

Abstract

When one reviews the research on the concept of Health Promoting School, the emphasis is predominately on future outcomes and benefits to the students. In the Irish context, there is a dearth of research on the impact these HPS initiatives have in the lives of students attending DEIS primary schools. This study aims to fill that void and provide a basis for future research. The study was carried out in three DEIS primary schools in Cork City with a sample of 36 students and 36 school staff. A questionnaire was completed by the students and school staff and the findings were then triangulated with the results from semi-structured interviews with 3 school staff, one school principal, one HSCL coordinator and one class teacher.

The primary aim of this study was to evaluate how both school staff and students perceive existing HPS initiatives within their school. The research further evaluated which benefits are seen by each schools staff, of the HPS initiatives. Finally, how the HPS initiatives within these schools can be supported and maximised was evaluated.

This study found that existing HPS initiatives were much more beneficial to students than had been anticipated by the educational community. These benefits ranged from increased educational outcomes, a better understanding of the impact of nutrition and physical activity on health to an awareness and acceptance of positive mental health. Limitations to the beneficial nature of HPS initiatives within the school included a reluctance of parents to become involved in the HPS initiatives. This study found that when parents receive concise and accurate information they become more empowered to assist with their child's health education. The HPS initiatives discussed in this study unfolded a new sense of confidence within the students in terms of their own health education and wellbeing. The study increased

the awareness of school staff to integrate health education in other curricular areas throughout the school day. It also revealed that school staff should become more inclusive of parents in order for them to follow through on the HPS teachings in the home environment. It recommends further study in the area benefits which can be derived of HPS initiatives.