Race, Ethnicity And Religion, Gender And Sexuality: Sociological Observation

This is my fourth week of school placement. There are many different aspects that fall under the heading of race, but I will focus on multiculturalism within the school community. One of the first things I noticed as I walked in the front door of the school, was that the students came from all different multicultural backgrounds. In my first few days within the staffroom, I had numerous discussions with different teachers, in which they informed me of the high level of students from different nations around the world attending the school. I am surprised at how multicultural the school is compared to my last school placement, where there was a very low number of foreign students. The school prides itself on being a very culturally diverse institution. This is evident to me through cultural activities provided by the school to incorporate all students to make them feel welcome and accepted. There are many events arranged by the school such as International Languages Day, different types of food catering to the needs of most student cultures in the school cafeteria and national celebration days. Even within my own class this week, of the students who attended my class out of an overall 13, each came from a different nation. Therefore. this is the topic I have chosen to focus on.

According to Rosado (1997), “the essence of multiculturalism, the undergirding concept of multicultural education, is the ability to celebrate with the other in a manner that transcends all barriers and brings about a unity in diversity”. During the 1990’s there was a huge increase in emigration to Ireland which has resulted in many students growing up in a multicultural country. Due to this high volume of immigrants entering the country, schools throughout have become more culturally diverse (Tormey & Gleeson, 2012). As noted by the NCCA (2006), a key learning outcome of the secondary school curriculum is to recognise how the different cultures in the community have added to the diversity within schools. The authors state that by being culturally aware “contributes to young people’s personal and social development as citizens of an intercultural Ireland, Europe and the global community”.

In summary, compared to my own experiences of secondary school as a student, multiculturalism was not seen in a high regard as it is today. Back then students of different cultures stood out amongst the crowd and were for this reason bullied. However, from teaching in this school, to be of a different culture is now seen in a positive light as students of all cultural backgrounds are all accepted. I think schools throughout the country should follow in the footsteps of my school in believing that all different cultures add to the overall diversity. In my last school placement, bullying was prevalent regarding students of different nationalities. I believe this was down to the school not teaching and promoting multiculturalism and cultural diversity within the school.

References:

1. NCCA 2006, Guidelines for Schools Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School, Dublin : National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
2. Tormey, R. and Gleeson, J., 2012. Irish post-primary students' attitudes towards ethnic minorities. Irish Educational Studies, 31(2), pp.157-173.

Gender- Sociological Observation

This is my sixth week of school placement. The area I chose to focus on this week is the topic of Gender. This topic is of specific relevance to my current placement, as I am teaching in an all-boys school. My first experience in this school was during my first observation day, when I was walking passed the classrooms, I could hear and see the boys banging on the windows, shouting and whistling at me. From this moment on I was frightened and worried on starting my placement as I had never taught in an all-boys school before. Since that day, there have been numerous obstacles in which I have had to overcome regarding the boys. The main issue I have found while teaching the boys is the level of messing that occurs day today. For example, this week while I was supervising a Transition Year class, where I had to deal with an incident, where two of the boys were down at the back of the class messing with water while working on an e-Twining Project on the computers. I couldn't believe my eyes when I first saw it, as I thought the Transition Year students were more mature than this. To overcome this situation, I issued both students with a slip and removed the bottle of water from them, as they were attempting to damage school property e.g. computer keyboard.

As discussed by Barnes (2012), boys utilise humour for four specific reasons these are as follows; "to gain and keep status within the group, to exclude those who transgress or who cannot conform to the norms of the dominant discourse of masculinity in operation, police and to maintain the boundaries of 'acceptable' masculinity and to defuse tension in the classroom". In all my classes, I have found that there are some boys who like to act the maggot and want to be the class clown. Every day I find I must deal with a lot of misbehaviour from these specific students, which leads to disruptions in my classes. As Barnes (2012) has outlined in her paper, there are many forms of disruptive behaviour which boys use e.g. kicking and punching each other, shouting across the room at each other, pen clicking and swinging on their chairs. After reading Smith (2003), I believe that boys use humour and disruptive behaviour while in the classroom, as a result this leads to overall academic underachievement. Smith (2003) notes there are three main causes to boy's underachievement academically firstly to present themselves in a masculine image in front of their peers, the academic curriculum and the testing student-teacher relationships within the classroom.

In comparison to my last school placement, where I was teaching in an all-girls, I never came across this misbehaviour. The only trouble I had to deal with was the girls chatting from time to time when the girls were not kept busy with a task. Due to this I was never equipped to deal with this behaviour before this placement. However, after six weeks in the all-boys school I can now deal with this behaviour each day. By administering penalty sheets, slips and issuing detentions, this misbehaviour in the boys' school has reduced drastically.

References:

1. Barnes, C., 2012. It's no laughing matter… Boys' humour and the performance of defensive masculinities in the classroom. Journal of Gender Studies, 21(3), pp.239-251.
2. Smith, E., 2003. Failing boys and moral panics: Perspectives on the underachievement debate. Journal of Educational Studies, 51(3), pp.282-295.

Sexuality- Sociological Observation

This is my second last week of school placement. The topic I am focusing on this week is Sexuality. I was on lunchtime supervision this week when I came across a devastating incident of a group of 3rd-year boys harassing a student who appeared to be different. When I first came to the school 9 weeks ago, I was informed there was a 3rd-year student who is a part of the LGBTQ community and was therefore told to look out for him in case there were any incidents involving other students. On Tuesday during lunch I was walking around the yard when a student came running towards me yelling that there was a massive fight and I had to come quick. When I arrived at the pitch, I saw one boy down on the ground while three other lads were around him punching and kicking him at every angle. At first, I was shocked and knew I needed to get help from a male member of staff in order to stop the fight. Luckily, the PE teacher was also on yard duty at that time and he also saw what was happening. After we both managed to get the boys to stop, I realised that it was the Transgender student who was being abused.

According to Dooley & Fitzgerald (2013), in a survey carried out based on the population of 8000 young people, it was said that most of them did not identify as being straight, 8% were said to be lesbian, gay or bisexual while 3% questioned their sexual orientation. Although the approximate figure of LGBTQ students within Irish secondary schools is within 29,000 and growing, they are neglected and undervalued by all within the school community. Glen, (2016). LGBTQ students face more bullying on an ongoing basis compare to other students because of stereotyping, prejudice and stigmatizing others who adhere to different identities. Due to bullying, there are several negative consequences which can affect LGTBQ students. These are as follows:

1. Leaving school early
2. Developing poor self-esteem
3. Not reaching their full potential
4. Experiencing Mental Health problems
5. Becoming involved in self-harming behaviour

(Mayock et al, 2009).

Hunt & Jensen, (2006) note that when schools take action towards students' sexuality and gender identity, LGBTQ students may experience less bullying at school. They will be more encouraged to report incidents of when they have been bullied to their teachers.

In summary, I feel students Sexuality should be addressed more within schools. They cover the topic in S.P.H.E. class but students are still unaware of the consequences they cause to people when they bully them because of them being different. I feel there should be more strategies put in place in order to promote LGBTQ students within my school. Some of these include Staff training days, LGBTQ days e.g. non uniform wear different colours, talks with the parents and students informing them on the up to date information regarding Sexuality and LGBTQ.

References:

1. Dooley, B.A. and Fitzgerald, A., 2012. My world survey: National study of youth mental health in Ireland. Headstrong and UCD School of Psychology.
2. GLEN (Gay and Lesbian Equality Network), 2016. 'Being LGBT in School' A Resource

for Post-primary Schools to Prevent Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying and Support LGBT Students.
3. Mayock, P., Bryan, A., Carr, N. and Kitching, K., 2009. Supporting LGBT lives in Ireland: A study of the mental health and well-being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people.