



EDUCATING THE HEART 2015 PILOT STUDY – A BRIEF SUMMARY

What is the Background to Educating the Heart?

Founded by Richard Moore in 1996, Children in Crossfire has developed a dual approach to realising its vision of building a compassionate world where every child can reach his or her potential – firstly, working overseas to improve healthcare, nutrition and education for young children; and secondly, working in Ireland and the UK to help young people gain the necessary skills and values to become active compassionate citizens with the capacity to bring about positive change both locally and globally.

Children in Crossfire's work in Development Education (DE) has evolved steadily throughout the organisation's history, most notably through the establishment, and ongoing development, of its respected Continuing Professional Development course for teachers, Teachers in Development and Learning (TIDAL), which seeks to build capacity for cultivating global citizenship amongst young people.

As a key part of the ongoing evolution of TIDAL, Children in Crossfire's patron, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, presided over the launch of the Educating the Heart initiative during a visit to Derry/Londonderry in 2013. The Dalai Lama addressed a private audience of educators, students, policy makers, and researchers as they explored together the role of compassion in educating both the minds and the hearts of young people.

Inspired by the Dalai Lama's vision for an education system that instils unbiased love, respect and compassion into the hearts and minds of young people, Children in Crossfire sought to explore the notion that compassion training might be incorporated as a central element of its DE programme and across the school curriculum. These explorations were intended to question the adequacy of a 'critical literacy' approach to implementing DE in cultivating a sense of global citizenship amongst young people. Would a DE pedagogical approach which also sought to nurture emotional literacy and well-being prepare young people more holistically for participating as compassionate global citizens in today's increasingly interconnected world?

Based on these questions, Children in Crossfire hosted a series of consultation seminars with key stakeholders, including 200 educators and DE practitioners, and over 50 young people. Educators and DE practitioners identified a need to build a deeper level of emotional capacity alongside critical thinking so that young people could develop more courage to take part in life in general, whilst working to build a more just global society. They felt that young people were being failed miserably by society's lack of focus on nurturing emotional skills for life and citizenship. They agreed that it was unrealistic to expect young people to have the positive values needed to act for peace and global

justice unless they were adequately skilled at both an emotional and thinking level.

Consultations amongst young people revealed a sense of being overwhelmed by the responsibility of addressing the problems our world, coupled with a sense of lack of capacity and/or readiness in being able, or having the confidence to do so.

What Did Educating the Heart Set Out to Achieve?

Recognising a possible gap in Children in Crossfire's DE pedagogical approach, the organisation sought to develop its DE methods so as to nurture compassion and emotional literacy alongside critical thinking and critical literacy. Children in Crossfire also recognised value in combining curriculum elements such as well-being, personal development, critical thinking and active citizenship.

Educating the Heart therefore aimed to:

- explore possibilities for evolving Children in Crossfire's DE initiatives towards a pedagogy which nurtures compassion and [combines critical and emotional literacy](#) approaches for engaging young people in global citizenship
- combine curriculum elements such as well-being, personal development, critical thinking and active citizenship
- develop a range of practical tools and methods for implementing the evolved approach in classroom teaching and learning
- explore and understand how young people might receive such an approach by engaging them directly in an Educating the Heart pilot programme
- develop a core competency framework for cultivating global citizenship through Educating the Heart

What were the Required Practical Steps?

1. In 2014, Children in Crossfire's DE team initially undertook training to build wider knowledge, skills and understanding of emotional literacy learning approaches. This was principally conducted through a process of [Cognitively Based Compassion Training](#) (CBCT) under the direction of Dr Brendan Ozawa de-Silva and CBCT founder Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi
2. Drawing from previous experiences of delivering DE, particularly through the TIDAL programme, and from the CBCT training, Children in Crossfire shaped a DE programme which was piloted during 2015 as an eight-week intervention amongst students aged 11-12 from Oakgrove Integrated College in Derry. Two classes (14 students per class) took part in the pilot study. One class received an **Inside-Out** programme intervention which began with compassion training and emotional literacy elements (**inside**) as a building block for later applying DE issues through critical literacy (**outside**). The other class received an **Outside-In** programme intervention which began with DE issues through critical literacy (**outside**) as stimulus for later applying compassion training and emotional literacy elements (**inside**)
3. Research findings from the pilot study, alongside further consultations with stakeholders, indicated a need to break the siloed approach between **Inside-Out** and **Outside-In**.
4. Children in Crossfire's Development Educators then undertook a further period of reflective practice, and evolved the approach in consultation with 10 educators and 12 young people.

The outcome was a recommendation to merge the two (Inside-Out/Outside-In) approaches in symbiosis so that emotional and critical literacy operate as **mutually interconnected aptitudes** for exploring DE issues.

Inside-Out and Outside-In Approaches Explained

The **Inside Out** methods were essentially designed to build a deeper understanding of self, others and compassionate interconnectedness. The intention was to methodically build skill sets around:

- relating to oneself with compassion
- relating compassionately to others in our day to day lives
- extending compassion to those we are interconnected with across the world

Using this foundation, the below aspects were then explored through a critical literacy framework:

- the global injustices inherent in our interdependent world
- bias, perspectives and attitudes to poverty and injustice
- active citizenship

The **Outside-In** Methods simply operated in reverse, beginning with the critical literacy framework, followed by an understanding of self, others and compassionate interconnectedness.



What were the key findings from the Pilot Study?

By the end of the study intervention: -

- The **Inside-Out** Group demonstrated significant understanding of **Self** and **Other Compassion**.
- Whilst the **Outside-In** Group demonstrated significant understanding of Other Compassion, there was no significant change in their understanding of **Self Compassion**
- The **Inside-Out** Group extended their social circle to include concepts relevant to themselves e.g. my mind, my thoughts, my feelings, and my relationships. There was no change in the **Outside-In** Group responses.
- Both Groups demonstrated attitudinal change in relation to perceptions of people living in poverty, with the **Inside-Out** Group moving from harsh judgement of those in poverty to an empathic awareness. The **Outside-In** Group moved from harsh judgement to demonstrating critical thought around the structures and conditions that caused those to be living in poverty.
- Both groups had an increased awareness of development issues, with the **Outside-In** Group demonstrating increased critical thought in relation to understanding the structural causes of poverty. The **Inside-Out** Group did not demonstrate such critical thought.
- The **Inside-Out** Group demonstrated an increased understanding of interdependence, and how they are themselves interrelated with the issue of poverty and inequality. The **Outside-In** Group did not demonstrate such understanding.
- The **Inside Out** Group's solution to poverty involved actions they themselves should take as individuals and as a class. The **Outside-In** Group's solution to poverty involved actions others should take, such as the government, social services or institutions

What Research Measures were used?

The research measures designed and administered for the pilot intervention included:

- Reflective practice journals for the practitioners
- Pre, Mid and Post tests for the pilot study participants including: qualitative questionnaires, social circle tasks, issue-tree tasks on poverty, and quantitative questionnaires

These measures were intended to explore differences between the **Inside-Out** and **Outside-In** groups in relation to:

- knowledge and awareness of development issues
- understanding of 'self' and 'other' compassion
- attitudes to poverty and inequality
- awareness of interdependence and interconnectedness
- evidence of thinking critically
- perceptions around solutions to injustice
- belief in the ability to be a change-maker

What is the key learning to date?

Research findings and subsequent consultations with key stakeholders have highlighted the need to merge the **Inside-Out** and **Outside-In** approaches in symbiosis so that emotional and critical literacy operate as mutually interconnected aptitudes for exploring DE issues. Doing so is also considered

likely to support the process of embedding key curriculum elements to the heart of global citizenship learning. By way of example, the approach directly supports connections between curriculum elements such as Well-Being and Personal Development with Critical Thinking and Learning for Life and Work.

How do Children in Crossfire propose to merge the Inside-Out and the Outside-In approaches?

Children in Crossfire has developed a framework termed **‘Emotical Literacy’** which is designed to break the silo between **Inside-Out** and **Outside-In** approaches, whilst meeting a wide range of curriculum elements. The key premise of **‘Emotical Literacy’** is a fusing of **‘the heart’** and **‘the head’** in exploring DE issues through a framework which builds a range of core competencies for participating as global citizens (see document **‘Educating the Heart Emotical Literacy Framework’**).

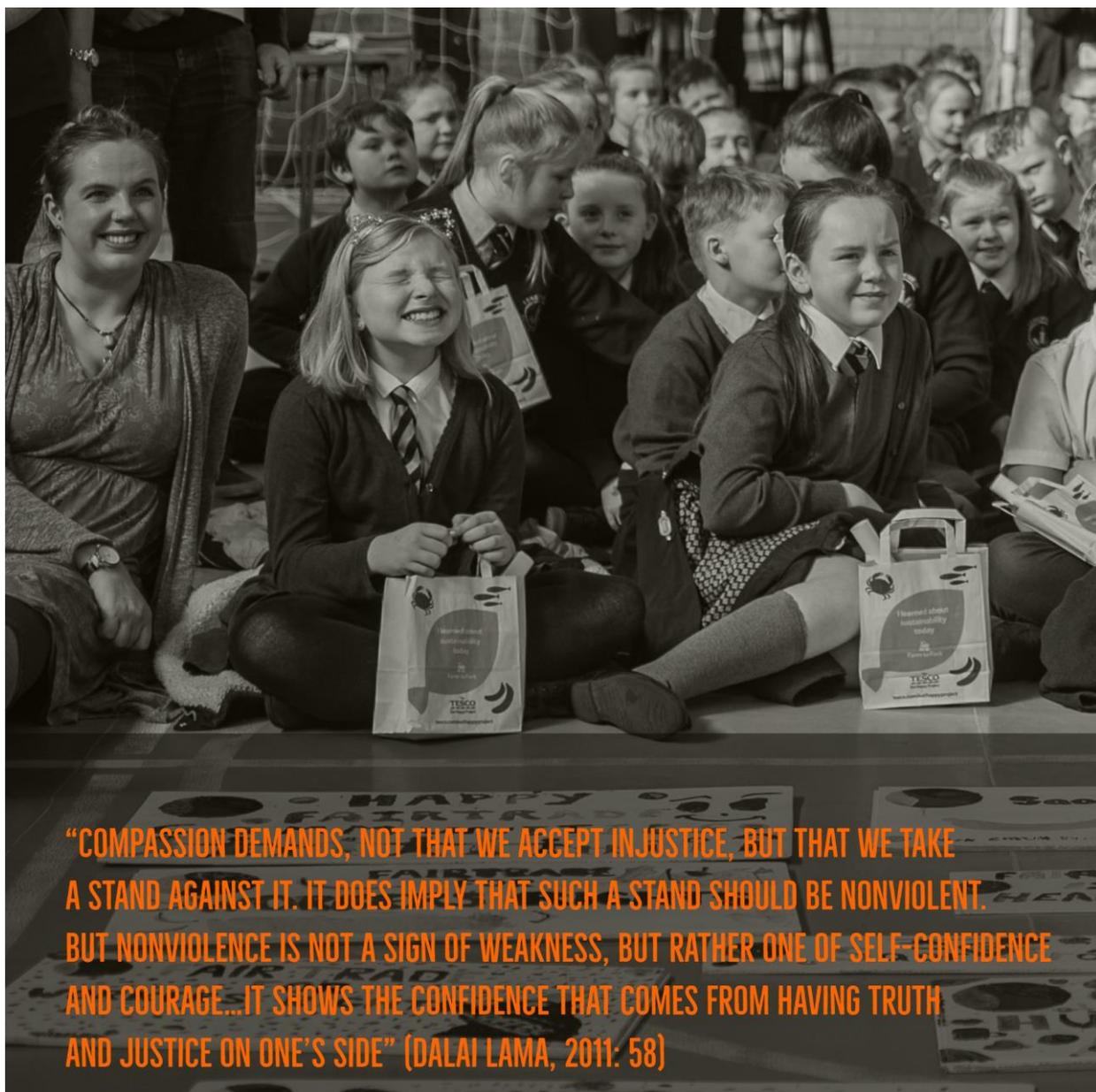
What are the Next Steps?

1. The **‘Emotical Literacy’** Framework remains a work in progress. Following further consultations with key stakeholders it will be formally presented in context with theoretical background, pedagogical approaches and curriculum links together with an overview of how these can be translated into practical implementation methods. Consultations will include an International ‘Think-Tank’ which will be held in June 2017. The Think-Tank has been kindly funded by **Mind and Life Institute** and will involve relevant scholars, researchers, practitioners and policy makers in further exploring the contextualising of **‘Emotical Literacy’** against theory, pedagogy, education policy and practice.
2. The ongoing development of innovative tools, methods and activities which can be utilised in cultivating the core competencies inherent in **‘Emotical Literacy’**.
3. Over the next five years, Children in Crossfire plans to roll out its Educating the Heart programme, as an accredited module, to 700 Primary and Post-Primary teachers, impacting over 120,000 students across Ireland and the UK.



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“COMPASSION DEMANDS, NOT THAT WE ACCEPT INJUSTICE, BUT THAT WE TAKE A STAND AGAINST IT. IT DOES IMPLY THAT SUCH A STAND SHOULD BE NONVIOLENT. BUT NONVIOLENCE IS NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS, BUT RATHER ONE OF SELF-CONFIDENCE AND COURAGE...IT SHOWS THE CONFIDENCE THAT COMES FROM HAVING TRUTH AND JUSTICE ON ONE’S SIDE” (DALAI LAMA, 2011: 58)



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GIVING CHILDREN THE CHANCE TO CHOOSE