

'Our Global Family':

Using Storytelling to Develop Compassion and Acceptance of Cultural Others in Primary School Pupils

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Project Aim:

The aim of this project was to develop a teaching model that develops understanding, acceptance and compassion amongst primary school pupils towards others, particularly refugees and migrants.

Background Literature

For countries like the UK, who have increasing numbers of asylum seekers and diversity in schools the importance of promoting an understanding of others to enable a more harmonious society is becoming greater, Ozdemier et al (2018) & Cerna et al (2021). Not being understood and accepted can lead to poor academic and life outcomes, this is more prevalent for diverse individuals, (Murray, 2012; Riley, 2017). Books that represent diverse individuals, with the help of more knowledgeable others to open up discussions that can help to shape childrens existing ideals are seen as a great resource to promoting understanding amongst all children, (El-Amin & Cohen, 2018; Howe,2013). They also provide a valuable resource for children to experience a world they might otherwise never experience in their life and provide a role model or someone relatable to others, (Gibb, 2016; Finkelberg, 2022).



Between 2009 and 2022 there has been around a 10% increase of pupils in UK schools from ethnic minority backgrounds, (DfE, 2010 & DfE, 2022)

Methodology

Interviews were conducted with primary school K1 & K2 teachers involved (N=4-8) and the head teacher N=1. As part of a pilot empathy project, the school, which has a predominantly white, middle class student population, used stories written by Derby College ESOL (Lexis) students who have only recently arrived in the UK, many of whom are refugees and asylum seekers, who wrote about their home country, their journey to the UK and their life in Derby.

The data were analysed using qualitative methods and themes were identified using the six stages of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researchers took a ground theory approach (Gasser and Strauss, 1967) whereby the "researchers discover, or construct data systematically obtained and analysed using comparative analysis"(Tie et al. 2019: 1).

Findings

Five main themes were identified from the interviews and survey data. These related to (i) Methods that aid understanding, (ii) Influence on the children, (iii) 'Key' in the curriculum, (iv) The importance of adding inclusion as one of the school values (v) External & internal restrictions to understanding. Each of these themes were explored using extracts which best exemplify the theme and the wider data set. Overall, the findings show that 'Our Global Family' form a valuable element of the teaching foundation for the development of pupil's understanding of diversity awareness and acceptance for others.



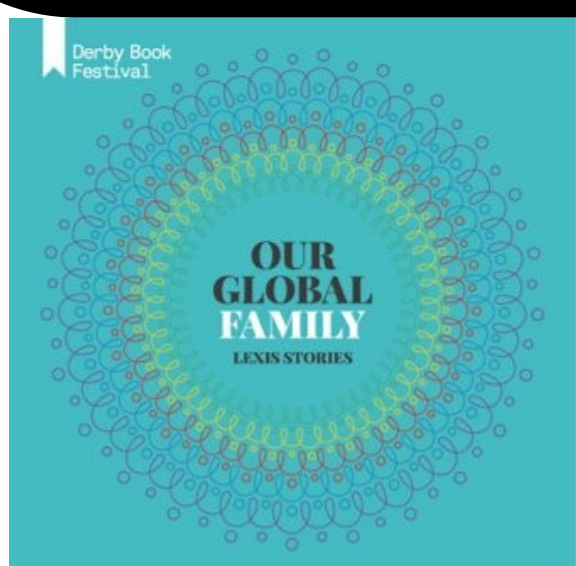
All teachers that participated agreed that development of diversity awareness is valuable to pupils

Discussion & Conclusion

Storytelling through use of the LEXI stories (Our Global Family) is considered an **effective tool** in the development of compassion, understanding and acceptance among KS1 & KS2 pupils for other races and cultures, which, in an increasingly multicultural world are increasingly valuable (Riley, 2017).

Thus, wider research is recommended to test the theory. Storytelling along with other components such as accessibility of text, and open discussions in a safe environment with knowledgeable others are also key to the learning experience (El-Amin & Cohen, 2018; Howe,2013).

Our Global family provided opportunities for improved self-esteem and creative expression for children, including those from different backgrounds, with a noticeable impact on respectful behaviour. This outcome however requires teacher training and dedicated time spent on teaching diversity awareness, with integration into the curriculum (Howe, 2013; Allen & Kern, 2019). Furthermore, parental support and interventions to strengthen children's understanding of diversity awareness such as visits to multicultural communities are needed in addition to key resources such as the LEXI stories.



Scan the QR code to access the Lexis Book 2020

Scan the QR code to access references

