation for transforming the world for the liberation of humankind as based on a belief in humanity and a profound love for the world and for people. Love and hope are considered the basis for taking courage to act in order to create a new vision of the world which breaks down social barriers of class, gender and ethnicity. As individuals transform the world, they transform themselves within it (quoted in Gill and Neils, 2016, p22).
Introduction
In October 2018 Children in Crossfire provided training as part of its Educating the Heart Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programme for primary and post-primary teachers in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It is OCN accredited at Level 3 (equivalent to Quality and Qualifications Ireland Level 5). The training was delivered over two days in three locations, the Mac, Belfast, Fermanagh House, Enniskillen and the MIC Limerick. Children in Crossfire funded two days’ substitute teacher cover for each teacher attending the training.

This research focuses on the training provided by Children in Crossfire’s two facilitators in the Mac, Belfast. The event was oversubscribed with 32 participants from range of 19 schools (15 primary, 2 Special Educational Needs, 15 post-primary). Primary teachers’ experience included all primary years from p1 to p7. Post-primary teachers’ subjects included Art and Design, Business Studies, Drama, History, Learning for Life and Work, Music, Geography, Religious Education, Spanish. One of the activities revealed that the combined years of teaching experience of the group was 553 Years. Teacher experience ranged from 4 years to 30 years.

All participants were from schools based in Northern Ireland. The purpose of the research was to gather information and teachers’ views about training. The research will be used to inform further developments in Children in Crossfire’s support, training and work in developing a development education approach which centralises compassion as a core skill.

Research Aim
The aim of the research was to explore teachers’ experiences and views of Children in Crossfires’ Educating the Heart training programme.

Research Objectives
The three research objectives were to:
1. explore areas for development
2. assess the suitability of the OCN Level 3 Accreditation Tasks
3. identify teachers’ requirements for further support to develop and implement the Educating the Heart Programme and for accreditation and achieving the Compassionate Schools Award
**Research Methods**

Qualitative research methods were used. The researcher undertook the role of observer/participant. Over the course of the two training days the researcher reviewed training materials and talked to and asked teachers’ questions as they naturally emerged during the training (Appendix 1) The researcher audio recorded facilitator/teacher discussions and kept a photographic record of activities using an I-Pad.

**Educating the Heart programme: Aim and Benefits**

The aim of the Educating the Heart programme as stated in the *Children in Crossfire, Teacher Resource Pack, 2018* was:

> ...to facilitate the cultivation of the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for participating the world as a compassionate global citizen (2018).

The aim of the training programme was to support teachers to embed Educating the Heart methods across subject and curriculum areas (*Educating the Heart promotional leaflet, 2018*). The training would enable teachers to contribute to:

> Building compassionate and active citizens who are engaged critically with global issues, and have the knowledge, skills, emotional intelligence and creativity to create a fair and sustainable world (*Educating the Heart promotional leaflet, 2018*).

The benefits were, teachers would be provided with a range of teaching and learning strategies which would enable them to:

- Explore global development issues and actions to address these
- Promote pupil voice by involving them in learning and global citizenship actions
- Support pupils’ personal and emotional development through ‘education for wellbeing’ tools
- Develop empathy amongst pupils
- Develop pupils as critical thinkers
- Develop pupils’ critical literacy
- Develop pupils’ creativity and imagination
- Develop a growth mindset amongst pupils
- Develop pupils’ confidence and skills to address controversial issues
- Develop pupils’ confidence and skills to implement education for ethics

(*Educating the Heart promotional leaflet, 2018*).

**Open College Network (OCN) Accreditation**

The Educating the Heart Programme is accredited by OCN. Teachers participating in the programme had the option of completing tasks to achieve an OCN Level 3 Qualification at primary or post-primary level in *Nurturing Compassionate Citizens*. 
The OCN accreditation process is administered by Children in Crossfire. Teachers complete and submit OCN tasks to Children in Crossfire who verify tasks and award OCN Level 3 accreditation.

**Children in Crossfire Bronze, Silver and Gold School Compassionate School Awards**

Children in Crossfire also offered the opportunity for schools to achieve a compassionate school award at Bronze, Silver and Gold level. To achieve an award schools, are required to provide evidence of how they meet award criteria (Table 1.). The award scheme is administered by Children in Crossfire.

**Table 1. Compassionate Schools Award Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bronze Award</th>
<th>Silver Award</th>
<th>Gold Award</th>
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<tr>
<td>📚 Achieving the Bronze Award means that:</td>
<td>📚 Achieving the Silver Award means that you already meet the criteria for the Bronze Award, and:</td>
<td>📚 Achieving the Gold Award means that you already meet the criteria for the bronze and silver awards, and:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- You have attended Children in Crossfire’s Teachers in Development and Learning (TIDAL) Educating the Heart CPD Course</td>
<td>- You are promoting TIDAL Educating the Heart to colleagues within your school</td>
<td>- Educating the Heart is embedded across the ethos and policies of the whole school</td>
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<td>- You have successfully completed and received the TIDAL Educating the Heart accredited CPD qualification</td>
<td>- You are collaborating with colleagues to create subject links through Educating the Heart</td>
<td>- Your school has formed a partnership with another school, and pupils are engaged in shared learning</td>
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<td>- You are putting TIDAL Educating the Heart into practice through the delivery of the Pupil Programme</td>
<td>- You and your colleagues are beginning to see the positive impact of Educating the Heart on pupil learning and wellbeing</td>
<td>- Pupils have the opportunity to plan a Compassion in Action event for the school and/or wider community</td>
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**Educating the Heart Programme Support Materials**

At the start of the training teachers were provided with a resource pack. This included, a pupil programme and a teacher OCN Level 3 course in *Nurturing Compassionate Citizens* accreditation booklet.

**The Pupil Programme**

The Pupil Programme included 12 lesson plans. The lesson plans were designed for use by primary and post-primary teachers in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and aligned to meet the N.I. and R.o.I. curriculum requirements.

Each lesson was based on using active teaching and learning methods and included up to three 20 to 30-minute activities and pupil resources. Teachers can adapt the lessons to suit the needs of their pupils.
The resource pack includes an illustration of The Compassion Compass (Figure 1). The Compassion Compass is a reference framework which teachers can use when planning and teaching lessons. Teachers can navigate the framework using different compass points to explore and teach pupils about different components of compassion.

Figure 1

The two-day training programme was designed to enable teachers to use some of the active teaching and learning methods when teaching the Pupil Programme and to develop pupils’ knowledge, understanding, skills and values, pupil voice and participation. These are viewed as the components of compassion for educating the Heart, Head and Body (Table 2).

Table 2. Educating the Heart, Head and Body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heart</th>
<th>Educating the Whole Person</th>
<th>Head</th>
<th>Body</th>
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<td>Emotional Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge and Understanding</td>
<td>Pupil Voice and Participation</td>
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<td>Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Universal Values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Literacy</td>
<td>Active Compass</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Metacognition</td>
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**Teacher OCN Course Accreditation Booklet**

Teachers were given a primary or post-primary OCN Level 3 course in *Nurturing Compassionate Citizens* accreditation booklet. The introduction highlighted relevant course connections to the Northern Ireland Curriculum and to the Shared Education Programme (SEP). The links to the Northern Ireland Curriculum and relevance to SEP were reflected in OCN course objectives e.g. to:

- *Promote pupil voice*
- *Support pupils’ wellbeing and personal development*
- *Develop pupils’ interpersonal skills*....

To achieve the OCN Level 3 qualification teachers were required to successfully complete and submit nine short assignments including one 1500-word written assignment.

Discuss how the Educating the Heart training has supported your practice. Critically reflect on the extent to which you think implementing Educating the Heart in practice will develop pupils as compassionate global citizens.

The booklet outlined learning three main outcomes in relation to developing knowledge and understanding, active teaching and learning methods and reflecting sharing and evaluating practice. Each learning outcome had associated assessment criteria, reference to assessment tasks in the booklet and assessment methods.

**Educating the Heart Programme Structure**

The Educating the Heart training programme was held over two consecutive days in October 2018. Teachers participated in a range of activities under the main headings shown in table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Outline of structure and content of training days (from presentation slides)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Day One</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction and Welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring our role as educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>The science of compassion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflecting on values and considering new perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultivating skills</td>
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<td>OCN tasks</td>
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**Teachers Hopes for the Training**

At the beginning of Day 1 teachers were asked what they hoped to gain from the training programme. Teacher views were explored in group discussion. Teacher responses included:

- to share ideas
- to be inspired
- to develop practical active and teaching methods
- ways to support pupils’ emotional development
- ideas on how to teach empathy and compassion
- knowledge and understanding of Global Citizenship and Compassion...
reflection on values
• to identity ways that the training and lessons can be mapped to Learning for Life and Work
• ideas on how to embed the Educating the Heart programme within the school and make it sustainable
• to explore ways to develop Educating the Heart with a partner school as part of Shared Education Programme (SEP)
• further resources
• ideas to develop the Educating the Heart programme in Early Years and SEN schools

What Teachers Brought to the Training
Teachers were also asked what they brought to the training, comments included:
• an open mind
• willingness to learn
• experience
• passion
• energy
• raising awareness of SEN and disabilities
• experience of working with an NGO in Africa
• ideas
• approaches to educate the whole child

These capabilities were demonstrated throughout the two days of the training. Teachers enthusiastically engaged in activities and discussion.

Training Facilitation/Delivery
The training was led and facilitated by two experienced Children in Crossfire facilitators. They demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of programme content and active teaching and learning methods.

The facilitators used power point presentations. On Day 1 facilitators began with introductions and welcome. They provided teachers with the background to the work of Children in Crossfire, and outlined the two days of the training.

At an early stage of Day 1 training, the facilitators presented and discussed the Compassion Compass (Figure 1). They clearly explained different components of compassion using examples. This provided a valuable reference framework. Facilitators used the framework to make connections to components of compassion during training activities for example, Self-Awareness and Navigating Emotions, Deepening Resilience and Building Personal and Social Wellbeing, Building Relationships and Developing Empathy. The approach modelled how teachers could use and navigate the compassion compass when planning and teaching.

The facilitators created an open climate for discussion and learning. Throughout the two days training they encouraged participation in activities and discussion. The facilitators asked questions, prompted teachers to ask questions and allowed time for reflection and dialogue.
The facilitators used a range of active teaching and learning methods to model how lessons in the pupil programme could be taught. They built in time for teachers to self-reflect and captured teachers work on wall displays. The facilitators also used a number of short video clips related to global citizenship and development education as a stimulus for group discussion.

**Activities**
The following are examples of the topics covered and teaching activities.

**Developing Self-Awareness.** Photo 6 shows a selection of objects. Teachers were asked to select and object that reminded them of why they became teachers and to self-reflect. In turn, teachers shared their thoughts. The activity related to the Self-Awareness component of the Compassion Compass.

**What makes a compassionate citizen?** Photo 7. In this activity teachers were asked to think about, the knowledge, skills and values required to be a compassionate citizen in 2030. The activity encouraged teachers to think about educating the whole person, the Heart, Head and Body (see Table 2, p.5). The activity highlighted what teachers needed to support pupils to develop to be a compassionate citizen. Teachers stated, this would be increasingly important in an individualistic, consumerist and materialistic world which leads to social inequalities and injustice.

**Teacher Responses**
The teacher responses focussed on skills and values rather than knowledge. They included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Values</th>
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<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Good judgment</td>
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<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Open mindedness</td>
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<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<td>Transferable</td>
<td>Risk taking</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Gratitude</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
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<td>Morality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Growth Mindset</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Positivity</td>
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<td>Hope</td>
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**Resilience** Photo 8 shows teachers participating in an activity called Tracking. This was about being able to notice and monitor changes in their emotional, physical or behavioural changes in response to a situation. The facilitator demonstrated how teachers could use Tracking along with Grounding and Resourcing (Photo 9) to support pupils to identify and manage their emotions and develop resilience (see Figure 1, p. Compassion Compass).

![P8. Day 1 Resilience: Tracking](image)

![P9. Day 1 Resilience: Techniques](image)

**Critical Literacy** Photo 10 shows teachers working together on a critical literacy activity. This focused on global citizenship and exploring global inequalities.

![P10. Day 1 Critical Literacy Activity](image)

Photos 11, 12 and 13 reflect the mood of the training.

![P.11](image)

![P.12](image)

![P.13](image)
**OCN Level 3 Accreditation and Assessment Tasks**

Teachers agreed that the two days training and the OCN Level 3 qualification were incentives for participating in the training. They were a valuable part of their Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Teachers had an opportunity to review assessment tasks and to discuss and complete assessment up to six tasks in the primary or post-primary Teachers’ Accreditation Booklet during the training days.

Teachers found this useful for a number of reasons. They had time outside school to start the OCN Level 3 Qualification. They were able to work on the tasks when relevant course information was still fresh. Teachers commented on finding it useful to be able to discuss tasks with others and facilitators. Teachers also said that because they had begun the accreditation process it would be easier to continue with it in school.

Generally, primary and post-primary teachers were positive about the assessment tasks. They agreed assessment tasks were appropriate, relevant and reflected what was covered in the training days. In particular, they liked how the tasks were linked to the Northern Ireland Curriculum, pedagogy and classroom and whole school planning. Teachers said the tasks could also be used when working thorough the processes for Children in Crossfire’s Compassionate School Award.

Teachers agreed, although the assessment tasks were relatively short and manageable it would be more difficult to find time on return to school to complete them because of other priorities. A few teachers also commented that assessment task 2.1 was repetitive. This task required teachers to select three different teaching methods and complete three diagrams which were the same and state what learning intentions they would set for each method.

**Support for Teachers**

Teachers were asked how Children in Crossfire could further support teachers beyond the training. To develop and implement Educating the Heart programme within the classroom, at a whole school level and to develop in collaborative partnership with another school(s) and respectively to meet the criteria for Children in Crossfire’s, Bronze, Silver and Gold Compassionate Schools Award (Table 1). Teachers identified three areas for further support.

**Support for Developing Educating the Heart in the Classroom**

- provide more copies of the pupil programme
- provide facilitators to help develop and teach the programme and support the teaching of controversial issues
- support teachers to adapt the programme for teaching the programme for very young children
- develop an Educating the Heart programme for SEN pupils and provide support for teachers to deliver it

**Support for Developing Educating the Heart at a Whole School Level**

- raise awareness of the programme and its benefits for all teachers to encourage a whole school approach
- provide whole staff development/training
- provide materials for whole staff development/training
• provide face to face support for subject teachers and in particular Learning for Life and Work teachers to identity curriculum connections and embed the programme within subjects (post-primary) and in other extra-curricular activities including creating an after-school club
• provide support to examine how the Educating the Heart Programme relates to key school policies and practice
• provide support to develop programme as part of the school development plan
• provide guidance on real world applications

Support for Developing Educating the Heart in a Collaborative Partnership with another school(s)
• provide substitute cover to allow teachers time to plan, develop and implement a collaborative approach with a partner school(s) to develop and implement the programme
• provide face to face support/facilitator to support schools to develop a collaborative partnership approach to develop the programme in partner schools
• provide guidance on how the programme can be developed as part of the Education Authority’s (EA’s) Shared Education Programme

Discussion
Generally, teacher feedback about the training and materials was very positive. Teachers agreed the training was well planned and structured with relevant an interesting content. Teachers agreed the facilitators were excellent or Fab as one teacher commented. Teachers recognised the value of being part of diverse group and the experience of their colleagues. They commented that they welcomed the opportunities to reflect, share and discuss ideas with colleagues and facilitators. Teachers said they enjoyed participating in activities. This they said, gave them ideas for teaching about compassion and that pupils would learn more by doing. Teachers said the compassion compass was a refreshing way/perspective for exploring development education with pupils.

Teachers recognised connections with the Educating the Heart Programme and the primary and post-primary Northern Ireland Curriculum. A few teachers stated it would be important in lessons to include empathy and compassion as learning outcomes alongside knowledge and skills. Others made the connection with resilience and Personal Development. Some teachers said they found the resilience activity very interesting and would support pupil’s emotional development.

One teacher said, I can’t wait to try them (activities) in the classroom. Another, commented the training was Buzzing. Other comments included, ...a really interesting and enjoyable course..., most of the content covered links directly to Learning for Life Work and Local and Global Citizenship...interesting lesson plans...

Points for Consideration
• Reflect on teacher comments on support (p.10) and where possible seek to address these.
• The aim of the training programme as stated in the Educating the Heart promotional leaflet, 2018 was to support teachers to embed Educating the Heart methods across subject and curriculum areas. Whereas, the aim of the Educating the Heart programme as stated in Children in Crossfire, Teacher Resource Pack, 2018 was to facilitate the cultivation of the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for participating the world as a compassionate global citizen (2018). Children in Crossfire might consider communicating one aim for consistency. The first version of the aim is broad. It does reflect the purpose of the training and activities and teacher experiences. However, it does not adequately capture other
perceived intentions of the training. This is perhaps more accurately communicated in the second version of the aim. A possible aim could be to:

...provide teachers with a range of practical active teaching and learning methods to facilitate the cultivation of the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for participating in the world as a compassionate global citizen.

- The introductory slides outlined the two days training under key headings. It might be useful to break down the main headings into more specific topics/activities. This would provide teachers with a clearer picture of the training and act as an aide memoire. Children in Crossfire could also think about including training course objectives or learning outcomes. These could be used in research and evaluations to measure the success of the training.
- Make brief reference to any relevant research on compassion to justify Educating the Heart Programme
- Include a session on how Educating the Heart related to the Northern Ireland Primary and Post-primary curriculum and Shared Education and for example, how teaching compassion can build good relations at a local level. This session would be in preparation for completing OCN Assessment Tasks.
- The focus of the training was on active teaching and learning methods. While these are an important way of developing knowledge and understanding, skills and values they may have led to an imbalance in developing knowledge and understanding during the training.
- While teachers made connections between Educating the Heart programme and the Northern Ireland Curriculum when completing the OCN Level 3 Assessment Task 1.1 and during discussions it would be worth making these connections more explicit. For example, what skills can be developed with reference to the curriculum using a particular active teaching and learning method. Teachers could also include knowledge and understanding.
- Review the component on critical literacy and link to communication skills and critical thinking, effective questioning. How can we teach critical literacy? What skills are required?
- Provide guidance and examples on teaching all the different component in the compassion compass. What would teaching these components look like in SEN and Early Years settings? What would the pupil experience?
- Review and amend assessment activity 2.1. The assessment task, part b asks, what learning intentions would you set for this method? Usually, teachers set learning intentions first then think about what method they will use.
Appendix 1.

Interview questions arising during the training days

- What do you hope to gain from the training?
- What do you bring to the training?
- What are your views about the training?
- What do you like/dislike about the training?
- What activities did you like/dislike? Why?
- What support do you need, resources, training ...?
- What are your views about the OCN Level 3 Assessment Tasks? Are they appropriate, manageable?
- What are your views about the Compassionate School Award?
- Are you likely to seek a Compassionate School Award?
- What are your views on pupil programme lessons? Are the lessons suitable for your pupils?