

**A Study of the Perceptions among Irish Primary Teachers of  
the Development of their Teaching Identity after their First  
Year in Teaching**

Submitted by

Michael Hayes

to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the  
degree of Doctor of Education in Education (EdD)

September, 2012

This thesis is available for library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own has been identified and that no material has been previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

Signature: .....

## Abstract

This thesis reports the findings of research conducted with Irish primary teachers who had recently completed probation. The study employed semi-structured interviews to examine the teachers' perceptions of beneficial influences on the development of their teaching identity. The principals of the two schools involved were also interviewed. The interviews were designed to allow me to explore influences that had been identified in the literature as important in the formation of teacher identity. In the interviews, themes that have been identified in the literature on teacher identity were explored with participants. The teachers identified incidents and persons whom they perceived as having inspired them to become teachers. Their perceptions of how their interactions with pupils and parents had influenced their identities were examined, as were their experiences of school cultures and of working in collaboration with colleagues. Finally, their awareness of theoretical literature as a tool to help their further development was examined.

The findings of the study confirm that teachers' identities are formed by a combination of factors and add a more detailed understanding of those factors in the Irish context. Beginning teachers are influenced strongly by their own biographies, and by their experiences as students prior to and during their pre-service teacher education. They are sensitive to the perceptions of them by parents and pupils. Their willingness to engage collaboratively with other colleagues, including their principals and mentors, features strongly in their own perceptions of how their identities have been formed. The importance of the school culture in helping to shape the teacher's identity is highlighted as a phenomenon which both shapes and is reshaped in turn by teachers and their colleagues. Literature is generally not considered relevant by the Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in this study, although the principals' responses indicate their familiarity with themes common in the literature concerning teacher induction, and with concepts of teachers as reflective practitioners who need to continuously examine their practice and experience in order to promote the ongoing shaping of their identity as teachers.

The thesis argues for a conception of teacher professionalism which respects the identity of teachers and the agency of teachers as individuals in a world of individuals who are engaged in the constructionist creation of knowledge. This understanding prioritises practical wisdom, *phronesis*, over the technical knowledge, *techne*, and knowledge of

subject, *episteme*, which teachers also require. This is at odds with widespread competency-based conceptions of teacher professionalism. The findings of the research indicate that the development of teacher identity is complex and is affected by a broader range of influences than the imperative to develop competencies. It calls for an alternative approach to teacher induction which acknowledges the importance of these factors.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to a number of people who have helped and encouraged me along my journey.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Keith Postlethwaite and Dr Cheryl Hunt. Their continued support and wise guidance were invaluable to me in completing the thesis. To each of them I am extremely grateful. I am also grateful to Dr Christine Bennetts who helped me significantly at the initial phase of the research.

I am indebted to all of the teachers who agreed to participate in the study, both for their generosity in doing so and for the richness of the material they provided in the course of our interviews and subsequent discussions. I dedicate this thesis to them and to teachers like them who inspire me every day.

I would like to thank friends and colleagues who have advised and supported me, particularly at times when I became discouraged. Among others, John O'Sullivan and Catherine King provided critical advice and encouragement when it was needed. I wish to acknowledge especially my gratitude to Gerry O'Connell for his wisdom and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Ann, and our sons, Aodhán and Fergal, for their forbearance and understanding over the years. Without their support, this thesis could not have been written.

<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 The structure of the thesis.....	11
1.2 Background.....	11
1.3 A changing Irish context for teacher induction .....	12
1.4 My relationship with the participants in the research.....	13
1.5 A range of influences on the development of teacher identity .....	15
1.6 An opportune time for this research .....	16
1.7 Exploring teachers' stories .....	19
1.8 The context in which the research was conducted .....	20
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	22
2.2 Two views of teaching: competence versus growth.....	23
2.3 Policy directions: Teacher competence .....	24
2.3.2 <i>Competence-based approaches to teacher induction and development.....</i>	<i>27</i>
2.3.3 <i>Competence-based approaches in the Irish context.....</i>	<i>29</i>
2.4 Towards a broader conception of what it means to be a teacher.....	31
2.4.1 <i>A constructivist alternative to teacher-competence approaches.....</i>	<i>32</i>
2.4.2 <i>The self who teaches: Teacher identity and integrity.....</i>	<i>35</i>
2.4.3 <i>The teacher as Phronimos: possessor of practical wisdom .....</i>	<i>36</i>
2.5 An appeal to an older conception of teacher identity .....	37
2.5.1 <i>Phronesis: teaching as the moral application of practical wisdom.....</i>	<i>38</i>
2.5.2 <i>Challenges and changes to teacher identity.....</i>	<i>40</i>
2.5.3 <i>Apprenticeship of observation and 'knowledge' of teaching .....</i>	<i>41</i>

2.5.4	<i>Teacher commitment as an essential component of teacher identity</i>	42
2.5.5	<i>'Reference groups' and school culture in the formation of teacher identity</i>	44
2.5.6	<i>Experiences of teacher induction</i>	45
2.5.7	<i>Inspection and teacher identity</i>	47
2.6	Teacher enculturation and socialization	48
2.6.1	<i>Teacher enculturation: the development of teacher identity as stage process</i>	48
2.6.2	<i>Teacher enculturation as a socially constructed phenomenon</i>	49
2.7	How this chapter shapes the research: formulating the research questions	51
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</b>		<b>54</b>
3.1	Introduction	54
3.2	Educational research: how to address the research questions	55
3.2.1	<i>Positivism</i>	56
3.2.2	<i>Alternatives to positivism</i>	57
3.2.3	<i>Postpositivism</i>	57
3.2.4	<i>Constructivism/Constructionism</i>	58
3.3	Selecting an appropriate paradigm	59
3.3.1	<i>Theoretical and methodological framework</i>	60
3.4	Choosing a methodology within the social constructivist framework	61
3.4.1	<i>Pragmatism: John Dewey</i>	61
3.5	Methodology	63
3.5.1	<i>Hermeneutics</i>	63
3.5.2	<i>Prioritising Teacher Voice: teachers' life history</i>	65
3.5.3	<i>Deciding on a research approach</i>	66
3.6	Constructing a hermeneutical framework	67

3.7 Rigour and the hermeneutic cycle .....	69
3.8 Methods: using interviews to address the research questions .....	70
3.8.1 <i>Quantitative approaches versus interviews</i> .....	71
3.8.2 <i>Semi-structured interviews</i> .....	72
3.8.3 <i>Focus groups, one-to-one interviews and questionnaires</i> .....	73
3.9 Sample .....	74
3.10 Ethical considerations.....	74
3.11 Stages in the interview process.....	75
3.11.1 <i>Thematizing the interviews</i> .....	76
3.11.1 <i>Addressing the research questions</i> .....	76
3.11.3 <i>Conducting the interviews hermeneutically</i> .....	77
3.11.4 <i>Transcribing and analysis of the interviews</i> .....	78
3.11.5 <i>Verification</i> .....	79
3.11.6 <i>Threats to validity</i> .....	80
3.11.7 <i>Objectivity</i> .....	80
3.11.8 <i>Subjectivity</i> .....	81
3.11.9 <i>Generalisability</i> .....	81
3.11.10 <i>Establishing an interpretation: the hermeneutic circle and seven canons of interpretation</i> .....	82
3.11.11 <i>Member checking</i> .....	84
3.11.12 <i>Reporting</i> .....	86
<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION .....</b>	<b>88</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	88
4.2 Considering two different perspectives on teacher socialization .....	89
4.3 Coding the transcripts: identifying themes .....	89

4.4 Biographical influences .....	92
4.4.1 <i>Family influence</i> .....	93
4.4.2 <i>Teacher role models</i> .....	94
4.4.3 <i>Friends</i> .....	95
4.4.4 <i>Personal vocational commitment</i> .....	96
4.4.5 <i>Personal reflection – how teachers respond to their first challenges</i> .....	97
4.4.6 <i>College experiences</i> .....	100
4.4.7 <i>Positive encounters during teaching practice</i> .....	102
4.4.8 <i>Negative encounters during teaching practice</i> .....	104
4.5 Pupils and their parents.....	106
4.5.1 <i>Pupils</i> .....	106
4.5.2 <i>Parents of pupils</i> .....	108
4.6 Colleagues and other school-based influences .....	109
4.6.1 <i>Teacher mentor</i> .....	110
4.6.2 <i>Principal</i> .....	112
4.6.3 <i>Other colleagues</i> .....	113
4.6.4 <i>School culture</i> .....	115
4.6.5 <i>Staff selection – the job interview</i> .....	118
4.6.6 <i>DES inspector</i> .....	120
4.7 Theoretical literature.....	122
4.7.1 <i>Philosophy of education</i> .....	122
4.7.2 <i>Other literature</i> .....	123
4.7.3 <i>Continuing professional development</i> .....	124
4.8 Conclusion .....	125
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>126</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	126

5.2 Findings related to the research questions.....	127
5.2.1 <i>How teachers saw the early formation of their teaching identities</i> .....	127
5.2.2 <i>The development of teaching identities as the acquisition of competence</i> ..	128
5.2.3 <i>NQTs perceptions of dominant influences during the first year</i> .....	129
5.3 Organising the themes that emerged in the study.....	129
5.4 The range of influences on teacher socialisation.....	130
5.4.1 <i>Biographical influences</i> .....	131
5.4.2 <i>Students (Pupils and their parents)</i> .....	133
5.4.3 <i>School culture</i> .....	134
5.4.4 <i>Supporting teacher commitment through collaboration</i> .....	136
5.4.5 <i>Theoretical Literature</i> .....	137
5.5 Towards a model for beginning teacher learning: <i>Phronesis</i> .....	140
5.6 Participants' views on the benefits of participating in the research .....	142
5.7 Implications from the research for teachers during induction.....	142
5.8 Recognising the agency of individual teachers in their own learning.....	143
5.9 Facilitating ongoing teacher learning .....	145
5.10 Implications for teacher educators.....	146
5.11 Impact of the research on my own thinking and practice.....	147
5.12 Implications of the research for inspection practice and policy .....	148
5.13 Teacher learning: a reciprocal process .....	148
5.14 How this research contributes to knowledge in the Irish context.....	149
5.15 Scope for developing this research.....	150
5.16 Final reflections on the research.....	151
APPENDIX 1: Participants' Consent Form .....	153

APPENDIX 2: Participants' biographical data .....	154
APPENDIX 3: Schedule for Teacher on Probation.....	155
APPENDIX 4: Interview Schedule .....	157
APPENDIX 5: Unedited Transcript (Sample).....	160
APPENDIX 6: Example of coded transcripts.....	180
References .....	191

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The structure of the thesis**

This thesis examines how a number of Irish primary-school teachers, who had completed probation, viewed a range of personal and professional influences on the development of their teaching identities. This introduction describes the context and rationale for the research. Chapter Two reviews literature which explores issues concerning teacher identity. Chapter Three delineates the theoretical perspective which led to my choice of a hermeneutical approach, and describes the research methodology which I employed. I present and analyse the data in Chapter Four. Chapter Five discusses the results and implications of this research for teachers' preservice education and their induction.

### **1.2 Background**

The research is opportune at a time when significant restructuring of initial teacher education in Ireland is occurring and when processes for the induction and certification of teachers are being reconsidered. These changes will affect my role as an inspector with the Department of Education and Skills, and most particularly my work with beginning teachers. Currently all Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) undergo probation, during which they work with inspectors, school principals and teacher colleagues in order to satisfy the Teaching Council's certification requirements.

As an inspector, I had worked with the participants in this study, with the exception of the two principal teachers, during probation. I considered them all good and effective teachers. Part of my role is to identify and disseminate good practice. However, since this good practice I observed was so varied I was intrigued by the challenge of identifying what warranted my use of the word 'excellent' in their reports. A resolution to this puzzle was to focus, not on the varied practice itself, but on the teacher identity that underpinned it and on the influences that shaped that identity. Perhaps, if these were better understood, teachers could be guided towards the discovery of their own good practice.

Teachers combine a multifaceted range of experiences, beliefs, intentions and relationships as they attempt to create good educational practice. In this process of interaction, their teaching identities are not static, but are being adjusted continually.

While these influences interplay constantly in each teacher's life, they are filtered through the teacher's perceptions and worldview. As Carr (1995:41) says: 'schemes of thought' are required by practitioners when they engage in educational practices, because with them they can

characterize their own practice and construe the practices of others in ways that presuppose, usually implicitly, a set of beliefs about what they are doing, the situation in which they are operating and what it is they are trying to achieve (Carr, 1995:41).

In the 1980s, Wragg provided a useful working definition of teachers as:

highly skilled professional people with sharp insight into classroom life and a sustained appetite for improving their own teaching and their pupils' learning (Wragg, 1984b:193).

How to help teachers develop this insight and sustained appetite for improvement still challenges all concerned with teachers' initial preparation, induction and ongoing development. This study focuses on successful beginning teachers' perceptions of the influences that gave them this insight and appetite for their own early development. It explores their view of factors present prior to preservice teacher education, including biographical influences and early experiences which preceded their college years. It also examines how they perceived their development as teachers during their first year. Using interviews, I sought to explore how teachers felt they were influenced by formal structures and supports available to teachers on probation. I also sought their articulation of those often implicit, tacit and unarticulated schemes of thought that had guided them. I intended that this research would provide useful information for other teachers, teacher educators, and those who evaluate teachers' work. Through this study, I hoped to develop insights to help beginning teachers understand the continuing formation of their identities as teachers. I was also interested in discerning whether inspectors should continue to be involved in teacher induction.

### **1.3 A changing Irish context for teacher induction**

On completing pre-service education, Irish primary-school teachers commence probation, a period which normally lasts for one year, during which inspectors evaluate their work. Teachers are advised that the process 'is designed to ensure that you have a period in which you can develop your teaching skills and can satisfy an inspector... that you can teach competently' (DES, 2005a:5). Changes to this process are occurring as responsibility for teacher induction transfers from the Inspectorate to the Teaching

Council. One of the issues for me to consider, as an inspector, was whether my research might indicate whether there should be a continuing role for the Inspectorate in the induction of teachers, and if so, how this might work.

Teachers enter the profession through varied routes: most complete B.Ed. degrees in one of five Irish colleges of education, and others complete postgraduate diplomas in primary education in Ireland or the United Kingdom. Some take an online postgraduate course. Having worked with teachers who qualified through all of these routes, I was intrigued by how quickly some adapted to the school/classroom environment and wondered what might account for the apparent ease with which they developed highly professional practice. I wanted to understand their perceptions of factors that had shaped their development. Initially, I wondered whether my input, as inspector during the probationary period, had helped. This became my first vague research question but was abandoned for reasons outlined below.

Preservice teacher education in Ireland is changing. The B.Ed. degree course was extended to four-years in 2012. When I commenced this research it was unclear whether inspectors would be involved in teacher induction, and this issue remains unresolved. My first thoughts were to investigate the impact of inspector support on NQTs' progress. However, I realised that this would be difficult. A power relationship exists between inspector and teacher, as between mentors and teachers (Martin and Rippon, 2005:531), and teachers are pressurized to conform and to be seen to fit in. So, I expect that to the question, *'To what extent do you think your inspector helped you in your induction into teaching?'* teachers would feel obliged to say the inspector had been helpful, even if they believed otherwise. Persevering with this question was futile: attempting to break down the power relationship would be difficult, and would appear disingenuous with teachers who did not complete probation successfully. Additionally, any finding in respect of inspectors' roles would have no value if a policy decision had already been made to remove them from the process. While this was not clear at the commencement of this research, recent proposals envisage that inspectors will work with one tenth of NQTs.

#### **1.4 My relationship with the participants in the research**

Trying to minimise the power imbalance in the inspector-teacher relationship, I broadened my research question. Instead of focusing on my role, I decided to explore

what teachers themselves considered to be beneficial influences as they developed their teaching identities.

Researchers have to be close to groups, live with them, look out at the world through their eyes, empathise with them, appreciate the inconsistencies, ambiguities and contradictions in their behaviour, explore the nature of their interests and understand their relationships (Woods, 2006:3).

Woods's demand for intimacy between researcher and participants would have been problematic with a wider sample which included teachers whose work had been evaluated by other inspectors. It may have been difficult for teachers disclosing their personal stories to me, a stranger and an inspector. Therefore, identifying my research sample was a critical issue. If I were to explore the research questions honestly and thoroughly with NQTs, I needed to ensure that the teachers knew me and did not need to be convinced again of my *bona fides*.

While I believe it likely that each teacher would have been successful with another inspector, this cannot be presupposed, as 'elements of practice that school inspectors are trained to inspect... span broad classes and combinations of skill' (Brundrett and Silcock, 2002:1). Given such breadth, inspectors will focus on certain aspects of teachers' work during evaluation, and this focus is directed by each inspector's assumptions of what constitutes good teaching. Because 'to assess teaching as poor, good or excellent is already to assume values taken from the perspective we are trying to judge' (Brundrett and Silcock, 2002:8), I cannot be certain that another inspector would have agreed that my 'excellent' teachers were indeed so. To have included teachers who had completed probation with other inspectors would have introduced another layer of interpretation. This would have obscured rather than clarified what I hoped to discover. The notion that inspectors' opinions can be standardised is unrealistic, despite their use of common evaluation schedules, because 'teaching isn't a job like carpentry or plumbing with very specific and well-defined outputs' (Brundrett and Silcock, 2002:9), and so cannot be easily measured.

With my research sample, I was as close as an inspector could conceivably be to teachers, given the very real position of power I held. I visited their classrooms several times throughout the year, observing their work in each curriculum area and examining preparation, assessment and record-keeping. I completed observation schedules during each visit and gave feedback afterwards. I wrote two reports for each teacher: an interim report and a general inspection report at the end of the process.

## **1.5 A range of influences on the development of teacher identity**

Supports are provided during probation by teaching colleagues, school principals, mentors and inspectors. I believe it unlikely that these supports alone could explain how some teachers are so successful in navigating their way through their first year. Cultural theories of learning recognise that learning experiences are shaped by complex interactions between ‘many factors, dimensions and influences’ (James et al, 2007:4). Other factors might include personal motivation, significant biographical episodes, encounters with inspiring teachers, and pre-service teacher education. All of these factors combine and interact to create each individual teacher’s identity.

Pre-service education programmes are built on the premise that ‘the combination of methodological input, practical experience and student reflection results in growing understanding and shifting perspectives’ (Brown and McGannon, 1998, online). Brown and McGannon question whether or to what degree this happens. An alternative view questions the relative importance of teacher education programmes, and suggests that ‘teachers’ prior beliefs served as a filter for the knowledge about teaching and classrooms that they acquired as preservice teachers’ (Levin, 2003:264). On entering teacher education, students are “‘insiders” who already have a strong sense of what it means to be a teacher’ (Mayer, 1999, online). Beliefs about teaching are influenced by ‘deeply seated archetypes of teaching’ (Mayer, 1999, online), which make them resistant to teacher education programmes.

It is pertinent to address Brown and McGannon’s questions and to examine teachers’ preconceptions about teaching. I intended to explore factors recognised by successful beginning teachers as influencing their growth in understanding and professional maturity. Nevertheless, because all had recently completed preservice education, I expected that my research would address aspects of participants’ preliminary preparation for their careers, but would also uncover their preliminary thinking about teaching before entering college. I wanted to examine how they experienced the socialization process, and whether they felt that their teaching identities had changed as a result of the experiences and people they encountered during their first year.

Knowles (1992) identifies two attempts to explain the socialization of beginning teachers. The first sees the period spanning the experience of the student teacher and their early inservice teaching as the primary influence, while the other suggests that teachers’ learning in this phase has less significance than biography. From this

standpoint, the teacher has already been formed to an extent by their experience as learners. Unlike new entrants to legal and medical professions,

who come to their formal professional preparation relatively ignorant and unskilled about their future professional duties... future teachers do not come to teacher education and beginning teaching ignorant... they already know classrooms (Knowles, 1992:101).

Lortie calls this ‘apprenticeship of observation’, suggesting that ‘there are ways in which being a student is like serving an apprenticeship in teaching’ (Lortie, 1975:61). Teacher socialization is self-socialization, and ‘one’s personal predispositions are not only relevant but, in fact, stand at the core of becoming a teacher’ (Lortie:79). ‘Apprenticeship of observation’ has been challenged as an idea that has taken on ‘the air of authority through repetition, instead of empirical evidence’ (Mewborn and Teminski, 2006:30). Lacey’s (1977) research into teacher socialization found that teachers’ own school experience was ‘more significant in their professional development than the curriculum of any training course’ (Atkinson and Delamont, 1985:316-317). Knowing that apprenticeship and socialization had this effect on teachers’ development was not enough to counter it, because

its impact is still so dominant... despite many changes to teacher education... which have been designed to bring a wider range of influences to bear on a student teacher’s thinking and practice (Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:279).

By exploring what influences held most meaning for NQTs in their development of professional identities, I sought to find out which of these viewpoints more closely reflected their experience. I hoped to generate insights which would inform future approaches to preservice education and induction of Irish primary-school teachers.

## **1.6 An opportune time for this research**

The Chief Inspector told Irish principals that ‘it is not a sensible or appropriate use of Inspectorate resources to carry out traditional probationary inspections’(Hislop, 2011), and he signalled that, ‘as principals do in most developed countries’, principals would be required to act as gate-keepers for membership of the profession. A colleague’s view is that the probationary process, during which teachers are motivated to achieve a ‘satisfactory’ rating, contributes to the success rates among NQTs. If inspectors’ evaluations were not required, would beginning teachers retain the motivation to develop standards of professional practice? How influential is external evaluation in motivating beginning teachers to professional development? Would teachers still strive

to develop their practice in the absence of inspection? I hoped to gain some insights into such questions by speaking directly to teachers. By understanding the influences teachers perceived as affecting their development, I hoped to facilitate purposeful engagement by NQTs in induction programmes. I wondered whether ‘it might be possible to identify training interventions relevant to those who were trying to establish successful formal mentor programmes’ (Bennetts, 2003:63).

My concern regarding proposed changes is that supports currently provided to NQTs would not be diminished. When I commenced this research, the National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction (NPPTI), which had been established in 2002, provided mentors to support a selection of NQTs. It was extended in 2010 as the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT), and participation for NQTs became obligatory in 2012.

In January, 2012, the Teaching Council (TC) published its consultation document on the Career Entry Professional Programme (CEPP), detailing its envisaged induction procedures. The document presents CEPP as ‘an innovative, integrated and improved entry into the teaching profession for NQTs for the purpose of ensuring that they are competent practitioners’ (Teaching Council, 2012:2). Similar in tone to *Professional standards for teachers: Why sit still in your career?* (TDA, 2007), it ‘combines an explicit mode of address to its intended recipients as ‘professionals’ whilst systematically positioning them as trainees’ (Beck, 2009:7). The TDA document is reductive:

it suggests that being a professional educator is a matter of acquiring a limited corpus of state-prescribed knowledge accompanied by a set of similarly prescribed skills and competencies. The model is a technician one involving the acquisition of trainable expertise (Beck, 2009:8).

Beck is wary of the ‘embedded behaviourism’ that ‘underpins the unremitting emphasis on the acquisition of particular performance capabilities’ (Beck, 2009:10), arguing that it excludes ‘alternative models of professions or conceptions of what it means to be a professional educator’ (Beck, 2009:10). When the TC document says that CEPP ‘will build on the foundations established in ITE for the teacher’s lifelong learning journey and will extend and deepen the knowledge, skills and competence developed’ (p.2), it also uses a competency discourse that Beck suggests will suppress any possibility of debate ‘from the start to the finish of teachers’ professional formation’ (Beck, 2009:10). Teachers are ‘trainees’ whose responsibility is ‘to acquire the trained competencies and

expertises that government and its agencies prescribe – no less, but also no more and no differently’ (Beck, 2009:10). If Beck’s criticisms are correct, then teachers might simply engage in strategic compliance with regulations, or they might welcome the idea of teaching as a set of competencies as providing measures by which they could assess their effectiveness. If the latter were the case, teachers would start to see their ‘ideal’ selves as teachers in terms of their ability to do whatever competencies were prescribed.

I share Levin’s concern to help teacher educators, school leaders and policy makers ‘better understand how to support and retain novice teachers by supporting their growth and development’ (Levin, 2003:ix). While teacher retention was not the focus of my research, an important secondary concern was to seek ways to retain the idealism teachers bring into the profession. Research by Nias in the 1980s had found that teachers’ personal identities and professional roles were very closely linked, and that many of those who left teaching early did so because they could not reconcile disjunctions between the two (Pollard, 1987:102). In this study my exploration of influences on professional identity seeks to shed light on how NQTs might attempt to bridge any gaps between personal and professional identities, while recognising that these may indeed coexist as legitimate alternative selves.

I believe mentors’ supportive roles would be compromised if they had to assess NQTs. No ‘conflict of interest issues’ (Bennetts, 2002:161) should appear in the work situation. Because mentors are assigned during the mentoring programme, the dynamic between mentors and teachers is unlikely to develop like ‘those intimate learning alliances that happen naturally’ in traditional mentor relationships (Bennetts, 2002:155). Ideally, mentors should have a ‘sophisticated understanding of beginning teacher learning so that they could take student teachers through and beyond the process of socialization’ (Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:279), but often, mentoring programmes focus on administrative aspects and give ‘insufficient attention to pedagogical issues, to the promotion of reflective practice incorporating an examination of principles behind the practice’ (Hobson et al, 2009:211).

Teachers in Ireland are appointed to permanent positions before commencing probation. However, in many OECD countries, NQTs must complete a period of mandatory teaching experience before gaining tenure (McKenzie and Santiago, 2005:114). One principal in this study stated that by employing the teacher, he had already adjudged the person suitable. If he were later to find the teacher’s work ‘unsatisfactory’, his initial

judgement would be questioned. Therefore, he would be unlikely to make such an embarrassing decision. He argued that NQT assessment be performed by external, independent evaluators.

I decided to focus on beginning teachers' perceptions of what was important in the formation of their teaching identities. While conscious of NQTs' need for support, I, as inspector, was also responsible for assessing their professional competence. My role was different from the mentor's, who should be precluded from an assessment role by the need for a 'trusting mentoring relationship' with NQTs (O'Brien and Christie, 2005:191). The issue of how such trusting relationships could be established while respecting the need to ensure that only competent persons were licensed to teach has not been adequately addressed in the literature about the proposed changes to the induction of teachers in Ireland. In Chapter 5 I suggest another option which would satisfy the need for teachers to be evaluated, while enabling principals, mentors and other colleagues to focus on supporting the NQT during induction.

### **1.7 Exploring teachers' stories**

I believe that teachers' schemes of thought become more sophisticated as they progress through teacher education programmes and as they gain in teaching experience. Past attempts by practitioners and by government commissions to create a comprehensive job description for teachers have failed, and attempts to identify the nature of teaching have been selective, focusing on discrete aspects of the job (Youngman, 1984:180). How do beginning teachers see their teaching identity? Where and when does it begin? To what extent had it been formed in colleges of education or had it existed prior to that? How much of beginning teachers' development is self-managed and how important are teachers' individual qualities? Who are the people best placed to assist them and what other factors are helpful? From an early stage in the research, I determined to address these questions by speaking with teachers who had recently completed probation, as I considered that these teachers' of how these influences had affected them would still be fresh.

Until relatively recently, educational researchers generally viewed teachers as 'interchangeable types unchanged by circumstance or time' (Goodson, 1992:4). Previously, teachers had been 'shadowy figures on the educational landscape' (Ball and Goodson, 1985:6). Goodson argues that teachers play a complex and active role in shaping their own histories (1985, 2000). The significance of teachers' biographies in

the shaping of their behaviours and practices has become more widely acknowledged, as biography plays ‘a major role in how student and beginning teachers approach their early experiences in the classroom’ (Knowles, 1992:99).

In the 1970s Nias interviewed graduates of a PGCE course to explore how it had prepared teachers, but although teachers were enthusiastic to talk to her, they wanted to tell her about things other than those she had asked about. They were giving her ‘a vivid picture of the lived experience of primary teaching’ (Nias, 1991:148). This led her to reformulate her research question, her revised aim being ‘to capture, as nearly as possible in the words of the teachers themselves, a detailed and comprehensive picture of the subjective reality of primary teaching’ (Nias, 1991:149). I sought a similar goal, and focused on what teachers themselves considered influential in the development of their identities as teachers. In Chapter 2, I review literature relevant to the research and set out my revised research questions.

### **1.8 The context in which the research was conducted**

I restricted my research sample to NQTs whose work I had placed in the highest of four categories on the evaluation schedule for teachers on probation (Appendix 3). The sample of eight teachers who had completed probation successfully was chosen from two large schools in a predominantly middle-class area of Dublin. They had entered teaching through a variety of routes: some had gone to colleges of education on completing secondary education, while others had worked in different careers before choosing teaching. The principal teachers of both schools were also interviewed. Brief anonymised biographical data for the participants are included in Appendix 2.

Nias included participants who had worked with her along with teachers who completed their preservice education elsewhere (Nias, 1989:5). She included teachers who had had varying degrees of success in their early career. Some of those asked to participate in Nias’s research declined the invitation. Ten years later, when she broadened the scope of her research to a longitudinal study, the group was, unsurprisingly, smaller. Admitting that her second group was more self-selected, she states that her research is ‘heavily biased [as it] reflects the experience of successful and committed teachers’ (Nias, 1989:7). My sample was also restricted to successful and committed beginning teachers. All those invited to participate in the research agreed readily.

Her longitudinal research allowed Nias to examine how teachers' perspectives changed over time. Levin's study examined how teachers' pedagogical thinking changed over fifteen years (Levin, 2003). My research focuses on teachers' perceptions at an early point in their careers. Because of the 'power relationships at work in teacher induction' (Martin and Rippon, 2005:531), it would not have been possible for me to have conducted this research while the teachers were on probation and while I was charged with assessing them. Martin and Rippon had gathered data during the induction year, using focus group interviews to construct a narrative which was representative of teachers' experiences. Like them I sought an interpretive approach which would allow the teachers' voices to be heard.

My research is informed by social constructionist thinking. In exploring with teachers the very broad range of influences that make up the learning cultures experienced by them, I did not seek to create 'simple rules for action or recipes for effective teaching' (James et al, 2007:20), as cultural approaches do not claim to be able to generate such uncomplicated solutions. However, I sought a more 'detailed understanding of how learning cultures work' (James et al, 2007:20) by conversing with teachers. I hoped to show that teacher development involves more than the acquisition of technical expertise, but is a 'dynamic and continuous process of mutual interactions and adaptation amongst the newly arrived teacher and the different members of [the educational] community' (Caires et al, 2012:164).

In this research, I hoped to develop insights which might guide those involved in teacher education and development. Believing that a teacher's identity is formed by a wide and complex range of factors, I sought to explore how teachers felt they had been influenced by these. Some influences had been present prior to the commencement of the teachers' careers. I hoped to examine the relative importance to teachers of biographical influences and of their teacher education programmes. Other factors, including the school culture, significant other teachers, pupils and parents, became active when the participants began teaching. By setting this research at the end of the first year, I hoped to gain a valuable insight into how teachers saw their teaching identity at a point in their careers when their memories of pre-career influences would still be fresh, and also when they would have had sufficient teaching experience to have experienced school-based influences.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I review literature that explores how teachers see their career development and I examine literature that sees the development of teacher identity as a phenomenon that can be directed from without. I review literature which examines how teachers' own perspectives on their development can change during the course of their careers. The purpose of the review is to identify theories and research relevant to this study, to consider research that has been done in relation to the field of teacher identity, and to identify the further contribution that this study can make to the area (Wellington et al, 2005:73). At the outset, I used a three-step approach (Rudestam and Newton, 1992, in Wellington et al, 2005:74). to identify a range of literature. This involved reading broadly relevant background material, examining literature which addresses issues related to my research interests, and reading literature which is directly related to my field of study. Having used physical searches in libraries, the internet and searches of databases of electronic journals, I then used 'an obvious but sometimes overlooked source': other people's references (Wellington et al, 2005:77). This involved 'an iterative process of discovering regular reference to particular writers, reports and studies' (Wellington et al, 2005:77). The authors I mention more frequently in this chapter are those whose works kept recurring in other literature.

In what follows, I explore two contrasting conceptions of teacher identity. The first of these, which is a view favoured by governments and officialdom in Europe and in the United States, focuses on the acquisition and implementation of predetermined competences. The alternative view sees each teacher as an individual who has been and remains both the subject of a complex range of influences as they experience a process of enculturation or socialization, and a dynamic actor who is not merely a passive participant in a socialization process, but who looks beyond it to reflection or action to create new ways of thinking and being that go beyond the current 'culture' and the dominant social practice. In this view, each teacher's biography and personal commitment, their educational philosophy and the theories of education and learning that they encounter in college and throughout their careers, along with significant others and school context factors, are seen as primary determinants on the formation of teachers' identity.

In this chapter I review literature which suggests that competency development on its own is inadequate. Teacher learning goes beyond competency development and is ‘both situated in practice and... an integrated, complex system embedded in the structures, histories, and cultures of schools’ (Battey and Franke, 2008:127). In its more sophisticated forms, teacher learning involves an ongoing dialogue between teachers’ experience, as understood in the light of their reflection on their practice, and the practice and experience of others, as expressed in theories of education. learning, culture and philosophy that look beyond the limits of current practice. This conception emphasises the person of the teacher as an individual driven primarily by moral and personal influences rather than by an obligation to develop technical competence. However, teacher education policy often prioritises competencies. In this study I explore how teachers see these two kinds of influence.

One of my primary concerns in this research was to explore beginning teachers’ perceptions of the factors that had influenced their decisions to become teachers. I also wanted to see what influences they thought had helped them during their first year in teaching. By speaking with teachers I hoped to discern whether they saw their own development in terms of developing competence or as something more complex than that. The consideration of the issues examined in the course of the literature review led to the formulation of the research questions. These are outlined at the end of this chapter.

## **2.2 Two views of teaching: competence versus growth**

That teaching is a complex activity is widely acknowledged (Danielson, 1996; Mayer, 1999; Florio-Ruane, 2002; McKenzie and Santiago, 2005), but there are considerable differences between a view of teaching as the learning and implementation of a set of competencies (Danielson, 1996), and a view that sees career as being ‘socially constructed and individually experienced over time’ (Ball and Goodson, 1985). I examine and critique literature which focuses on teaching as the development of a set of competencies. I also look at an alternative approach in which teachers’ selves and stories are placed centre stage.

Teachers’ perceptions of their career development over long periods of time have been examined in longitudinal studies (Nias, 1989; Levin, 2001, 2003; He and Cooper, 2011). Understanding how teachers’ pedagogical thought develops over time can help

policy makers, teacher educators, school leaders and others concerned with the induction and retention of teachers to support the growth and development of teachers (Levin, 2003). Levin questions the ‘customary folklore in teacher education’ that claims that teachers forget what they have learned on teacher education programmes when they graduate and ‘enter the real world of the classroom’ (Levin, 2001:29). She argues that whether or not there is a ‘washout’ of what has been learned on such programmes depends on a variety of factors, including teachers’ individual natures and their propensity to learn as teachers, the programmes they attended, the contexts in which they teach, their personal relationships both in and out of school, and other life circumstances. However, she found no evidence of such washout in the participants in her study (Levin, 2003:230). Instead, she found that ideas about ‘children’s development and learning, and teaching’ (Levin, 2003:230) which they met in teacher preparation programmes, remain foundational for them as they progress through their careers.

### **2.3 Policy directions: Teacher competence**

While considering ways of making teaching more attractive, the OECD warns that if ‘teaching does not change in fundamental ways, there is a risk that the quality of schools will decline’ (McKenzie and Santiago, 2005:17). This demand for change implies a deficit in current models of teaching. The OECD report advocates ‘preparation of a profile of teacher competences’ and the development of ‘shared understanding of what counts as accomplished teaching’ (McKenzie and Santiago, 2005:132). It states that the ‘overarching priority’ is ‘to have in place a clear and concise statement or profile of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do’ (McKenzie and Santiago, 2005:131). European policy is developed by experts who seek to define indicators and benchmarks for progress (Feerick, 2004). In England, attempts to raise teaching standards and to enhance teaching as a career have included ‘developing the expertise of beginning teachers, supporting them through their induction year and providing opportunities for structured professional development’ (Younger et al, 2004:246). However, there is a ‘significant mismatch’ (Younger et al, 2004:258) between the actual motivations of aspiring teachers and those ascribed to them by officialdom, which sees teachers’ primary motives as the lure of salary and the promise of positions of power outside the classroom.

The restructuring of education following policy changes by successive United Kingdom governments has caused regrettable changes in teachers’ identities since the 1980s

(Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:89). I agree that there is a ‘better way of looking at the “good teacher” than can be encoded conveniently in a tick-list of competences’ (Moran, 2007:60). The ‘behavioural-objectives model’ (Dunne, 1988:67) of competence-based approaches, in which the primary requirements for effective teaching are objectives that state intended outcomes in terms of pupil behaviour, has been challenged for having no regard for teacher activity. Its effectiveness is ‘judged solely by its measured effects’ (Dunne, 1988:67). Activity theorists argue that predefining objectives is inappropriate, indeed pointless, as both motives and outcomes of any activity change as it progresses. Writing objectives ‘provides an impoverished view of the goals and motives’ of the agent (Jonassen, 2000:111). An alternative, the focus on ‘the complexity, interactions and intentionality of human performance... requires a more powerful lens than objective writing’ (Jonassen, 2000:111). In the following sections I look in more detail at competence frameworks and at critiques of them.

### **2.3.1 Competence frameworks: a behaviourist aberration**

Competence-based approaches to teacher education include precise objectives, framed in behaviourist language; effective strategies for achieving objectives; performance indicators to verify their attainment; and mechanisms for reviewing objectives by stakeholders (Burke, 2007:69). Perhaps it is not surprising that policymakers look for the certainties and accountability mechanisms that competencies appear to provide. I examine critiques of competence-based approaches in this chapter, and in Chapter 5 I discuss the implications of my findings for those who shape policy.

In 2003 the European Council identified five reference levels of average European performance which were to be achieved by 2010. These included ‘a European framework for the qualifications and competences of teachers and trainers’ (Feerick, 2004:17). Feerick welcomes the ‘impressive set of outcomes’ (Feerick, 2004:18) identified. My belief that setting targets is neither a measure of nor a guarantee of success is strengthened by the Council’s interim report of 2008, which found that ‘no significant progress has been made to the EU benchmarks’ (European Council, 2008a). Regrettably, instead of questioning the assumptions underlying the benchmarks, the Council sought to clarify the indicators (European Council, 2008:C86/6). The Council does not consider whether its benchmarks were insufficiently idealistic, focusing solely on technical competence in an area where it can only ever be part of a more complex picture. A similar failure of policy occurred in America. In 1990, ‘six ambitious national goals’ were set for education, to be achieved by 2000, and a National Education

Goals Panel was formed to monitor progress towards these. Two further goals were added in 1997. However, no goal was achieved, ‘and the goals panel quietly vanished’ (Ravitch, 2010:149).

Historically, attempts to prescribe what happened in schools were made in the positivist belief that research could produce for education what experimental physics had for science. This research was to be conducted in the university, ‘the place where knowledge was discovered’ (Eisner, 2002:379) and applied in school. One such American attempt to construct a model for teaching used Taylor’s scientific management model (Miettinen, 1999:328). It gave responsibility for planning to specialist curriculum planners; the plans were to be executed by teachers. Scientific knowledge would change the nature of educational decision-making, so that ‘educational arguments and disagreements’ would be regarded as “technical” problems which could be resolved objectively through the rational assessment of evidence’ (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:67). The illusory promise of the scientific model had appeal: ‘(i)f teaching could... be gotten down to a science, both efficiency and effectiveness would be achieved’ (Eisner, 2002:379). However, it became clear that models that worked for physics were not replicable in schools: ‘Raising kids and raising corn were not the same’ (Eisner, 2002:378). The ‘inveterate reliance on theory in a field in which theory was limited’ was abandoned, along with the idea that a teacher’s role was to know, like a pilot, what routines to use when needed (Eisner, 2002:379). Eisner is perhaps being overcritical of the limits of theory: the problem which he identifies is better understood as the misconception that general principles from theory can always be applied to specific teaching situations. Because teaching is a contextual practice, practitioners need to remake theory for their own contexts if it is to be useful. Through a dialectic process, ‘providing individuals with the opportunity to reconsider the beliefs and attitudes inherent in their existing ways of thinking’ (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:91), theory can equip them to develop practice, as ‘practices are changed by changing the ways in which they are understood’ (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:91).

The understanding of a teacher’s role in the argument made by Carr and Kemmis is markedly different from the view apparently held by the English government that teachers should be a ‘cadre of skilled technicians’ (Richards et al, in Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:264) who would ‘deliver’ the curriculum effectively and efficiently. Bloomer and James argue that ‘practice is constituent of the identity of the practitioner’ and so ‘is not simply something that the practitioner *does*, it is as much what the

practitioner *is*' (Bloomer and James, 2003:249). As practice is so intertwined with individual identity, it is not amenable to description in terms that are extrinsic to individual practitioners' identity: 'objectives, benchmarks and outcomes are poor descriptors of practice; aims, values and principles communicate its essence more adequately' (Bloomer and James, 2003:249).

### **2.3.2 Competence-based approaches to teacher induction and development**

Competence-based approaches to teacher induction are 'prevalent across the European Union and firmly rooted in the USA' (Dolan and Gleeson, 2007:1). Calling for profiles of teacher competencies, the OECD suggests that these should include

subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, the capacity to work effectively with a wide range of students and colleagues, to contribute to the school and the profession, and the capacity to continue developing (McKenzie and Santiago, 2005:13).

While many warn of deficiencies in competence-based models (Wragg, 1984a; Jordan and Powell, 1995; Grangeat and Gray, 2008) it is accepted that they have value (Burke, 2007; Pollard, 1997). Pollard explains that although the emphasis on 'competences' helps to clarify some of the skills, knowledge and understandings involved in teaching, the focus is on practical and technical matters, with little attention paid to 'values, aims and consequences' (1997:4). This is true not only in Europe: in the USA, 'a hunger for simple answers has overwhelmed good judgement in the application of such an approach to teacher evaluation' (Shaker and Heilman, 2008:102), and the promise of 'reductive certitude in a complex human service profession' (Shaker and Heilman, 2008:102) entices policy-makers, who ignore the arguments of educational researchers. These policy-makers rarely have educational expertise, and rely on 'a combination of "policy experts"... business leaders, "hard" scientists, and a very few token, ideologically inclined academicians' (Shaker and Heilman, 2008:102).

In the 1980s Wragg cautioned against viewing teaching as an amalgam of discrete skills, saying that 'the extreme optimism of the supporters of the so-called Performativity or Competency-based Teacher Education programmes... was misplaced' (Wragg, 1984a:7). The assumption underlying these programmes was that teaching could be broken down into components, and that teachers 'could be certificated on the basis of their proven ability to manifest whatever set of competencies had been prescribed' (Wragg, 1984a). Wragg points to the arbitrariness of the hierarchies of

competencies compiled during the 1970s, saying that such approaches were not founded on empirical evidence. However, Wragg also errs by focusing on empirical evidence. Such evidence cannot exist because of the contextual nature of the relationship between theory and practice, in which teachers' practices are neither prescribed nor stable and 'are marked by both continuity and change, and individuals inherit and reproduce elements of them whilst also bringing their own 'slants' to bear' (Bloomer and James, 2001:online).

The belief that scientific models could inform teacher education programmes led to attempts to identify specific teacher behaviours that increased student learning. Accumulated statements of correlations between teacher behaviours and measurable student learning were seen as the 'knowledge base of teacher education' (Proefriedt, 1994:5). Researchers would identify the specific teacher behaviours that proved effective, and teacher educators would train teachers in using them. This led to the proliferation of competency-based teacher education (CBTE) and performance-based teacher education (PBTE). Proefriedt recalls that Dewey had argued against such a narrow and technical approach to professional teacher education because of its emphasis on skill or technical knowledge at the expense of meaning (Proefriedt, 1994:5). Dewey also said that in the practice of any vocation experience is essential for 'artistry to be more than a technical accomplishment' (Dewey, 1916:295-296). Concern with meaning 'should be central to the education of teachers' instead of 'the emphasis on the accumulation of information and skills' (Proefriedt, 1994:5).

Of concern for the teacher's classroom practice is her ability 'to adjust general pedagogical principles in light of her judgement about the needs of individuals or of particular contexts' (Campbell et al, 2004:9). The recognition that judgement and the ability it gives teachers to make adjustments to lessons in response to unpredicted occurrences is reflected elsewhere by the same authors. Teaching is a 'multidimensional role' (Muijs et al, 2005:66) that cannot be understood only in terms of 'effective instruction' (Muijs et al, 2005:52).

The use of competence-based frameworks for assessment of teachers' work can help create shared understandings of professional practice. However, rigid adherence to frameworks as the sole means for describing professional practice can lead to narrow conceptions of what an accomplished teacher is. Teachers' voices are excluded from the discourse on competence. Accordingly, 'by systematically failing to record the voices of

ordinary teachers, the literature on educators' careers actually silences them' (Casey, 1992:188). Focusing on teaching as the acquisition and application of a set of competences, while ignoring the character, experience and beliefs of the teacher, results in an impoverished and restricted conception of teacher identity.

### **2.3.3 Competence-based approaches in the Irish context**

Despite well-argued opposition to teaching based on behaviourist philosophies (Dunne, 1988; Carr and Skinner, 2009), and the misgivings of others (Moran, 2007; Burke, 2007), Ireland is just as much under pressure to adopt competence-based approaches as other western countries. Although there is caution about their use (Coolahan, 2007; Egan, 2007; O'Doherty, 2009), there is growing acceptance that they 'will be of value in coming to a position on the knowledge, skills and competences which teachers require to be effective practitioners' (Egan, 2007:46).

The Working Group on Primary Preservice Teacher Education advised that

Teacher preparation programmes should adopt a co-ordinated holistic approach focused on the practice of teaching... Students need assistance in the application of knowledge and skills required in foundation and curriculum courses in the complex environment of the classroom. (DES, 2002:156).

Despite the recognition of the complexity of the classroom, it is not clear that warnings are heeded that teachers' professional development can be hampered 'by linking NQT induction too closely to school performance management' (Haggarty et al, 2009:3). Instead of trying to accommodate the 'contingent and shifting nature of knowledge' in the fields of teacher education and professionalism, it is possible that teacher education is 'being fixed into apparent certainties' (Edwards et al, 2002:1). The *Beginning to Teach* report (DES, 2005b) made recommendations which emphasise competence, and teacher educators were asked to 'ensure that new teachers have a comprehensive understanding of the teaching of literacy and numeracy' (DES, 2005b:71).

There are some in Ireland who view competence-based approaches with caution: O'Doherty considers that lists of competencies compiled by the Teacher Training Authority in England were 'issued without rationale or indication of their philosophical underpinning' (O'Doherty, 2009:67). Noting an 'instrumentalist and reductionist approach' and a change in language, so that prospective teachers are styled 'trainees'

(O'Doherty, 2009:67), she queries the synonymous use of the terms 'competencies' and 'competences' (O'Doherty, 2009:77). She suggests that 'competencies' are

the list of skills, knowledge, attitudes which have been developed in other jurisdictions where concern for the quality of teaching and teachers has resulted in the development of prescriptive, narrow, rigid criteria and which are premised on an impoverished perception of teaching and learning (O'Doherty, 2009:77).

She argues that 'competences'

need not be limited, instrumental or behaviourist in nature. If we... identify what we consider valuable in education, then statements of competence, or 'competences' can be flexible, expansive, culturally rich, and challenging (O'Doherty, 2009:77).

For O'Doherty, statements of competence would include the professional knowledge, judgement and autonomy of the teacher. Teachers who reflect critically rather than engaging in a type of reflection that perpetuates 'technical rationality' would recognise the 'individualised, personal and non-routine nature of teaching', and 'eschew the concept of tool-kit teaching' resident in competency-based approaches (O'Doherty, 2009:77). Activity theorists argue that there are occasions when there is 'no readily available model to fix the problems... no wise teacher [with] the correct answer' (Engestrom, 2009:59). Instead, 'learning needs to occur in a changing mosaic of *interconnected activity systems* which are energized by their own inner contradictions' (Engestrom, 2009:60). There is no ideal context amenable to pre-packaged solutions, and while 'there are common features of good pedagogy that can be applied almost anywhere, the nature of that application differs significantly between different sites and their learning cultures' (Biesta et al, 2007:148). Learning cultures are not the physical environments in which people learn, 'but the social practices through which they learn' (Biesta et al, 2007:143). Different learning cultures can exist in the same school and change over time with new cohorts of students. Given the diversity of teaching contexts, the undesirability of 'one size fits all' models of teaching for these learning cultures should be apparent. However, in Ireland as elsewhere, the drive for national standards and consistency in inspection lead to the restriction of teachers' practice, as it happens frequently that 'good pedagogy... [does] not completely fit the criteria set out for national standards and inspection' (Biesta et al, 2007:148).

The use of pre-determined criteria by Irish inspectors for the evaluation of teachers (Appendix 3) may also act to limit NQTs' practice to the strategic development of behaviours that demonstrate that criteria have been met. Those charged with the

development of revised teacher induction programmes for Ireland must include an understanding of the ‘excellent pedagogy that is particular to a tutor’s personal approach and professional judgement’(Biesta et al, 2007:148). Such understanding can be developed if NQTs are helped and supported to seek and to recognise the excellence which can be found through critical reflection on their own practice, preferably through dialogue with other members of the learning culture in which they work.

#### **2.4 Towards a broader conception of what it means to be a teacher**

Good teaching... isn’t just a matter of knowing your subject, being efficient, having the right competencies, or learning all the right techniques. Good teachers aren’t just well-oiled machines (Hargreaves, 1998:559).

Increasingly, teachers find themselves working in ‘contemporary cultures of performativity’ (Troman and Raggl, 2007:87). Those who insist on firm guidelines, strict requirements and regular evaluation of teachers fail to recognise teachers’ professional abilities and ‘their duty to exercise discretionary judgements in the circumstances and with the children they know best’ (Hargreaves, 1994:xiv). Instead, teacher education has become a utilitarian activity, with little time for reflection or questioning (Hargreaves, 1994:5).

A theme recurrent in critiques of competence-based frameworks is the inadequacy of such frameworks to reflect its breadth and complexity. Teachers need a theoretical framework: Freire states that ‘all educational practice implies a theoretical stance on the educator’s part’ (Freire, 1972:21). Brookfield rephrases this: ‘all teachers possess a set of beliefs concerning what their role should be in the classroom’ (Brookfield, 2006:254). In addition to their philosophy or theory, teachers require something which is not present before entering the unpredictable environment of the classroom. This is the ability to ‘muddle through the complex contexts and configurations’ of classrooms (Brookfield, 2006:1). Others have used Aristotle’s term *phronesis* or practical wisdom (Carr, 1993; Moran, 2007), or artistry (Eisner, 2002).

Schön suggests a model for professional education which combines the teaching of theoretical knowledge with learning by doing, coaching in the artistry of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1999:xii). Each of these involves developing an ability to respond in practical ways to changing and challenging situations, requiring the use of professional judgement to assess appropriate courses of action. Pollard offers ‘reflective teaching’ as a process through which the capacity to make such judgements can be developed and maintained (Pollard, 1997:4).

Nias highlights the importance of perception and judgement:

The minute-by-minute decisions made within the shifting, unpredictable world of the classroom and the judgements teachers reach when they are reflecting on their work depend on how they perceive particular events, behaviours, materials and persons (Nias, 1985:13).

Brookfield responds forcefully to those who would see teaching merely as the development of competencies:

There are no seven habits of effective teaching, no five rules for pedagogic success, and if someone tries to tell you there is, you should steer clear of them as fast as you can! (Brookfield, 2006:1).

Elsewhere, he offers a model for the development of critical practice (Brookfield, 1995). He does so 'in a tentative spirit' (Brookfield, 1995:xvi) recognising that many of the practices and approaches he describes were crafted for his particular situation and are not universally applicable without modification. Explaining that we can only unearth our deepest-held and often hidden and uncritically accepted assumptions by examining what we do from 'as many unfamiliar angles as possible' (Brookfield, 1995:29), he suggests four lenses through which to do so: the autobiographies of teachers and learners, students' eyes, colleagues' experiences and perspectives, and theoretical literature. Each lens illuminates a different part of practice, and taken together, they 'throw into sharp relief the contours of our assumptive clusters' (Brookfield, 1995:29).

#### **2.4.1 A constructivist alternative to teacher-competence approaches**

Eisner stresses the constructivist understanding that knowledge is created by 'an inventive mind interacting with a universe which itself is part of what humans construe in the process of interaction' (Eisner, 2002:380). While he finds this liberating, the freedom is gained at the cost of the security of foundationalist conceptions of knowledge. However, governments persist with technicist conceptions of teacher education. Through the search for a holy grail that would show things as they really are, it was hoped to generate 'science-based "best practices"', and 'teacher-proof methods' (Eisner, 2002:383). From the 1980s on, a struggle developed between government, which sought a cohort of technicians to 'deliver' the curriculum, and teacher educators, who 'saw teaching as responding to the complex needs of individual learners in a specific context, and therefore highlighted the need to educate student teachers to help

them make multiple decisions in non-routine situations’ (Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:264).

Behaviourists had attempted to create a science of teaching, believing that ‘all knowledge can be analysed into a definite number of component elements’ (Dunne, 1988:69). For them, all intended learning must be identified beforehand using objectives that outline observable and measurable pupil behaviour. Dunne calls this conceptualisation of teaching and learning inadequate because of the arbitrariness of the initial formulation of objectives, the failure to take contingencies of teaching situations into account, and the refusal to allow for improvisation or for following up unanticipated events. The last of these involves a different kind of learning objective, which

has not been formally endorsed in advance, but is rather discovered within the teaching situation and pursued, even while its whole significance or value is not yet full apparent (Dunne, 1988:86).

Twenty years later a similar argument was advanced by Andrews and Edwards:

In education we don’t always know what the outcomes will be, they only emerge as part of the process... Teachers need to feel on ground safe enough to take risks that may be creative and lead to genuine excellence, rather than settling for the false security that all ticks have been marked against a list of their competencies (Andrews and Edwards, 2008:5).

While I believe this approach to be superior, there remains, in policies that promote the competence-based agenda, the behaviourist requirement that specific student behaviour must be stated in advance so that unequivocal judgements can be made ‘as to whether the teacher has been successful (where ‘to be successful’ means ‘to achieve one’s objectives’)’ (Dunne, 1988:67).

Teachers certainly need skills and competencies, and some might ‘suggest that it is possible to identify the most important skills as a set of competencies that every practising teacher should possess’ (Jordan and Powell, 1995:122). But the possession of a particular set of skills is no guarantee of teacher competence: the belief that ‘professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique’ (Schön, 1991:21) is a form of Technical Rationality which has underpinned the “major” professions as they seek to apply a specific type of knowledge in ‘stable institutional contexts’ (Schön, 1991:23). Unlike these professions, teaching suffers ‘from unstable institutional contexts of practice... and [is] *therefore* unable to develop a base of systematic, scientific professional

knowledge' (Schön, 1991:23). Schön argues that a different conception of knowledge operates in the 'workaday life of the professional' (Schön, 1991:49). This is often tacit and the professional is often unable to articulate all the criteria used in forming a judgement. In acting professionally, he or she

makes innumerable judgements of quality for which he (sic) cannot state adequate criteria, and he displays skills for which he cannot state the rules and procedures. Even when he makes conscious use of research-based theories and techniques, he is dependent on tacit recognitions, judgements, and skillful performances (Schön, 1991:50).

This is the teacher's knowing: knowing when to apply certain skills, and when not to, comes from an intuition which is only developed through experience. Teacher education is not 'mere training in tricks of the trade' (Carr and Skinner, 2009:143). While any form of teacher education that would claim to be professional should include leading student teachers into an exploration of theory, or 'initiation into a wider intellectual conversation about the nature of schooling' (Carr and Skinner, 2009:143), Carr and Skinner argue that effective classroom practice is developed more through experience than theoretical learning. In reality, 'all educational theories are theories of theory and practice' (Carr, 1995:41), as practice is intertwined with theory, whether articulated or tacit.

Teachers' effectiveness is less a function of their theoretical knowledge or of skill:

The quality of teachers' practices... [depends]... on the way in which they go about making decisions about which of those skills to apply and in which situations, and about the way in which they monitor pupil responses and adjust their approach accordingly (Jordan and Powell, 1995:122).

Policy-makers continue to adhere to competence-based 'targets whose achievement can be measured quantitatively or verified through observed behaviours and evaluated against identified performance indicators' (Burke, 2007:67) for pragmatic rather than philosophical reasons. While it is legitimate for governments to seek to ensure good quality education systems and that expenditure on education is reasonable, efforts to meet these requirements have brought an 'almost unstoppable trend towards thinking largely in quantitative terms about teaching/learning and teacher preparation' (Burke, 2007:69). Burke suggests there is a danger that education is re-defined exclusively in terms of what can be measured, and that the role of the teacher is trivialised (Burke, 2007:69). Then again, 'the precise nature of the theoretical or reflective basis for teaching' is not easily grasped (Carr and Skinner, 2009:142). The difficulty in demonstrating how reflection 'might be exhibited and embodied in the rough and

tumble of practical teacher training' (Carr and Skinner, 2009) can result in the perception that professional theory and practice occupy different spaces in teacher education.

#### **2.4.2 The self who teaches: Teacher identity and integrity**

Parker Palmer says that teacher competence is important, but that it is inadequate to view teachers solely in its terms. After thirty years teaching, he says that 'the techniques I have mastered do not disappear, but neither do they suffice,' and argues that 'good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher' (Palmer, 1998:10). This resonates with 'the intuition shared by many educators of very different times and places... that the educational relationship is a relationship between human beings... [which] cannot and should not be reduced to a merely instrumental relationship' (Biesta, 1995:107). Recognising that education involves more than 'relentless and mindless standardized testing', Palmer says teachers 'must live examined lives and try to understand what animates their actions for better and for worse' (Palmer, 1998:ix). His vision of a 'self who teaches' is more authentic than a conception of a teacher as a possessor of competences. He illustrates the priority of identity over competence by sharing his students' descriptions of good teachers: a feature of their descriptions was the lack of uniformity in teaching approach, making it 'impossible to claim that all good teachers use similar techniques' (Palmer, 1998:10). What good teachers had in common was a strong sense of personal identity:

The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts – meaning *heart* in its ancient sense, as the place where the intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self (Palmer, 1998:11)

This 'connectedness' and the weaving of complex webs by good teachers cannot be measured by 'methodological reductionism' (Palmer, 1998:11-12). Whereas the OECD would favour 'a statement of teacher competencies and performance standards at different stages of their career' (McKenzie and Santiago, 2005:132), Palmer focuses on identity, 'a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am' and integrity, by which 'I become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am' (Palmer, 1998:13).

For Palmer, '[t]echnique is what teachers use until the real teacher arrives' (Palmer, 1998:6). A teacher is not only a competent person, but is a multifaceted human being, whose parts may not be separated easily if at all. There are resonances with Bateson's image of a life as multilayered, like 'a Samurai sword, whose layers of differently tempered metal are folded over and over' (Bateson, 1989:214). It is difficult to see how teaching based on her philosophy of life as 'improvisatory art' (Bateson, 1989:3), in which familiar and unfamiliar components are constantly put together to create something new, could be shaped so that it could be properly and fully described by a competency framework.

Competency models of teaching are deficient because they adopt an instrumental view of teachers as 'objects which can be manipulated for particular ends' (Casey, 1992:188). Such approaches fail to recognise the significant role played by biography in shaping how pre-service and beginning teachers view their early teaching experiences (Knowles, 1992).

#### **2.4.3 The teacher as *Phronimos*: possessor of practical wisdom**

The notion of competence is rooted in technical rationality, and prioritises observable behaviours and empirical evidence over 'valuable features of education which cannot be so easily captured' (Moran, 2007:62). Aristotle distinguishes between making and doing: 'making aims at an end different from the act of making, whereas in doing the end cannot be other than the act itself' (Aristotle, Book VI, 5, 1140b, 3). Moran uses the craft of shoemaking to illustrate the point: the purpose of this craft is its outcome, the production of shoes; there is no virtue in the physical act of making shoes. Carr gives greater detail: shipbuilders, craftsmen and artisans use *techne* to 'produce an object or an artifact', whereas the work of a teacher is 'to realise some morally worthwhile "good"... which cannot be made, it can only be done' (Carr, 1993:168).

Education is a good in itself, and there is much more to teaching and learning than outcomes. Moran laments the fact that this is not understood by governments:

The simplistic view arises in government that investment in the tools and *techne* of education will push all the right buttons and deliver more effective learning than that resulting from trusting teachers and encouraging them to develop their own – possibly quirky – *phronesis*. (Moran, 2007:62)

Neither is *episteme*, scientific or pedagogical knowledge, the most important of the pedagogical virtues. Like *techne*, it is morally neutral. Aristotle's *phronesis*, 'wise

practical reasoning' (Eisner, 2002:375), is the virtue 'which all good teachers possess' (Moran, 2007:61), especially so where they have to make decisions 'where it may only be possible to respect one value at the expense of another' (Carr, 1993:170). Because *phronesis* demands that teachers use their capacities to promote the good and avoid the bad for their pupils, it takes precedence over *techne* and *episteme* which are morally neutral and 'ought not... be deployed in the classroom except under the guidance of *phronesis*... Craft and knowledge can be used for both good and ill, but practical wisdom is always a force for good' (Moran, 2007:62). Technical competence must always be guided by wise judgement. *Phronesis*, practical wisdom, 'is the union of good judgement and action' (Carr, 1993:172).

## **2.5 An appeal to an older conception of teacher identity**

To the question of whether our concepts of practice have developed at all if we still appeal to ideas that originated with Aristotle, Carr responds that much of the ambiguity surrounding contemporary notions of educational practice arises because our present concept of practice is but a fragment of a 'previous concept of practice which, though it can no longer find adequate expression, nevertheless continues to convey something of its original meaning and assert something of its original form' (Carr, 1993:165). He argues that by attempting to reconstruct this original meaning, we can clarify current understandings of educational practice. He identifies the primacy of practical knowledge, reached through deliberation and judgement, as a distinctive feature of practice. Educational practice is guided not only by theoretical knowledge, but by 'the exigencies of the practical situation in which this theory is to be applied' (Carr, 1993:172).

Aristotelian views of teaching (Moran, 2007; Begley, 2006.; Carr, 1993, 1995) share the idea that teaching which does not privilege *phronesis* over the other intellectual virtues of *techne* and *episteme* is deficient. It is important to note that none of these commentators suggest that *techne* and *episteme* are dispensable. *Phronesis* alone is insufficient for good teaching: 'One might be able to assess a situation quite well and still be inept in its execution' (Eisner, 2002:382). The adept teacher needs all three virtues. I equate the ability to use all three with Eisner's notion of *artistry*, for whom:

teaching in many ways is more like playing in a jazz quartet than following the score of a marching band. Knowing when to come in and take the lead, knowing when to bow out, knowing when to improvise are all aspects of teaching that follow no rule, they need to be felt (Eisner, 2002:382)

Van Manen speaks of a non-cognitive knowledge which teachers use for the ‘incredible intricacies of practical actions in teaching-learning situations’ (van Manen, 1999:69). This manifests in experienced teachers as confidence, ‘a form of knowing, except that this “knowledge” cannot necessarily be captured in words’ (van Manen, 1999:69). It could also be described as skill, although Wragg points out that this word has both good and bad connotations. Viewed positively, skill ‘attracts adulation, is a gift of the few, the result of years of practice or the mark of the expert’ (Wragg, 1984a:6). A less admiring view of skill is of something mechanical, ‘the sign of a rude technician rather than an artist’ (Wragg, 1984a:6). For the purposes of this study, it was important to try to discern, from the ways in which the participants spoke about themselves, whether they saw themselves as skilled technicians, or whether in their discourse they tried to capture the essence of what van Manen had described as a form of knowing which is almost incapable of being described in words. I believe that this form of knowing is actually very similar to the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis*.

### **2.5.1 *Phronesis*: teaching as the moral application of practical wisdom**

An understanding of *phronesis*, practical wisdom, might guide the discussions that teachers have with mentors at the beginning of their careers and beyond. The aim is to identify a common language which will guide teacher discourse on educational practice and what it means to be a practitioner. Gadamer revisits Aristotle’s distinction between *phronesis* and *episteme*. For the Greeks, mathematics was a science, *episteme*, that could be learned by anybody and was ‘a knowledge of what is unchangeable’ (Gadamer, 2004:312). Human sciences are of an entirely different nature: they seek to understand people as acting beings, and they do not attempt to establish what is. *Techne*, the skill of the craftsman who knows how to make something, is also of a different order to *phronesis*. The skilled craftsman is always concerned with the practical application of a particular skill. The *techne* may have been taught or been acquired through extensive experience. In either case, the craftsman ‘must know how to apply what has been learned in a general way to the concrete situation’ (Gadamer, 2004:314). Genuine mastery is only acquired through practical application.

The person charged with moral decision-making must be able to see what is right in a particular situation and use the right means to do it. So far, as far as teaching is concerned, there appears to be little difference between what is required and what may be needed to be done by the skilled craftsman. Gadamer makes a number of

distinctions. A *techne* can be learned, but can also be forgotten. Moral knowledge is never forgotten. We are always in a situation of having to act, and do not have the luxury of deciding whether to learn a particular skill.

Teaching has a core moral aspect which brings it beyond the application of craft knowledge. Teacher education courses which prioritise craft knowledge in isolation from the moral purpose of teaching diminish teaching as a profession:

A purely practical training for teachers does not only mean a failure to incorporate theoretical understandings into their knowledge and skills, it also means a limitation of those skills. Skilled activity is characterised by automaticity and fluency, with rapid adjustment to feedback from the current context; the activity is monitored but only at the level of consciousness when the skilled performance is disrupted (Jordan and Powell, 1995:123).

If teacher education consisted solely of learning ‘practical’ matters, without reflection, the result would be

a sterile, rigid kind of learning that would not lead to the flexibility that is required in all teaching... It follows, therefore, that teachers and intending teachers need to reflect, and that reflection necessarily requires an understanding of theoretical frameworks (Jordan and Powell, 1995:124).

Goodson warns against the ‘overzealous promotion of teachers’ everyday craft knowledge’ which would ‘redirect their work away from broader moral and social projects and commitments’ (Goodson, 2000:185). This ‘craft knowledge’ is not *phronesis*, and instead focuses narrowly on ‘pedagogical skills and technical competencies’ which serves to ‘remove from teachers any moral responsibility or professional judgement’ (Goodson, 2000:185-186). It is ‘a ‘what works’ knowledge and may be used by policy-makers as a basis for changing or refining the rules of practice’ (Bloemer and James, 2003:250). Practical wisdom, on the other hand, ‘developed... in appropriately reflective ways, can and should form an important part of what it means to be professional as a teacher’ (Goodson, 2000:186). Using practical wisdom to guide their practice, practitioners ‘tend not to experience their expertise as a set of techniques or as a ‘tool kit’ for producing learning’ (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:37), but they respond creatively to a complex and often unpredictable range of ‘factors which shape the situation moment by moment’ (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:37).

Kennedy argues that ‘no other profession is subjected to more assessments with less effect’ than teaching (Kennedy, 2010:1). She describes teaching as a poorly understood activity. It can be viewed as the imparting of knowledge, in which case testing an

individual's knowledge is the best way to identify the prospective teacher. It can be seen as having to do with motivating students, or it may be the teacher's skilful behaviours that are most valued. Arguments persist as to whether successful teaching is the result of 'teachers' knowledge, actions, character traits, or beliefs and values', because

we really do not know how these different qualities influence student learning and consequently are not sure about which qualities should be assessed (Kennedy, 2010:2).

In summary, the core issue lies at the heart of teacher identity: whether teachers are to be seen as skilled technicians whose role is to ensure the efficient curriculum delivery that is demanded by the 'dominant rationalist discourses of the day'(Bloomer and James, 2001:online), or as practitioners, 'thinking teachers' [who] 'have some part to play in the making, rather than simply the taking of curriculum' (Bloomer and James, 2001:online). I agree that teachers must be identified as researching practitioners who 'need to be at the heart of the research process in deciding what research should be carried out, how the findings should be interpreted and how they should be used' (Bloomer and James, 2003:251). However, the dominant discourse of technical rationality limits educational practice to a utilitarian activity in which the teacher is not required to be a thoughtful agent, but an efficient technician whose sole purpose is the performance of prescribed tasks.

### **2.5.2 Challenges and changes to teacher identity**

It is difficult to argue that what matters most in teaching is not the skills or competences/competencies of the teacher, particularly in light of the headwind that has gathered internationally behind competence-based approaches. However, there are voices that make alternative claims, and I agree with them that looking beyond competence frameworks facilitates the development of more complete and authentic conceptions of a good teacher. While policy imperatives create a version of a teacher, 'there is the possibility of rejecting, recasting and subverting some aspects of these dominant versions' (Maguire, 2008:45). Discourses that focus on identity provide alternative viewpoints which allow us to see teaching as a complex activity and help us understand why 'different individuals act differently in the same situations' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005:14).

The dominance of competences is not unchallenged. Competence-driven theories of leadership are questioned, and in Scotland, public-sector organisations are abandoning

competency and standards frameworks (Bolden et al, 2003:39). In place of the emphasis on individuals' competence is recognition of the collective dimension of school leadership. This idea resonates with activity theory, in which a subject can be an individual or a collective (Dwivedi et al, 2009:438). In school, the collective activity can be that of the staff; in a classroom, that of teacher and pupils. This acknowledgement of the agency of more than one person requires a view of teaching which reaches beyond the individual competence. Teaching can be seen as the school's collective responsibility. This view prioritises process over the specific inputs or outputs of competence models, as 'inputs will be different in every case and the outputs will emerge from the process rather than being predefined' (Dwivedi et al, 2009:438).

### **2.5.3 Apprenticeship of observation and 'knowledge' of teaching**

Prospective teachers have many implicit and tacit beliefs about the nature of teaching (Anderson and Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Sugrue, 1997a, 1997b). These 'lay theories' are established during their long 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975; Anderson and Holt Reynolds, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 2001) during which time they have spent 'thousands of hours as schoolchildren observing and evaluating professionals in action' (Borg, 2004:274). They are observers who view their classrooms from their vantage points as students. They view questions of teacher knowledge and skill 'through the lens of a former pupil rather than the lens of a trained practitioner' (Darling-Hammond, 2001:761). Many enduring conceptions of teaching are formed without direct access to the teacher's motivations or pedagogical beliefs, and rely heavily on imagination to form beliefs about learning (Lortie, 1975:63).

Lay theories are beliefs developed naturally over time... Preservice teachers do not consciously learn them at an unannounced, recognized moment from a formal teaching/learning episode. Rather, lay theories represent tacit knowledge lying dormant and unexamined by the student (Holt-Reynolds, 1992:346).

Constructivist principles, applied to student teachers' learning, should help them to 'draw on previous knowledge and accommodate new insights within an existing framework of knowledge' (Brown and McGannon, 1998, online). In college, student teachers learn techniques and skills they will use in the classrooms and access knowledge about teaching and education. What form this knowledge takes is contested: modernists and postmodernists 'fight out their different interpretations of knowledge in teacher education' (Edwards et al, 2002:8). Whatever resolution is found, whatever

accommodation is made with teachers' prior knowledge, ITE 'cannot possibly produce... teachers who know all they need to know about classroom practice', so it is necessary that 'student teachers are helped to adopt an approach to thinking about their teaching which will provide a basis for further development' (Brown and McGannon, 1998, online).

The 'paucity' of the knowledge base is noted by Edwards et al, who state that knowledge of teaching resides in knowledge of the curriculum and of learning targets 'enriched by the pedagogical knowledge licensed increasingly overtly by government guidelines' (Edwards et al, 2002:99). An unfortunate result is that

The theorizing teacher drawing on and informing an educational knowledge-base consisting of Vygotskian-style 'scientific concepts' of... pedagogy is not the most ubiquitous image of the teacher practitioner (Edwards et al, 2002:99).

They are not despondent, however, and consider it timely to aim for a new knowledge-base for education, which

is constantly informed and reformed by work carried out by educationally grounded forms of social science, which responsibly engage together in supporting and informing the generation of locally relevant knowledge in the actions of knowledgeable teachers (Edwards et al, 2002:100).

#### **2.5.4 Teacher commitment as an essential component of teacher identity**

Day and Gu (2010) identify several common factors in the technical-rationalist reforms occurring in schools in western countries. Many of these reforms are poorly managed and 'disturb the relative stability of teachers' work, the conditions for teaching and learning, their own development, and... their beliefs, practices and self-efficacy' (Day and Gu, 2010:25). One of the factors is that these reforms progress without having regard for teachers' identities, which Day and Gu argue are 'central to motivation, efficacy, commitment, job satisfaction and wellbeing' (Day and Gu, 2010:25). They argue that ways must be sought to 'build, maintain and enhance... the commitment that is essential if teachers are to teach to their best in the new environments in which they work' (Day and Gu, 2010:25).

It is reasonable to expect that some kinds of teachers would have more commitment than others and also that some kinds of schools would foster more commitment than others (Ingersoll et al, 1997:10).

As an element of teacher identity, teacher commitment is influenced not only by 'antecedent personal characteristics' (Razak et al, 2009:343), but also by social groups,

including other teachers, and by school cultures. The term ‘commitment’ has been used ‘to describe the amount and quality of thought and energy with which individuals address their work’ (Nias, 1989:30). It is the ‘quality which separates the “caring” or “dedicated”’ (Nias, 1989:30) from others, and divides those who take their roles seriously and are loyal to the school from those who are not so concerned about high standards and who do not show a strong allegiance to their schools (Nias, 1989). Nias claimed that commitment is a more significant descriptor than ‘allegiance to any particular philosophy or espousal of any specific teaching style or form of classroom organization’ (Nias, 1989:31), but in 1989, this ‘important fact’ was not mentioned ‘in any published study of teacher perspectives’ (Nias, 1989:31).

A possible reason for the tardiness in researching teacher commitment is the clustering of teachers in schools, which does not make it possible ‘to identify the factors that influence the levels of commitment of individuals or members of the groups collectively’ (Razak et al, 2009:343). Nonetheless, teachers and their commitment levels are subject to ‘scrutiny and sometimes critical comment by politicians, policy makers, employers, parents, students and other stakeholders’ (Razak et al, 2009:344). Research by Reyes (1990, in Razak et al, 2009), found that committed teachers are likely to

- (a) be less tardy, work harder and be less inclined to leave the workplace;
- (b) devote more time to extra-curricular activities in order to accomplish the goals of the school and school system;
- (c) perform work better;
- (d) influence student achievement;
- (e) believe in and act upon the goals of the school and system;
- (f) exert efforts beyond personal interest; and
- (g) intend to remain a member of the school system (Razak et al, 2009:343).

Among the factors likely to affect levels of teacher commitment are demographic characteristics such as teachers’ age, sex, race and education, along with school level factors like school context, community setting and the type of student enrolled (Ingersoll et al, 1997). The vocational element of teachers’ identity is stronger for some: there are teachers who have ‘a strong emotional dedication to their work’ (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:93) and who are like the ‘Plowden primary teacher’ who always feels ‘that you can never do enough’ (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:93). Such teachers ‘sometimes eagerly accept concepts of vocation and conscientiousness to justify their taking on backbreaking loads’ (Brookfield, 1995:15). Teachers’ commitments to their students often lead to ‘willing acceptance of heavy teaching loads, long hours of preparation and marking, as well as attempts to keep up with recent developments in research’ (Ball and Goodson, 1985:20). Teacher guilt, with its ‘overwhelming feelings of frustration and

anxiety' (Hargreaves, 1994:142), can have demotivating and destabilising effects on teachers.

It is worrying that teachers' own sense of commitment can have negative personal consequences for them, as 'over-commitment and over-conscientiousness of primary teachers to preserve their values and identities' (Troman and Raggl, 2007:86), while attempting to implement reforms imposed from without, caused increased levels of stress and burnout, and led many to exit the profession. In order to protect their self-identities, teachers have had to become more strategic and political, resulting in their having to adjust their commitment (Troman and Raggl, 2007:86).

### **2.5.5 'Reference groups' and school culture in the formation of teacher identity**

In 1985, Nias claimed that primary teachers' personal identities were anchored in and sustained by reference groups within and outside school. Discussion with other group members 'served the interrelated functions of defending the substantial self and defining the reality to which that self had to react' (Nias, 1985:107). She wrote when there was still a secure sense of teacher identity, with 'a great deal of consistency of social identity and self concept' among teachers, and when the majority of teachers saw their personal and social identities as isomorphic (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:90). While such a view presents the concept of identity as 'a fairly permanent and central set of characteristics' (Maguire, 2008:44), an alternative is that identity is 'contingent', constituted by individuals in relation to their surroundings, is never fully autonomous because of its exposure to things outside of itself, and 'will never be totally secure and fixed for all time' (du Gay, 1996:48). Instead, teacher identity is 'a continuing site of contestation, struggle and reworking' (Maguire, 2008:45). Sfard and Prusak argue that because identity is 'constantly created and re-created in interactions between people' (2005:15), it is a useful tool for examining how personal worlds are shaped by collective discourses. In 1989 Nias predicted likely costs to primary teachers following the 1988 Education Act, including 'loss of freedom... and erosion of their sense of professional integrity' (Nias, 1989:213). Woods and Jeffrey describe the changes since the 1980s as a 'revolution' (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:90).

Linked to the concept of identity is that of community, formed through the combination of individual voices (Sfard and Prusak, 2005:15). There are two subsets of identity: 'actual identity... stories about the actual state of affairs, and designated identity...

narratives presenting a state of affairs which... is *expected* to be the case' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005:15). Sfard and Prusak see learning as the closing of the gap between actual and designated identity: the extent to which people do this determines whether their learning is successful or not. For individuals, changing designated identities is difficult as these are largely formed by 'narratives authored by others' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005:15). Unwelcome changes to teacher identity have occurred as teachers' designated identities have been altered from without by policymakers, whose actions have widened the gap between teachers' actual and designated identities. The widespread adoption of competence-based views of what a good teacher is has contributed, in my view, to increased disparity between teachers' actual and designated identities.

### **2.5.6 Experiences of teacher induction**

While Draper et al (2004) identify several models of teacher induction, they stress that there are no smooth transitions between stages of professional development outlined in these models. Earlier research had indicated that '(t)he speed of passage through these stages [varied]... as a consequence of differing starting points and also partly because of different amounts of support' (Draper et al, 2004:202). The teething problems encountered in Scotland's experience of a new teacher induction programme (Draper et al, 2004; O'Brien and Christie, 2005) should be remembered as new Irish induction processes are developed. The shortcomings in the 'complex and unwieldy' guidelines (O'Brien and Christie, 2005:197-198) used in Scotland should be addressed. Tension arises when mentors are required to assess inductees. A system where mentors assess teachers would prevent the formation of the 'trusting, benevolent alliance' (Bennetts, 2002:1-2), characteristic of mentor relationships. The extent to which the induction tutor moves outside the role of mentor, into the 'systematic examination of the NQTs teaching and of pupil learning' is one of the 'complex and potentially problematic' features of induction (Haggarty et al, 2009:4).

Another concern must be what to do about failing probationers. In Scotland the incidence is approximately 2%, while failure rates are typically less than 1% in OECD countries (McKenzie and Santiago, 2005:155). No Irish data were available for the OECD report. However, of 1,566 probationary teachers in 2003/04, only three received an unsatisfactory rating (DES, 2005b:61,67). In Scotland, Probationer Coordinators work with schools to support probationary teachers. Who would provide such support in

a new Irish system has not been clarified, and it is unclear whether the evaluative and support roles previously held by inspectors will be separated.

The ‘evidence that a good early start... and effective professional development are both associated with the development and maintenance of teacher commitment and retention’ (Draper et al, 2004:201) needs to inform an Irish induction programme. Other Scottish research highlights the ‘productive and constructive’ advantages of collaborative approaches in teacher induction, allowing teachers to share in and contribute to ‘collective memories and accumulated professional knowledge’ (Grangeat and Gray, 2008:181). However, the *Standard for full registration*, required on completion of induction, does not embody accumulated professional knowledge, but only the bureaucratic knowledge ‘which is necessary to the functioning of education policy’ (Grangeat and Gray, 2008:186).

In Ireland, the DES surveyed probationary teachers in 2004 to elicit levels of satisfaction with supports provided. They were asked to rate support given by the school principal, other teachers, inspectors, education centres and induction courses. The responses were positive in respect of principals, other teachers and inspectors, but not so regarding education centres and induction programmes. The report suggests ‘it is likely that the questionnaire respondents were expressing dissatisfaction at not having access to induction courses rather than rating the induction courses that they were attending’ (DES, 2005b:70). Only 20% of the responses were positive in respect of initial teacher education, with teachers remarking that the methods they had learned had been useful, while praising colleges, lecturers and teaching practice supervisors. Negative themes included lack of confidence in teaching particular age groups, lack of training in practical school matters, lack of preparation for planning, concerns regarding classroom management and inadequate preparation for helping pupils with differing learning needs (DES, 2005b:28).

Walker’s advice for beginning lecturers has much that is relevant for beginning teachers: ‘(t)here are no short cuts... It is something we have to work on ourselves, make mistakes and be prepared to learn. We have to be prepared for a level of anxiety, for disappointment... and for unexpected success’ (Walker, n.d., online). Postman argues that acceptance of his assertion that ‘error is no disgrace’ (Postman, 1996:125) would necessitate changes in the classroom environment, a place where there is little tolerance for error. ‘In varying degrees, being wrong is a disgrace; one pays a heavy price for it’

(Postman, 1996). Although he speaks primarily for students, I believe this is also true for teachers. It explains the emphasis on getting things right, so that teachers are not allowed to enter classrooms without the objectives, techniques and assessment strategies that will ensure 'effective' teaching. When there is failure, the teacher is blamed. An environment in which fear of failure inhibits any form of experimentation by beginning teachers perpetuates the belief that there is an ideal, if elusive, 'right' way to teach.

### **2.5.7 Inspection and teacher identity**

The pressures of 'deprofessionalization' and 'intensification' of teachers' work (Woods, 1999:115) have created 'severe identity crises' for teachers (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:104), leading them 'to reconsider their beliefs, values, roles, biographies, and ambitions in ways they had not anticipated' (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:90). Increased emphases on efficiency, performativity, audit accountability and challenges to teachers' moral systems have made teacher identity more fragile, and have brought 'strongly traumatic negative feelings... [which] needed to be countered if the personal identity were to be salvaged' (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:98).

School inspection is identified as a threat to the 'integrated and consistent self-identity' (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002) of primary teachers which had prevailed since the 1967 Plowden Report. Humanist values, centring on warm and caring relationships with a high degree of trust, and a vision of 'good teaching' based firmly on child-centred principles, contributed to the Plowden self-identity. Vocational commitment was also evident in the strong emotional dedication of teachers and their strong moral and political investment in their work (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:93).

'To declare that one is called to the vocation of education does not seem to be a way of talking that fits the ethos of our times' (van Manen, 1997:219). The ethos has changed, and new principles guiding school inspection have expedited this change. The substitution of accountability for trust meant that 'inspection reduced the complex, multiple qualities of Plowden teaching to a series of measurable criteria' (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:94). The use of quantitative terms by inspectors to grade teachers and the setting of targets for pupil achievement were introduced along with 'a continuous onslaught on teacher adequacy' (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:95-96). Now the 'good teacher' is described in terms of competencies. Inspectors are not seen as colleagues but as auditors.

## **2.6 Teacher enculturation and socialization**

### **2.6.1 Teacher enculturation: the development of teacher identity as stage process**

Teacher identity, present in embryonic form before entry to teacher education (Sugrue, 1997a) becomes established in the process of socialization as teachers construct their actual identities. There are different perspectives from which such development is viewed, including teacher development theories, which identify discrete stages in teachers' professional growth, and teacher socialisation theories, in which the roles played by school culture and by colleagues are emphasised (Sfard and Prusak, 2005; Nimmo and Smith, 1995; Kinnucan-Welsch, 2007). Lortie describes socialization as 'something that happens to people as they move through a series of structured experiences and internalise the subculture of the group' (Lortie, 1975:61). This has two elements: the need for 'structured experiences' to be provided for the teacher to engage constructively with, and the influence of the school culture into which the teacher is socialized. Simply internalising the subculture is not sufficient for student and beginning teachers: failure to establish and maintain critical engagement with the culture would lead to them privileging 'dominant aspects of school culture such as control and transmission of information... over more sophisticated teaching methodologies' (Sugrue, 1997a:218). Without an ongoing critical discussion, initially with a knowledgeable mentor, NQTs could be 'drawn into seeing things from the perspective and within the culture of the school' (Haggarty et al, 2009:8).

Theorists who attempt to portray teacher development as progression through stages do not agree about the number of stages, their duration, or terms to define them. Whether there are four stages of fantasy, survival, mastery and impact, or whether the description of five stages of novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert teacher is more accurate is not the central issue (Nimmo and Smith, 1995, online). Critics question whether the easy categorisation of a stage model can accurately describe the experience of all beginning teachers:

Novices obviously do not all have identical enculturation experiences. Nor do they all proceed through developmental stages with robot-like precision. 'Stage theories' provide one explanation for how neophytes develop but uncertainty exists as to how well the neatly packaged 'stage models' reflect actual teaching experiences (Nimmo and Smith, 1995, online).

Nimmo and Smith distinguish between teacher development perspectives, which see teacher development happening as teachers pass through identifiable and predictable

stages, and socialisation perspectives, which focus on professional growth. They argue that ‘an interactionist perspective provides a more authentic perspective... to analyse beginning teacher enculturation’ than either (Nimmo and Smith, 1995, online.). They suggest that growth as a teacher is too complex, too multi-faceted for socialisation theory or stage theory to explain adequately, either separately or in some amalgam. Nevertheless, they recognise that socialisation theories provide insights into aspects of NQTs’ working lives, and agree that explaining teacher development using stages ‘has some appeal’, even though attempts to identify stages in teaching are ‘uneven and inconclusive’.

### **2.6.2 Teacher enculturation as a socially constructed phenomenon**

Beginning teachers are influenced by a broad range of factors which can be grouped under three headings. Firstly, there are biographical influences that have contributed to their decision to pursue teaching careers. These include significant teacher figures and critical incidents from their time as students in school. The second group of factors are encountered by teachers during their time as student teachers. These factors include the structure and content of the teacher education course; fellow students; lecturers and teaching practice supervisors; and experiences of teaching practice. Finally, when teachers commence their teaching careers, they encounter a third group of factors which incorporate their pupils, the school contexts and cultures in which they find themselves, DES inspectors and other school-based influences such as mentors, principals and other colleagues.

Hargreaves points out that cultures provide the context in which teachers develop and sustain particular strategies of teaching. The children’s ages, the subjects taught and the school’s socio-economic context influence the development of teachers’ practices in their working environments. To understand the work and motives of teachers we must understand their teaching communities or work cultures (Hargreaves, 1994:165). Hargreaves revisits this theme repeatedly (2003, 2010) and emphasises the teacher as a ‘key agent of change in today’s knowledge society’ (Hargreaves, 2003:160). In activity theory, teachers are the actors who have ‘the ability to develop new strategies of action and new meanings in the context of their experienced world’ (Hayrynen, 1999:121). This process is regulated by the ‘habitus’, ‘the system of durable representations by which people organize their practices and representations’ (Hayrynen, 1999:121). The social world is ‘continuously mobile’ (Hayrynen, 1999:121) and requires that teachers

and educationalists ‘get accustomed to the actual heterogeneity in our culture and adapt their habitus’ accordingly (Carpay and Van Oers, 1999:309). Aspects of student teachers’ habitus include

how they were disposed to see the task of teaching, what personal, tacit theories they brought to that task, their expectations of what *learning* to teach would involve, how they were disposed to engage with the range of learning situations that they would encounter, what they felt was the motive of the teacher education enterprise, and what they expected to be the outcomes (Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2010:265).

These aspects remain important for teachers during induction. Sugrue’s research indicates the presence of socially constructed teaching identities prior to student teachers’ commencing teacher education courses. These identities are formed by ‘personal experiences... apprenticeship of observation and embedded cultural archetypes of teaching’ (Sugrue, 1997a:214). The belief that student teachers’ identities are socially constructed, that they ‘already possess many of the necessary prerequisites to be teachers’ (Sugrue, 1997a:217), contrasts with the view of teacher education as the purging of students’ initial perceptions:

Initial teacher education, in too many instances, seeks to supplant unarticulated tacit images of teaching by privileging what are regarded as more scientific, and more adequately grounded research based versions. This approach assumes that student teachers arrive in... colleges of education as *tabula rasa*, with empty disk space ready and passively awaiting the received wisdom and orthodoxies of current educational thinking (Sugrue, 1997a:222).

Sugrue’s research highlights the existence of a belief that ‘a teaching personality’ is more important than cognitive skills or pedagogical and subject-matter knowledge, and that having attitudes, dispositions, and personal qualities augmented by particular talents are the essentials of being a teacher (Sugrue, 1997a:217). Co-existent with this belief is a uni-dimensional view of teaching as transmission, which student teachers must be helped to challenge constructively ‘during their most formative years in initial teacher education and as beginning teachers’ (Sugrue, 1997a:218). While Dewey uses the term ‘transmission through communication’, he emphasises that transmission ‘is a communicative process... not a one-way process’ (Biesta, 1995:115). These dispositions, attitudes and qualities are all aspects of the student teacher’s habitus. I believe that Sugrue would agree with Carpay and Van Oers (1999) that student teachers also must adapt their habitus according to insight. I agree with him that it is wrong to impose ‘scientific’ programmes (Sugrue, 1997a). Instead, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) should require holding student teachers’ preconceptions up for scrutiny, to refine

those that survive and to add other perspectives, or in constructivist language, ‘teachers must be supported and encouraged through meaningful experiences to question their own beliefs and practices’ (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2007:275).

The foregoing discussion of the literature on teacher identity reveals it to be a complex and contested area. At one extreme, teacher identity is seen, usually by policy-makers who seek pragmatic solutions to teacher education and development, as unproblematic and as something which occurs as teachers progress through predictable and invariant stages. This view has driven the development of competence-based approaches to teacher education and evaluation. Ranged against this view are philosophers, teacher educators and teachers who see teacher identity as being situated deeply within the person of the teacher and as something which can be developed through critical reflection, usually in the company of knowledgeable others, on the wide range of influences that teachers experience in their work. The implications of this discussion for my research are clear: that my study examines how NQTs consider the development of their own identity. My concern is to ascertain whether they accept the prescriptions of policy-makers and view their development in terms of competencies, or whether they subscribe to a broader view of teacher identity which is not solely dependent on competence, but which encompasses their pre-college influences, their experience of teacher education and their initial teaching experience. In the final section of this chapter, I outline how the literature review guided my formulation of research questions.

## **2.7 How this chapter shapes the research: formulating the research questions**

In this chapter I have examined two very different perspectives on teacher identity. The first, the competency approach, is prevalent in documents which shape policy in western countries. The other idea of teaching identity differs radically from prevailing competence-based notions. I have addressed the socialization and enculturation of teachers and referred to experiences of teacher induction programmes in other countries; reviewed Irish research with student and beginning teachers, and noted contributions to the debate on competence-based approaches to teacher education, induction and professional development. I argue that recent contributions (Moran, 2007; Burke, 2007; O’Doherty, 2009) are insightful, significant, and worthy of consideration. Threaded through the literature review is my perception of teaching as a complex activity that cannot be described adequately in terms of competencies.

In Chapter Three I outline my social constructionist/constructivist position. Constructivists believe that people's worldviews are formed through social interaction. This worldview, habitus, or identity is what each teacher brings into the classroom. Its formation is crucial to initiation into the profession and ultimately to teacher retention. Challenges to traditional conceptions of teacher identity, occurring as teachers' identities have been designated by external agencies, have made it more difficult for teachers to reconcile their actual and designated identities. Actual identity is continuously created and reshaped as 'individuals make meaning of the world through an ongoing interaction between what they already know and believe and what they experience' (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2007:271). Although literature on constructivism has focused on children's learning, 'the professional development of teachers can be guided by constructivist principles of learning' (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2007:271). My decision to focus on teachers' actual identities, and on how teachers saw these forming and developing, required me to hear their stories, because when identity-building is equated with story-telling, when we explore 'the stories people tell about themselves' we can see them as 'words that are taken seriously and that shape one's actions' (Sfard and Prusak, 2005:21).

My primary motive in this research was to explore what successful beginning teachers experienced as reasons for their success. In exploring each area, my intention was to admit all factors that teachers felt were important. I determined to discuss with teachers early formative influences on their decision to teach, their experiences as pupils, as student teachers, and their perceptions both of their roles as beginning teachers and the people and other factors that had helped in their development.

In this research I set out to explore the relative perceived importance which the factors discussed above held for participants. I hoped to discover whether they perceived their teaching identities as having been largely formed prior to their entry to teacher education programmes, whether they had been most influenced by college experiences, or whether they perceived their experiences in their own schools and classrooms, with their pupils and colleagues, as having the greatest influence. The influence of competence-based conceptions of teacher identity might also have been expected to arise during teacher education courses and during the probationary year. As these competing positions would not permit the formulation of a precise set of questions, it was essential that I keep the questions open in order to allow me to explore each of

these possibilities from the perspective of the NQTs in the study, I formulated my research questions as follows:

- To what extent do beginning teachers see their teaching identities as having been formed by their biographies as students, their teacher education programmes, or their early career experiences?
- Whether, or to what extent beginning teachers see their development of teaching identity as the acquisition of competences?
- What do newly qualified teachers perceive as the dominant influences on their classroom practices during their probationary year?

In exploring these questions with the participants, it was necessary to consider a variety of available research options and to choose one appropriate for my purposes. In Chapter Three I explore issues involved in conducting the study, and outline my rationale for decisions taken during the process.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

Researchers' beliefs about the nature of reality, about how knowledge is constructed and how the world should be studied reveal their ontology, epistemology and methodology respectively, and guide their research designs and interpretation processes (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008:429). In this chapter I outline some of the different traditions which helped to form my theoretical perspective. I indicate my reasons for choosing an interpretivist methodology for this research.

- My research questions are about NQTs' perceptions of their identities, of the relevance of competencies and of the factors that influenced their development. In choosing an appropriate framework for this research, I needed to consider a range of possible options and to decide which was most likely to help me to address the research questions. I do so in sections 3.2 and 3.3 below.
- My emphasis on exploring teachers' perceptions is consistent with positioning my work in an interpretive framework. In sections 3.4 and 3.5 I examine interpretive approaches which allow the focus of the research to be kept on the perceptions of the participants.
- The characteristics of the interpretive framework and the implications for me in choosing it are looked at in sections 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7. Within the broad church of interpretivism I felt that a hermeneutic approach would suit my concerns and help to address the limitations. I outline my reasons for my choice of hermeneutics in section 3.5.1.
- In sections 3.5.2. and 3.5.3 I indicate how insights from teachers' life history research and narrative research informed my thinking, particularly with regard to the need to prioritise teachers' voice. I outline why I felt that these approaches would have been more appropriate to a longitudinal study than to my research, which focuses on teachers' perceptions at a particular point in their careers.
- In section 3.8 I consider a range of tools to conduct research using a hermeneutic approach. Within this approach I selected semi-structured interviews as the best tools for my research.

- I outline how I chose the participants for this research in section 3.9. I used purposive sampling to select participants who I felt would be more likely to provide data which would help me to address the research questions. In section 3.10 I show how ethical considerations remained to the fore during this research.
- Section 3.11 delineates the stages involved in the research, from thematizing the interviews, to conducting and transcribing them, through to negotiating an adequate hermeneutic interpretation with the participants and reporting on it.

### **3.2 Educational research: how to address the research questions**

Research in education is conducted using varied methodologies which are underpinned by diverse philosophical standpoints. Stenhouse defines research as ‘systematic and sustained enquiry, planned and self-critical... subject to public criticism and to empirical tests’ (Stenhouse, 1981:8). Educational research must be ‘geared directly to improving educational practice’ (Hammersley, 2001:online). Researchers must guard against a naïve aspiration for a clinical approach and the use of scientific methods which ‘lack the objectivity, certainty, logicity and certainty which are falsely ascribed to them’ (Wellington, 2000:14). Instead, researchers should aspire to conduct research which is ‘systematic, credible, verifiable, justifiable, useful, valuable and “trustworthy”’ (Wellington, 2000:14). In social research, the researcher does not behave ‘as an objective automaton’ (Walford, 1991:2).

Crotty (1998:2) suggests four questions:

1. What methods do we propose to use?
2. What methodology governs our choice and use of methods?
3. What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question?
4. What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective?

The answers to these questions reveal the epistemology underlying the theoretical perspective or philosophical stance adopted, the methodology suggested by the theoretical perspective, and the methods or techniques used to gather and analyse data (Crotty, 1998:3). Researchers’ views of knowledge, their assumptions about what can be known and how they can make sense of the world must be identified, explained and justified. Here I consider some theoretical perspectives which helped to shape my own.

Interpretive research must address the researcher’s theoretical positioning; the congruence between methodology and methods; strategies to establish rigour; and the

analytic lens through which the data are examined (Caelli et al, 2003:5). While a function of social research is to build and test descriptive and explanatory models of reality, these models are simplified representations of complex social reality, and are thus limited in the degree of complexity of social reality they represent (Wengraf, 2001:51). The search for a conceptual framework for research is facilitated by a theoretical discourse which aids the development of research questions. This 'theory-language' allows theories to be framed as a body of concepts. However, indicators for these concepts 'are often typically indirect and non-obvious' (Wengraf, 2001:53). This requires researchers to define indicators clearly and to interpret evidence carefully and thoroughly.

### **3.2.1 Positivism**

Habermas reduces modern philosophy to 'a single question: how is reliable knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) possible?' (Habermas, 1968:3). The researcher's answer reveals the underlying epistemology; whether explicitly expressed in the form of a theory or not, it reveals the researcher's assumptions about humanity in the world. If one believes that knowledge is discoverable by objective and unbiased researchers using clearly identified and agreed instruments; that such knowledge is true for all locations and contexts, that it gives absolute certainty; then one is probably content with the scientific paradigm of positivism. This belief, 'that there is objective truth and that appropriate methods of inquiry can bring us accurate and certain knowledge... has been the epistemological ground of Western science' (Crotty, 1998:42). An inductive-deductive approach is used, allowing for continuous revision and refinement of knowledge as theories are systematically tested against experience. Popper sees knowledge as tentative, saying that all scientific theories remain so until refuted. Confirming evidence should not be admitted until after 'a serious but unsuccessful attempt to falsify the theory' (Popper, 2002:48). For Popper, 'the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability' (Popper, 2002:48).

The difficulty with positivism lies with its claims to universal applicability and certainty. Its underlying ontology is questioned: Phillips and Burbules note both Feyerabend's contention that the modern scientific worldview has no greater claims to external validity than medieval witchcraft, and Lyotard's suspicion of the 'meta-narrative' or story that is told to justify knowledge-making claims of science (Phillips and Burbules, 2000:4-5). Walford questions the 'idealized conception of how social

research is designed and executed' (Walford, 1991:1). Not only is research in the social sciences unlike the 'careful, objective, step-by-step model' that is supposed to occur, he argues that even research in the natural sciences seldom follows this model, is often centred around 'compromises, short-cuts, hunches and serendipitous occurrences' (Walford, 1991:1). It ultimately involves a social process of peer review and does not offer absolute certainty based on uncontested empirical data.

### **3.2.2 Alternatives to positivism**

Based on emerging philosophies which contested the modernist worldview that undergirded positivist research, new paradigms are used by researchers, with the choice of paradigm largely dependent upon the type of problem to be explored (Guba and Lincoln, 2005:192). Whether the positivist paradigm was appropriate for research in the social sciences was raised. Pring, in considering descriptions of quantitative research as 'positivist', refers to its 'bad press amongst educational researchers', and suggests that '(i)t requires a more subtle and charitable understanding' (Pring, 2000:44). Similarly cautious, Wellington states that 'critics of positivism have sometimes succeeded in throwing the baby out with the bathwater' (Wellington, 2000:16), Notwithstanding these reservations, positivist approaches are rejected by interpretive researchers because '(w)hat we take to be knowledge of the world is not a product of induction, or of the building and testing of general hypotheses' (Gergen, 1985:266). Interpretive researchers see reality as a 'human construct' (Wellington, 2000:16) and aim to build knowledge by exploring 'perspectives and shared meanings' (Wellington, 2000:16). Pring claims it possible to reject the caricature of positivism 'without abandoning the realism of the physical and social sciences and without therefore concluding that reality is but a social construction' (Pring, 2000:50-51).

### **3.2.3 Postpositivism**

Postpositivism is linked to foundationalism, which holds that 'we can have an ultimate grounding for our knowledge claims' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:27). Phillips and Burbules emphasise that postpositivism is a '*nonfoundationalist* approach to human knowledge that rejects the view that knowledge is erected on absolutely secure foundations – for there are no such things' (Phillips and Burbules, 2000:29). Instead, knowledge is fallible, consisting of conjectures that are the best available supported by the strongest warrants on hand. They suggest postpositivism as a valid approach to

naturalistic social research. For them, postpositivism is an approach to research that seeks 'appropriate and adequate *warrants* for conclusions' (Phillips and Burbules, 2000:86). It is interpretive or hermeneutic, in that a person's actions can be understood as 'actions' rather than as 'behaviours', only when their meaning is known.

### **3.2.4 Constructivism/Constructionism**

In constructivism, meaning is seen as created by the mind rather than existing independently of it. There are diverse understandings of the term 'constructivist'. Ernest refers to 'a controversy between radical constructivist and social constructivist theories of learning' (Ernest, 1994:31). Radical Constructivism, von Glasersfeld's concept (1995), is based on the principles that all knowledge is constructed by the learner, the 'cognizing subject', not by an external agent, and that learners construct a personal world model which they adapt in light of experience. Social constructivists emphasise the roles of language and social interaction in the construction of meaning.

The term 'constructivist' is problematic. Crotty prefers Schwandt's distinction between 'constructivism' as 'the meaning-making of the individual mind' and 'constructionism' as the 'collective generation [and transmission] of learning' (Crotty, 1998:58). I equate the constructivism of this distinction with von Glasersfeld's radical constructivism, and social constructivism with constructionism. Gergen prefers 'constructionism', partly because it retains the link with the 'seminal volume' of constructionism, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Gergen, 1985:266). Its authors contend that reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:13), and not generated through theorizing: to believe it so is 'intellectualistic misapprehension' (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:27). The sociology of knowledge must focus on people's everyday or common sense knowledge, 'what people "know" as "reality" in their everyday, non- or pre-theoretical lives', because this is the knowledge that 'constitutes the meanings without which no society could exist' (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:27). This central idea, that the world of everyday life is actively constructed by people for whom reality is not simply just there, has driven constructionist research (Holstein and Gubrium, 2008:3).

My own position is that of a social constructionist: I believe that descriptions of social reality as 'socially constructed, subjectively experienced and the result of human thought as expressed through language' (Wellington et al, 2005:100) most accurately reflect my own experience as a learner, as a teacher, and now as an inspector who meets

and works with hundreds of teachers during each school year. I believe that my individual experiences and the ways in which I experience them, together with the mutual sharing of experience with others, including teachers, inspectors and even people whom I have never met except in literature, creates a dialectic process which continually shapes and re-shapes how I see and experience the world. From this position, I sought to address the research questions through dialogue with participants whose experiences, along with their perceptions of how these experiences had affected them, would provide me with the data with which to explore the research questions.

Critics suggest that constructivism is so relativistic that it does not allow any critical response. Interpretive research has been criticised for not focusing on ‘the main criterion for interpretive inquiry... that [it]...should be borne out by the evidence – that it should have withstood the search for negative or refuting evidence’ (Philips and Burbules, 2001:81). Philips and Burbules criticise Lincoln’s criteria for judging research because ‘she never mentions the requirement that an interpretation should be borne out by the evidence’ (Philips and Burbules, 2001:81). This is harsh: Lincoln chooses not to prioritise the positivist notion that only that which can be empirically proven has value. Research should not only inquire into the effectiveness of educational practice but should also look at the desirability of educational ends (Biesta, 2007:18).

I have adopted an approach, hermeneutics, which involves a rigorous process of inquiry and which results in the construction of a negotiated interpretation, acknowledging ‘the shared understanding of the phenomena between the person researched and others in the context’ (Young and Collin, 1988:155). Because this approach emphasises data, it addresses the concerns of Phillips and Burbules that interpretations are in line with evidence, and the type of data generated using this approach is consistent with my constructionist position.

### **3.3 Selecting an appropriate paradigm**

Choice of paradigm affects the selection of theoretical framework and data-gathering and analysis methods. Pring argues that ‘it is difficult... to think about education, let alone research into it, without addressing questions about the qualities which constitute or lead to a worthwhile form of life’ (Pring, 2000:14-15). Recognition that values are legitimate factors in the research process would be unacceptable to ‘hard-line foundationalists’ (Guba and Lincoln, 2005:202), for whom ‘there is a “real” reality “out

there” apart from the flawed human apprehension of it [and which] can be approached (approximated) only through the utilization of methods that prevent human contamination of its apprehension or comprehension’ (Guba and Lincoln, 2005:203). Interpretive researchers recognize that ‘that reality is a human construct’ (Wellington, 2000:16) and therefore that values will influence that construction and are valid foci for enquiry.

### **3.3.1 Theoretical and methodological framework**

As objectivist philosophies led to the use of empirical research methods, most interpretive research methods grew from constructivist philosophy (Caelli et al, 2003:2-3). Paradigms for social research are continually changing, and although more researchers ‘see the world with more pragmatic, ecumenical eyes’, this does not necessarily lead to greater uniformity among researchers (Miles and Huberman, 1994:5).

Agreeing that the methodological approach adopted prioritises certain kinds of explanation or ‘theory of human nature’ (Pring, 2000:57), I adopted a ‘hermeneutic dialectic process’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:149) through which ‘a new construction will emerge that is not “better” or “truer” than its [positivist] predecessors, but simply more informed and sophisticated’ (Pring, 2000:49). For my research, such an approach allowed me to attempt an understanding of the formative influences that best support beginning teachers’ development of teacher identity. The hermeneutic dialectic process, even when not resulting in consensus, ‘at the very least exposes and clarifies the several different views and allows the building of an agenda for negotiation’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:149). The goal is not some ‘objective’ truth, but reaching an ‘appropriate’ interpretation:

there is no unequivocal objectivity... every interpreter submits “his own” interpretation... [which] may attain... a definable degree of appropriateness (Gadamer, 2004:159).

Hermeneutics facilitates a negotiated understanding which has power for individuals as it represents their model of the world – which will inevitably influence their actions. Objective truth is not necessary to make a difference to thinking and practice. Revealing individuals’ models opens them up for scrutiny and can shape people’s actions. This makes hermeneutics a particularly attractive choice for my research as it facilitates joint exploration with the participating teachers with a view to the creation of new

understandings of how the various factors that they have encountered to date, and continue to meet in their work, have influenced the development of their identities as teachers.

### **3.4 Choosing a methodology within the social constructivist framework**

Teaching has been described as ‘action that causes learning, a process of clinical decision making, negotiated sociolinguistic interaction, [and] a force for cultural praxis’ (Florio-Ruane, 2002:207). Interpretive research is understood and conducted in diverse ways, and the multiplicity of approaches and conceptions of interpretive research makes it difficult to ‘aggregate findings and to draw comparisons across studies, even when these studies are of similar phenomena’ (Borko et al, 2008:1029). Methodological pluralism and concern for rigour and credibility are among the themes that emerge in various approaches to interpretive research (Borko et al, 2008:1019). I considered a number of methodologies for this research. I was attracted to pragmatism, particularly that of Dewey, and critical theory. Finally, I chose hermeneutics, primarily as understood by Gadamer, because it allowed me to incorporate influences I had gathered from other perspectives in the meaning-making process.

#### **3.4.1 Pragmatism: John Dewey**

Dewey is aware of the contribution of science to the modern world without being a positivist. He maintains a critical stance and his philosophy sits comfortably with other paradigms: his pragmatism acknowledges the contribution of science and is acceptable to postpositivism, and his explicit avowal of the democratic ideal in education and society (Dewey, 1916:iii) shows his closeness to critical theorists, who might pronounce, as Dewey did, that ‘(i)t is the aim of progressive education to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them’ (Dewey, 1916:115).

‘What distinguishes human beings, according to Dewey, is their capacity to adapt to new situations and experiences... through conceptualizing problems and possible solutions’ (Pring, 2000:12). Learning is a cyclical process, and education is concerned with knowing, understanding, judging and behaving intelligently in accordance with what people have come to know through interaction with the world. Because absolute truth is unattainable, ‘warranted assertibility’ (Dewey, 1941:168) must be sought. To have sufficient confidence in our beliefs to act upon them, our beliefs must be

warranted. This confidence is attained using reasonableness or rationality to search for means to 'achieve progressively stable beliefs' (Dewey, 1938:17). Methods are 'developed and perfected in the processes of continuous inquiry' (Dewey, 1938:11). The necessity for this continuous refinement of method is explained thus:

It serves no useful purpose for an education or a social science researcher to convey his or her "understandings" of the causes of a problem... The crucial question... is how researchers are to provide the necessary warrant to support the claim that their understandings can reasonably be taken to constitute knowledge rather than false belief (Phillips and Burbules, 2000:3-4).

'If teachers regulate or control the classroom environment in the manner [Dewey] articulates, they will be constantly educating themselves' (Hansen, 2002:273). Dewey believed that reality is experienced 'as a function of the organism-environment transaction' (Biesta and Burbules, 2003:11). Teachers' acceptance of his outlook obliges them to view themselves as 'a dynamic element of the environment' (Hansen, 2000:274), and somebody who researches teachers must consider them actors in their environments.

Such awareness means that research cannot be neutral; the researcher cannot be a disinterested observer seeking objective truth. Therefore, I rejected phenomenology as a research methodology. Although it involves describing experience 'from the perspective of those who have had that experience' (Cohen and Omery, 1994:148), its requirement that researchers 'bracket their presuppositions' is restrictive. It is neither possible nor desirable for researchers to deny their effects on the research: 'the observer makes a difference to the observed' (Wellington, 2000:16). This is understood in hermeneutic research, and researchers need an awareness of their role:

Without the 'safe' distance of a one-way mirror or the position of the detached manipulator of variables... one is forced to confront one's own participation within the research (Burman, 1994:51).

My decision to focus on teachers' *perceptions* of the formative influences in their early careers owes much to Dewey's assertion that things 'are what they are experienced as, or experienced to be' (Dewey, 1977:120). For instance, it is quite possible that teachers might perceive support offered to them as an imposition.

### **3.5 Methodology**

What 'is actually "universal" is process' (Dewey, 1948:viii), rather than any fixed notion of 'the world'. Dewey calls this 'the most revolutionary discovery yet made' (Dewey, 1948:viii). The world as it is experienced is real. In this study I focus on teachers' experiences because their *perceptions* interest me. Because their perceptions are real to the teachers, they influence their behaviour. This remains true even when external observers might contest the validity of the perceptions: even though such perceptions might appear mistaken, they still affect the ways in which people behave.

Miles and Huberman advise that research questions 'may be formulated at the outset or later on, and may be refined or reformulated in the course of fieldwork' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:23). I needed to formulate questions that were open enough to stimulate reflection on teachers' experiences, and flexible enough to be reformulated if required. By asking participants to reflect on their own practice, particularly on aspects in which they had discerned improvements, I felt that the perceived beneficial influences could be identified. Necessarily, the research is subjective, and while no claims are made as to generalisability, I hoped to discern patterns or themes in the responses, so that these may be used not formulaically but thoughtfully and critically to guide future teachers and their mentors through the induction process.

#### **3.5.1 Hermeneutics**

Accepting the subjective nature of qualitative research does not mean that it is not without rigour (Lincoln and Canella, 2007:180). Rigour in the collection and analysis of data is essential.

If researchers are to contribute... to the improvement of educational policies and educational practices – they need to raise their sights a little higher than expressing their fervent beliefs or feelings of personal enlightenment, no matter how compelling those beliefs are felt to be (Phillips and Burbules, 2000:3)

Not to have borne this in mind would have meant that my own prejudices might have uncritically directed the research. This is not to suggest that my position should have been kept secret or unacknowledged. My role in the research began long before I interviewed the teachers: I inspected them during probation, and my judgement of how well they had done led me to request their participation in the study.

A hermeneutic approach allowed me to incorporate my fore-knowledge or 'fore-meaning' while asking how to 'break the spell of our own fore-meanings' (Gadamer, 2004:270) so that the meanings found were not simply my own. If these fore-meanings are not acknowledged, Gadamer asks, how is it possible to protect the text, in this case the participants' words, from my potential misunderstandings? (Gadamer, 2004:271). It is difficult to recognise these 'fore-meanings' or assumptions, our 'taken-for-granted beliefs' (Brookfield, 1995:2). Recognising our deeply held assumptions 'is one of the most challenging intellectual puzzles we face in our lives' (Brookfield, 1995). In this research, my own misgivings about the reliance on competence-based approaches to teacher development were the fore-meanings which I needed to make explicit before analysing participant responses. In this way, I sought to protect the research from what Phillips and Burbules had cautioned against, so that my 'fervent beliefs' would not be privileged over participants' views. Gadamer offers a mechanism to ensure that hermeneutic researchers do not misinterpret the actual meaning of a text until it 'becomes so persistently audible that it breaks through what the interpreter imagines it to be' (Gadamer, 2004:271). This is an openness to the meaning as presented by the other and placing this meaning in relation to our own.

Using the hermeneutical circle, preliminary understandings are projected onto the text, and are modified continually. Every interpretation begins with a 'fore-conception' or 'something we grasp in advance' (Heidegger, 1927:191). The initial fore-conception is revised as more information becomes available, until ultimately an adequate interpretation is formed (Gallagher, 1992:61). This process is 'part of the very structure of human understanding' (Gallagher, 1992:61). Hermeneutics requires questioning, in which an interpreter is prepared to find meaning in the text and to be told something by it. The interview transcripts formed my text, and my task was to understand the meanings contained therein.

Knowledge gained by science does not encompass the full range of human experience. People have a tacit knowing; this knowledge is beyond the reach of traditional 'scientific' methods. Hermeneutic philosophy, although sharing common themes with pragmatism, has a different genesis, originating in the scientific study of the human sciences (Heelan and Schulkin, 1998:275). Attempts to bring a uniformity of meaning to theory fail to recognise the diversity of sources from which theory is constructed. Teaching is an example of a 'cultural milieu that... does not need or support unlimited univocity or precision' (Heelan and Schulkin, 1998:275). Therefore, an approach was

required which would allow me to acknowledge each participant's individual experience. While exploring teachers' individual perceptions, I would attempt to construct a coherent account of their combined experience. Placing the work in the hermeneutical context was appealing, because 'there is no guarantee of historical convergence toward a final scientific account or any other account' (Heelan and Schulkin, 1998:291).

### **3.5.2 Prioritising Teacher Voice: teachers' life history**

An approach other than a fundamentalist or rationalist one was required to gain a 'sufficiently sensitive and incisive grasp' of participants' concerns (Burman, 1994:50). Goodson called for 'a reconceptualising [of] educational research so as to assure that the teacher's voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately' (Goodson, 1991:36). The placing of teacher voice at the centre of educational research 'works against the grain of power/ knowledge as held and produced by politicians and administrators' (Goodson, 1992:11). The sponsorship of teacher voice in educational research is not only desirable: it is imperative (Goodson, 1992:12). Casey argues that 'by failing to record the voices of ordinary teachers, the literature on educators' careers actually silences them' (Casey, 1992:188). This results in the perpetuation of an instrumental view of teachers who can be manipulated and in the construction of educational policies which are incongruent with 'teachers' desires to create significance in their lives' (Casey, 1992:188).

My participants were teachers and I wanted this research to provide an opportunity for them to articulate their own experiences, to allow 'the submerged voices of new teachers to be heard' (Martin and Rippon, 2005:527). I sought to prioritise their voices, and to have their voices accepted as authentic and legitimate (Harvey, 1989 in Goodson, 1992:11). An approach involving the examination of teachers' life histories was appealing, as they emphasise the relative importance of teachers' biographies in the development of their teaching identities (Ball and Goodson, 1985; Goodson, 1992; Measor and Sikes, 1992; Levin, 2001, 2003). Goodson argues for 'a research mode that above all places teachers at the centre of the action' (Goodson, 2000:16). While I have placed teachers at the centre of this research, life history approaches are most effective when conducted over a long period of time (Morse and Field, 1996:96). As my research involved speaking to teachers about their perceptions at one particular point in their careers, soon after their completion of probation, the life history approach was not fully suitable for my purposes. Levin's is a longitudinal study which examines how teachers'

pedagogical thinking ‘develops over time based on their personal and professional life experiences’ ((2003:ix). Were my research to be broadened into a longitudinal study by returning later in their careers to interview the teachers to examine how their perceptions had altered, it would become more like the life history approach which ‘locates teachers’ lives within a wider contextual understanding’ (Goodson, 1992:234).

### **3.5.3 Deciding on a research approach**

My approach was influenced strongly by insights from narrative research, because of its focus on ‘experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals’ (Creswell, 2007:54). Narrative research usually focuses on individuals’ stories and experiences in order to describe these experiences in a chronological order, using life course stages (Creswell, 2007). ‘People are characters in their own and others’ life stories’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994:150). This means that when we talk to each other about ourselves and our experiences we are telling life stories. For Connelly and Clandinin, teacher education is a process of telling and re-telling educational stories. This process continues beyond teachers’ preservice education and is at the heart of their ongoing development.

Because my sample consisted of ten participants, the level of depth required for narrative research of this order would not have been possible within the timeframe available to me. A narrative or a life history approach would have been more suited to a longitudinal study. However, my approach has been informed significantly by insights from researchers who use life history and narrative approaches. In deciding on an approach to the research, I was attracted to pragmatism and to hermeneutic philosophy, as both aim to ‘speak “with truth” about the same contemporary lifeworld we all actively share’ (Heelan and Schulkin, 1998:271). I felt that hermeneutics afforded greater opportunity to engage with participants directly. Hermeneutics is a search for understanding, a ‘constant open task... not one that can ever achieve finality or closure’ of engaging dialogically with the tradition that is handed down (Bernstein, 1982:827).

In philosophical hermeneutics it is the conflict of interpretations that is the ground of human understanding. It is where ideas clash and different viewpoints are brought into dialogue that insight emerges (Fairfield, 2008:91).

Hermeneutics was originally the interpretation of biblical texts but has extended beyond that to include other areas of human experience. The concept of text has broadened to include discourse and human action (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:51). My interview

transcripts became the text to be interpreted. My knowledge of the contexts in which the teachers worked was not a barrier to objectivity, but an important element of the hermeneutical approach, as ‘the interpreter’s foreknowledge of a text’s subject matter’ is emphasised in the hermeneutical tradition (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:50).

There are similarities between the approach I used and narrative research. The narrative can be any text or discourse, created to facilitate making connections between a series of events or actions over time (Creswell, 2007). This narrative may be the transcript of a semi-structured interview (Clandinin and Huber, 2010). Autobiographical narrative inquiry involves looking at the characters in people’s stories, the plotlines they choose to tell and the audience to whom their stories are told (Clandinin and Huber, 2010). There is a high degree of congruence between this approach and my own, especially with regard to the exploration of significant characters in the stories told by the participants in this research.

### **3.6 Constructing a hermeneutical framework**

In adopting a hermeneutical approach, it was necessary to clarify my own framework in order to elucidate the structure within which I formed interpretations. This framework is used in hermeneutical inquiry to provide a three-step structure through which phenomenological material can be examined (Young and Collin, 1988:155-156). The structure requires researchers to make explicit the framework they use to understand the actions of others. They must develop a conceptual framework to account for the perspective of the actors. Finally, an interpretation must be constructed. While the researcher is the final arbiter (Young and Collin, 1988:156), the interpretation arrived at must be adequate.

Sullivan identified four criteria for the interpretation to be adequate, and these are the criteria I use to interrogate my project. An adequate account is 1) negotiated; 2) presents itself as an argument; 3) expresses an emancipatory praxis and 4) is critical (Sullivan, 1984:145-149). In Chapter 5 I present the interpretation arrived at having used these criteria.

1) The criterion that the account is negotiated with participants is necessary because the ‘purpose of hermeneutical interpretation is to obtain a valid and common understanding’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:50). The interpreter is not an expert and it ‘is not a foregone conclusion that a social scientific resymbolization is an adequate

interpretation' (Sullivan, 1984:146). Therefore, it is 'courteous to clear the account with those whose project has been interpreted' (Sullivan, 1984:146).

2) The adequate account must be plausible, chosen from several alternatives. Interpretive research recognises that the sense that people make of the world differs, that 'they construct "multiple realities"' (Hammersley, 1995:16). Therefore, a researcher who wants to 'describe and explain their behaviour accurately... [must] understand the cultures and perspectives which structure what they see, think and do' (Hammersley, 1995:16). A difficulty is that researchers' 'descriptions and explanations reflect their own perspectives... as much as the phenomena they claim to be describing' (Hammersley, 1995:16). Although I had relatively easy access to classrooms and teachers, I needed to remember that in terms of social research, I should be regarded as 'actually constructing the phenomena' (Hammersley, 1995:16) I hoped to describe. My interpretation would be only one among many possible. Sullivan advises that there is 'an inevitability of conflicts of interpretation' and that interpretation 'must be argued and reasoned to be considered plausible' (Sullivan, 1984:146). Alternative interpretations must be entertained, but they do not have to be embraced: '(i)n accepting conflicts of interpretation, one does not have to accept that accounts are of equal merit' (Sullivan, 1984:146). This has implications for my own analysis and reporting, as I seek more than an arbitrary interpretation. Carr and Kemmis offer two criteria that must be met if an interpretive account is to be valid. It must be coherent and 'comprehend and coordinate insights within a consistent framework', but it must also pass a more stringent test and 'be able to pass the test of participant confirmation' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:91). I outline the mechanisms I used to meet these criteria in sections 3.11.10 and 3.11.11.

3) An adequate account must express emancipatory praxis: it should have 'the practical significance of enhancing human freedom' (Sullivan, 1984:147). Sullivan rejects instrumental rationality, 'whose practical significance is to control others' (Sullivan, 1984:147). He refers to the dialectic between *habitus*, through which a culture reproduces itself, and *project*, through which it is transformed (Sullivan, 1984:61-63). Human freedom is furthered by people, agents, engaging with others in an ordered context, *habitus*, to transform their culture through projects. 'Cultural forms are not just made and repeated... they are also changed and transformed by agents who dream new dreams' (Sullivan, 1984:148). The utility of an interpretive account lies in its attempt to 'show how history has formed a group through their own agency' (Sullivan, 1984:148).

Kvale and Brinkmann speak of paying attention to ‘the contextual interpretive horizon provided by history and tradition’ and the need ‘to look beyond the here and now’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:51). I hoped to achieve this by encouraging participants to reflect on their roles in preserving the ‘specific cultural form’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:51) of their school, while being open to being transformed by insights that would emerge from the dialogue.

4) The account generated must be ‘a critical interpretation of the world of personal agency’ (Sullivan, 1984:171) and is not merely a ‘reiteration of the point of view of those interpreted’ (Sullivan, 1984:149). The interpretation is a ‘resymbolization’ (Sullivan, 1984:149) in which participants’ expressions are shown in a new light. While the account need not be ‘in complete agreement with those interpreted’ (Sullivan, 1984:149), it must have a sensitivity to reflecting back to participants their ‘capacities for intentional intervention... as... free agents in creating a world’ (Sullivan, 1984:171). Young and Collin reemphasise that the interpretation must be critical, and must ‘bring something new to our understanding of the original account’ (Young and Collin, 1988:156). In this study, what this meant was that in creating an interpretation, I needed to do more than simply restate what participants said. I had to seek to build on the research by going beyond the limits of what had been expressly stated during the interviews and subsequent discussions, in order to discern the implications of the research, while ensuring that my recommendations would respect what had been negotiated with the participants in the hermeneutic process.

### **3.7 Rigour and the hermeneutic cycle**

The need for rigour in hermeneutic research is as strong as in any other research, but all of the mechanisms for ensuring rigour are not available to interpretive researchers. Qualitative research must be seen as being ‘credible and legitimate’ (Aroni et al, 1999, online). The research must be designed and conducted with integrity and researchers must act in ‘good faith’ with both the research and others (Aroni et al.). My research aims at enhancing practitioners’ ‘judgement of the quality of their practice and their understandings of the meanings they attach to their practice’ (Abma and Schwandt, 2005:106.).

While there were areas I wished to explore with the teachers, I did not have an expectation that all would have been conversant with the language of the literature, for

it would be a mistake to assume that it is a prerequisite for skill only to be recognised as such if the person manifesting it is capable of explaining and analysing it in textbook language (Wragg, 1984a:6).

In hermeneutic research, this is not problematic, as ‘skilled hermeneutic inquiry has the potential to uncover meanings that are... hidden’ (Crotty, 1998:91). Interpreters of texts, in this case, the interview transcripts, ‘may end up with an explicit awareness of meanings, and especially assumptions, that the authors [or interviewees] would have been unable to articulate’ (Crotty, 1998:91).

Hermeneutics emphasises ‘understanding as a situated event in terms of individuals and their situations’ (Heywood and Stronach, 2005:114). Accordingly, it is ‘an inevitably prejudiced viewpoint’ (Heywood and Stronach, 2005:114). While objective truth is illusory, hermeneutical researchers argue that some perspectives are more defensible than others, depending on the researchers’ integrity and on whether their interpretations are justified with reference to the data. The hermeneutic circle is useful: the circularity refers to the continuous movement from part to whole and from whole to part. Each interpreter brings ‘particular expectations’ to a text (Gadamer, 2004:269), and these help meaning to emerge. The meaning is continuously revised ‘until it becomes clearer what the unity of meaning is’ (Gadamer, 2004:269). In sections 3.11.10 and 3.11.11, I outline how the hermeneutic circle assisted in establishing my interpretation.

### **3.8 Methods: using interviews to address the research questions**

I chose interviews because I believe that what people say about their experience is important. In the ‘anthropomorphic model’, the ‘phenomenal experience of individuals’ is afforded its own importance:

The things that people say about themselves and other people should be taken seriously as reports of data relevant to phenomena that *really exist* and which are *relevant* to the explanation of behaviour (Harré and Secord, 1972:7)

The attempt to describe social behaviour involves identification of meanings underlying such behaviour. The search for meanings includes obtaining individuals’ accounts of the social meanings they give to their own and others’ actions. The explanation of behaviour remains incomplete ‘until differing accounts are negotiated and... put into context’ (Harré and Secord, 1972:9). My decision to explore teachers’ perceptions acknowledges that people’s own accounts are subject to post-hoc modification. While such an approach might appear to lack objectivity by relying exclusively on

participants' subjective accounts, I believe that a fully objective stance is not possible and that meanings attributed by people to their actions are at least as important as meanings attributed by observers. 'There is no possibility of an absolutely objective, neutral account... Accounts can only be negotiated' (Harré and Secord, 1972:17).

Research in the scientific paradigm would attempt to find 'law-like generalizations about how teachers think and also what kind of knowledge they need to make good pedagogical decisions' (Florio-Ruane, 2002:209). Such an approach is limited in terms of 'understanding thoughtful action in context' (Florio-Ruane, 2002:209). Because the settings in which teachers work are 'emergent, normative and negotiated... teaching is both ordered and responsive to norms and standards and also improvisational and responsive to other participants' (Florio-Ruane, 2002:209-210). The use of instruments such as observation schedules, which inspectors use, would not give access to a teacher's thinking, even though the norms of teaching are 'shared sufficiently for us to recognize and even assess teaching' (Florio-Ruane, 2002:209). While I had completed three observation schedules for each teacher during the course of probation, these could not allow me to explore the teachers' thinking. Interviews were appealing because they would allow me to explore teachers' ideas in depth.

### **3.8.1 Quantitative approaches versus interviews**

While interviews could not give complete access to the full range of thoughts, values and unarticulated assumptions that guide a teacher's practice, I favoured them over other limited instruments. Quantitative means, including the use of questionnaires, would not have been appropriate for this research, because as they 'aim to simplify the phenomena, they can misrepresent the nature of the questions under investigation,' and would be unlikely to yield a 'sufficiently sensitive grasp of... participants' concerns.' (Burman, 2002:50).

I chose the interview as the most appropriate method for gathering data, agreeing that 'the only way to find out how schools really operate... is to go in and observe and interview' (Lovey, 2000:118-119). In selecting the sample, I chose teachers whose work I had judged impressive. I had observed each teacher on several occasions during probation and had written two reports on their work. As the research focused on the experience of their first year, conducted after its completion, observing the teachers again would have added nothing to the research. I opted instead to interview them.

There are potential dangers in using interviews: while ‘qualitative research interviewing has become a sensitive and powerful method for investigating subjects’ private and public lives and has often been regarded as a democratic emancipating form of social research’ (Kvale, 2006:480), this is not always true, and many interview relationships are marred by ‘power asymmetries’ and ‘seductive forms of manipulation’ (Kvale, 2006:480-481). Kvale warns that the idea of interview as dialogue is hazardous: ‘A dialogue is a joint endeavor where egalitarian partners... search for true understanding and knowledge... [but] the term *interview dialogue*... gives an illusion of mutual interests in a conversation, which in actuality takes place for the purpose of just the one part – the interviewer’ (Kvale, 2006:483). Nevertheless, I believe that interviewing was the method most congruent with the constructionist epistemology which led me to hermeneutics. Dialogue, conducted ‘in a spirit of fallibility and openness... is the social counterpart of Aristotelian *phronesis* or practical judgment’ (Fairfield, 2008:112).

### **3.8.2 Semi-structured interviews**

The film director, Peter Weir, is wary of interviews because ‘(y)ou tend to rationalise what you’ve done, to intellectually review a process that is often intuitive’ (Bliss, 2000:185). I had to bear in mind that interviews require people to verbalise their thought processes. While their actions would not necessarily have been guided by their premeditated thoughts, but by instincts and assumptions, an interview can invite people to superimpose a post-hoc structure on events that may not have been evident at the time. Notwithstanding this, I believe that post-hoc rationalisation can generate insights that teachers can use to construct their understanding of their professional position.

I aimed to use interviews to help teachers to reflect on positive aspects of their practice, the genesis of these aspects, and the potential for future development. I accept Warren’s insistence (2001:83) that perspective is central to qualitative research and that meaning is central to the interpretive process. Rather than conducting a survey interview or a questionnaire, which can be rigid and inflexible, I was attracted to Kvale’s idea of conversation as ‘wandering together with’, in which people are encouraged to tell their own stories of their lived world (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:48). This requires an openness and willingness to go to the different places that individuals will lead, because ‘(t)he goal is to unveil the distinctive meaning-making actions of interview participants’ (Warren, 2001:86).

The semi-structured interview has ‘the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena’ (Kvale, 2007:8). An acknowledged advantage of the semi-structured interview is that it allows the researcher to tailor questions to the interviewees’ responses, without being ‘bound by the codes of standardization and replicability to soldier on through [the] interview schedule irrespective of how appropriate it is for [the] interviewee.’ (Burman, 2002:51). The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to follow up issues that arise in the course of the interview, including ones that have not been anticipated (Burman, 2002:51).

It was important to guard against the ‘illusory simplicity’ that may be assumed because of the similarity of the interview to everyday conversations. I took steps to ensure that the purpose of the interview was made explicit from the beginning, and the focus was kept on this purpose throughout the interview. These steps are outlined later in this chapter.

### **3.8.3 Focus groups, one-to-one interviews and questionnaires**

I considered using focus groups, which would have enabled ‘those aspects of the topic most important, meaningful or relevant to the participants’ to emerge (Hinds, 2000:50). I agreed with Hinds’s recommendation that two people should conduct focus groups. It would not have been practicable to include an outsider, who would not have known the participants. While focus groups could provide qualitative data of the type I hoped to gather, including participants’ perceptions (Krueger and Casey, 2008:12), I opted for one-to-one interviews. Another potential disadvantage of focus groups was that regular contact between participants might make them unwilling to discuss certain aspects in each others’ company.

The one-to-one interview allows the gathering of in-depth information. I decided on a semi-structured approach, with a series of general open questions, which could be explored in-depth in conversation with the participants. The potential to pre-code closed questions offered the advantage of more speedy analysis, but I chose not to use such questions because the codes would be mine rather than the teachers’. Although the post-coding activity, organising participants’ responses after the interview, would be more time consuming, I preferred the semi-structured interview because ‘the responses you analyse are the respondents’ own’ (Hinds, 2000:46). The use of questionnaires would

have made the collection and analysis of data simpler, but would have limited the quality of data gathered:

It has been our experience that if one enters the field with a structured questionnaire, then persons will answer only that which is asked and often without elaboration (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:205).

### **3.9 Sample**

I selected my sample from teachers who had successfully completed probation with me as inspector. As I was not seeking statistical generalisability there was no imperative to use a random sample; instead I chose to work with a purposive sample. To have chosen a probability sample there would have been an equal chance that all teachers in my district who had completed probation successfully might have been chosen, whereas I wished to focus on the perceptions of some teachers who had excelled. As I was not aiming for a representative sample, the question of sample validity did not arise (Cohen et al, 2000:98), and my sample was ‘deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased’ (Cohen et al, 2000:104).

I had concerns about the extent to which recently qualified teachers, who may or may have not yet developed a concept of reflective practice, would be able to yield enough data to make it possible for me to explore thoroughly my research questions. Therefore, I broadened the scope of the research to include other people who are involved in the probation of teachers: the principals of both schools. I felt that they would be conversant with the discourse of reflective practice, and would have valuable insights into the early professional development of teachers. Appendix 2 gives brief biographical details of participants and information about their schools.

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

I used the BERA ethical guidelines in the research. Participants were informed of the purposes of the research, were assured of anonymity, and were informed that data would not be used for any purpose other than stated. Access to transcripts was limited to me and two named supervisors. The interview recordings were stored securely in electronic format. Participants were assured that all data would be destroyed on completion of the research. Each participant’s right to withdraw from the study at any stage and for any or no reason was stressed. To have demanded anything else would

have contradicted my espousal of a democratic and empowering approach to research. All participants remained willing to participate.

Teachers on probation were not included. Any intervention by an inspector, other than normal support and evaluation during probation, might have been seen to pressurize teachers, or might have been regarded as compromising the process. By choosing only teachers who successfully completed probation, it was possible to maintain a tight focus on the research questions. A further advantage of working with teachers whose work I had evaluated was that observational records were all in my possession: participants were not required to undergo further observation. In a sense, my work with probationary teachers to date constituted the first stage of the research.

While confidentiality was assured, the small sample size meant that anonymity could not be guaranteed. Persons with a strong knowledge of the two schools in this study would probably be able to identify some of the individual participants, but it would not have been possible to mask participants' identities to the extent required to ensure anonymity without severely restricting how the data would be used and reported. However, to ensure the highest possible levels of anonymity, pseudonyms are used throughout the text.

### **3.11 Stages in the interview process**

In exploring teachers' experiences in depth, it was essential to use an approach which would maintain the focus on the purpose of the research. Kvale and Brinkmann call this 'Investigating With the Final Report in Mind' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:275). This approach has seven stages: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysis, verification and reporting. While 'hermeneutics does not involve any step-by-step method' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:211), it was helpful to follow the sequence suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann. Conducting the investigation with the final report in mind helped me focus on creating an interpretation. Using the 'hermeneutical cycle' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:210), with its 'continuous back-and-forth process between parts and the whole' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:210), I found that the circularity facilitated the 'possibility of a continuously deepened understanding of meaning' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:210) as I sought 'a valid and common understanding' with the participants (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:50).

### **3.11.1 Thematizing the interviews**

While unstructured interviews are most useful when the researcher has very little knowledge of the topic to begin with (Morse and Field, 1996:73), the semi-structured interview is used ‘when the researcher knows most of the questions to ask but cannot predict the answers’ (Morse and Field, 76). It allows the researcher to gather all of the required information, and ensures that the researcher will not forget to ask a question, while allowing ‘freedom of responses and description’ to participants (Morse and Field, 76). I devised an interview framework which would allow me to explore the full range of influences on teachers in this research, by ensuring that I would ask questions about all of the areas I wished to explore, while remaining open to additional influences which the teachers might have raised during interview (Appendix 4).

In a constructionist approach, the research interview is understood as more than a set of research techniques that can be mastered through training. Rather, interviews are ‘dialogical performances, social meaning-making acts, and co-facilitated knowledge exchanges’ (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008:430). This makes it difficult to plan in great detail beforehand, as to impose a rigid structure would presuppose the course of the interview and would not respect its two-sided nature as an event co-created by knowing subjects.

(T)he diverse and specific nature of interviews means that no blueprint of interviewing practice or analysis can be absolutely determined in advance and in abstraction from the topic and context of a particular inquiry (Burman, 1994:49)

While this is true, aspects of the interview can be planned in advance. Location and time of interviews can be agreed with participants, and areas for exploration can be broadly delineated.

### **3.11.1 Addressing the research questions**

The first area I wanted to explore was biography: the extent to which teachers had been influenced by people and events prior to their entry into teacher education programmes. Connelly and Clandinin see teacher education as a career-long continuum which incorporates not only their preservice education and in-career development, but also their previous life history, as ‘student teachers come to their teacher education programmes with lifetimes of experience’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994:148). A further reason for my exploration of teachers’ early lives comes from Knowles, who argues that ‘the study of personal biography as it impacts the beginning teacher makes

good sense' (1992:102). Knowles had set out 'to determine the sources of teacher role identities' (1992:113), and had found that 'early childhood experiences, early teacher role models, and previous teaching experiences are most important' in the formation of the image of self as teacher (Knowles, 1992:126).

Besides biography, among the other participants that Connelly and Clandinin identify in the 'sustained conversation' that is teacher education are 'theory, research, social conditions, different cultural groups, other teachers, students, teacher educators, and children' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994:150). I considered that each of these areas could also be addressed using a framework based broadly on Brookfield's lenses (1995). The challenge in devising the interview schedule was to ensure that the interview would have questions which would address the key areas identified by Connelly and Clandinin (1994), Brookfield (1995) and Knowles (1992), while not being so rigid as to 'intimidate the participant or... fail to follow the participant's train of associations and perspectives' (Burman, 1994:54).

While I anticipated that a number of sub-themes would emerge from the data, I believed that my framework would be comprehensive enough to facilitate discussion of all factors which the teachers considered significant. While my organisation of the interview schedules utilised Brookfield's lenses, and while this had influenced way in which the themes are presented sequentially, it did not restrict the emergence of any number of sub-categories from the data. In Chapter 4, the data are presented as themes which are organised under several categories. These are similar to Brookfield's in many respects, but have been altered to reflect and include other themes which emerged during interviews.

### **3.11.3 Conducting the interviews hermeneutically**

By restricting the location to two schools, I was able to interview several teachers in one day at the same location. This proved advantageous when returning with transcripts. I used a digital recorder while interviewing ten teachers: eight who had completed probation and two principals. Two teachers were interviewed twice because of the length of time required. I transcribed these initial interviews and the transcripts became the basis for the hermeneutic negotiation which followed when I met each teacher on three further occasions to discuss themes emerging from the transcripts and my developing interpretation. A hermeneutic sensibility guided the manner in which the interviews were conducted. My first tentative attempts at interpretation began during the

interviews. As the interviews were semi-structured, it was open to me to follow up on participants' responses and to address issues arising during the interview which I had not anticipated.

Bennetts cautions researchers using hermeneutics that they need to be 'cognizant of the dynamics of human relating, and sensitive to the emotional content of the interview' (Bennetts 2002:166). Most of the interviews involved teachers disclosing previous experiences, many of which were charged with emotion, in great detail. Susan identifies her participation in this research as the beginning of in-depth self examination:

But even in terms of this interview, I'd have had to be a lot more honest than probably I ever would have been before. It's not that I would have been dishonest. I just would have held my tongue, as in – there'd be a lot I wouldn't say because I don't think it's the right time to say it... It is very hard to be honest, especially if you think it's reflecting on yourself.

While the interviewer must stop short of entering the role of therapist, entering an authentic relationship with the participants is 'an ethical requirement of hermeneutics' (Bennetts, 2002:166). My role during the interviews was to facilitate this in-depth exploration. Afterwards, my responsibility was to use the data that the interviews provided in an ethical manner. I discussed each teacher's transcripts with them alone and did not divulge information given by participants to anyone else, except where it was necessary for the reporting of the findings, and only then after all reasonable steps had been taken to protect participants' anonymity. My challenge was to engage with the data in order to construct an interpretation that was appropriate and respectful of the participants.

#### **3.11.4 Transcribing and analysis of the interviews**

By transcribing the interviews myself, I ensured data confidentiality. I had given assurances that participants' responses would not be shared with anyone except for the direct purposes of the research. My transcription of the interviews began my immersion in the data, which helped the data analysis. I was able to engage with the text as it was produced in a way that informed my interpretation. On completing transcription, I had many thousands of words to analyse. I was reluctant to use software for this task, as I feared that it would have distanced me from the data. However, WEFT QDA, an open-source tool for qualitative data analysis, allowed me to code the transcripts electronically, categorise the responses, and search transcripts thematically. I found that,

instead of obstructing data analysis, the software aided significantly in the task. Appendix 6 is an extract from the coded transcripts.

### **3.11.5 Verification**

The choice of a hermeneutic approach raised questions of reliability and validity. If I were to conduct research that was not 'scientific', the charge could be made that it was entirely subjective, relativist and therefore without value. It was necessary to respond to this charge: could my research be rigorous and worthwhile if it did not use traditional techniques to ensure reliability, or if it did not use the so-called gold standard of empirical research methods? There are mechanisms to ensure that interpretive research can indeed be rigorous. In the following, I outline how I incorporated these in my approach.

In the positivist sense, qualitative research cannot be reliable, as classical tests for reliability, such as replicability, cannot be assured. But 'the criteria of reliability in quantitative methodologies differ from those in qualitative methodologies' (Cohen et al, 2000:120):

reliability includes fidelity to real life, context- and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents (Cohen et al, 2000:120).

Guba and Lincoln's term 'trustworthiness' has been offered as a way of ensuring quality. However, this may lead to attempts at the end of the research to protect against threats to reliability and validity, when it might be too late to correct them, rather than during the research process. Consequently a perception has arisen

that by refusing to acknowledge the centrality of reliability and validity in qualitative methods, qualitative methodologists have inadvertently fostered the default notion that qualitative research must therefore be unreliable and invalid, lacking in rigor, and unscientific (Morse et al, 2002, online).

The legitimacy of interpretive approaches to research is called into question if valid results cannot be offered. Researchers who favour experimental research designs have criticised the absence of 'standard' means of assuring validity, while interpretive researchers respond that the scientific paradigm is irrelevant for their purposes, or that qualitative research does have appropriate procedures for attaining validity (Maxwell, 2002:37-38). Kvale and Brinkmann point out that quantified knowledge is not the goal of interview research (2009:58).

Lincoln and Guba offer four criteria for trustworthiness as ‘naturalistic analogues to the conventional criteria of internal and external validity’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:189). These are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Heron elaborates on these, equating internal validity with credibility, external validity with transferability, reliability with dependability, and objectivity with confirmability (Heron, 1996:160). He argues that the challenge ‘after positivism is to redefine truth and validity in ways that honour the generative creative role of the human mind in all forms of knowing’ (Heron, 1996:13). Describing validity as ‘an irritating construct’, Lincoln and Guba state that it cannot be dismissed because it raises the question of whether any research findings are ‘sufficiently authentic... that I may trust myself in acting on their implications’ (Lincoln and Guba, 2005:205). A test for validity in hermeneutic research is whether it is interpretively rigorous, whether ‘cocreated constructions [can] be trusted to provide some purchase on some important human phenomenon’ (Lincoln and Guba, 2005:205). By focusing on the ‘experiential, the embodied, the emotive qualities of human experience’ (Lincoln and Guba, 2005:205) in my research, I sought to ‘overcome the abstractions of a science far gone with quantitative descriptions of human life’ (Lincoln and Guba, 2005:205-206.).

### **3.11.6 Threats to validity**

There are limits to the extent to which validity can be assured, but it remains desirable to identify and minimize possible areas in which research may ‘slip into invalidity’ (Cohen et al, 2000:115-117). We can minimise these threats by choosing an appropriate time scale, ensuring that adequate resources are available, selecting an appropriate methodology, using an appropriate sample, demonstrating different types of validity in the research, ensuring reliability in terms of stability, selecting appropriate foci to answer the research questions, devising appropriate research instruments, and avoiding a biased choice of researcher. While some of these are appropriate in this study, attempting to apply these principles to the issue of bias would have been problematic: in hermeneutic research, the biases of the researcher are acknowledged and welcomed.

### **3.11.7 Objectivity**

Regarding objectivity, hermeneutics is possibly at the furthest remove from positivism. It is simply not possible for hermeneutical understanding to approach any subject matter free of any prejudice, and it is ‘unavoidably prepossessed by the context within which

the understanding subject has initially acquired his interpretive schemes' (Habermas, 1990:247). While some interpretive approaches are criticised for being 'overwhelmingly oriented towards an uncritical exploration of cultural meaning' (Crotty, 1998:60), it is possible for the hermeneutic branch of social constructionism to be critical, although relativist: 'What is said to be "the way things are" is really just "the sense we make of them"' (Crotty, 1998:64).

### **3.11.8 Subjectivity**

Rather than being something to be screened out in the pursuit of accurate measurement, subjectivity – whether of the researcher or of the researched – emerges as vital to include and address in generating rigorous and relevant analyses (Somekh and Lewin, 2005:xi).

The researcher's subjectivity is not something to be bracketed from hermeneutic inquiry. Unlike phenomenology, which attempts such bracketing, hermeneutics seeks 'neither "neutrality" in the matter of the object nor the extinction of one's self' (Gadamer, 2004:271). In contrast, it recognises that hermeneutic researchers' fore-meanings or 'prejudices' cannot be separated from the process. Awareness of their own biases helps researchers to understand a text, by allowing it to 'assert its own truth' against their fore-meanings (Gadamer, 2004:271). While methodological and ethical difficulties may arise through the researcher's proximity to the research, 'these difficulties are a small price to pay for the very creative wellsprings of the naturalistic approach' (Lofland and Lofland, 1984:10). As the research goal is to collect the 'richest possible data' (Lofland and Lofland, 1984:11), this is achieved through 'direct, face-to-face contact with, and prolonged immersion in, some social location or circumstance' (Lofland and Lofland, 1984:11). My research was conducted in such a location and involved both careful observation of teachers' work and intensive interviewing. These two approaches are 'most closely associated with the naturalistic preference for direct apprehension' (Lofland and Lofland, 1984:12). The challenge for the researcher is to retain sufficient distance to ask critical questions, but to remain close enough to make sense of the setting.

### **3.11.9 Generalisability**

Interpretive research is criticised for being too subjective and for not being generalisable (Scanlon, 2000:5). By asking participants to reflect on their own practice, and by speaking with them about it, my research would be necessarily subjective, and while it

was never my intention to claim generalisability, I hoped to discern patterns or themes in the responses that might guide future teachers and their mentors. Eisner's idea of the general residing within the particular is relevant. Although each participant expressed their own unique story, 'we can treat the lessons learned... as anticipatory schemata... for a case is not only about itself but an example of things like it' (Eisner, 2002:381). Lincoln and Guba argue that 'there can be no generalization' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:124), but that transferability is possible depending on the similarity between contexts. While my research is not replicable, because of the uniqueness of each participant, the individual stories contain truths that offer insights to a wider audience. Because of the similarity of contexts in which teachers are inducted, this research meets the requirement of 'fittingness' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:124), and is transferable to other contexts as long as there is active engagement with the similarities and differences between the contexts and thoughtful transfer of the ideas informed by these similarities and differences.

#### **3.11.10 Establishing an interpretation: the hermeneutic circle and seven canons of interpretation**

In hermeneutics, meanings generated within traditions of interpretation can co-exist with radical new meanings. The search for meaning has a 'cyclic pattern which is repeated over and over' (Heelan and Schulkin, 1998:281). As Heelan and Schulkin state, 'every rational inquiry then moves in a forward spiral aiming at fulfillment in a solution made present in experience as governed by a conscious if revisable goal' (Heelan and Schulkin, 1998:281). Using the hermeneutic circle, understanding is 'a development of what is already understood, with the more developed understanding returning to illuminate and enlarge one's starting point' (Crotty, 1998:92).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) offer seven canons of interpretation which have been adapted and extended from Radnitzky. These canons address implications for the hermeneutic interpretation of texts. The first canon emphasises a spiral process which moves back and forth from the parts to the whole. What this means for the analysis of qualitative interviews is an initial reading of the transcripts is done to get a general meaning. Certain themes are then examined to develop their meaning, and then the researcher uses the insights that emerge from this examination to test the 'part-interpretations against the global meaning' of the text (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:210). The second canon is that the process of interpretation of meaning ends when

a ‘good Gestalt’ has been reached. This is an ‘inner unity of the text, which is free of logical contradictions’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:210).

In this research, I returned to meet with participants on three further occasions after the initial interviews to provide opportunities to review the transcripts, to discuss emerging interpretations and to facilitate further clarification. This represents the third canon of interpretation, the ‘testing of part-interpretations against the global meaning of the text’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:210). The fourth canon, ‘the autonomy of the text’, refers to the obligation on the part of the researcher to try to understand the text using its own frame of reference, so that participants’ statements on a particular theme are prioritised when trying to understand their life-world. The fifth canon is that the researcher must have extensive ‘knowledge about the theme of the text’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:210). My background, as a former teacher and school principal, and now as a school inspector who had worked for a number of years with many NQTs, placed me in a very good position to satisfy the requirements of the fifth canon.

I believe the sixth canon to be of great importance for any research which claims to be interpretive, and especially so for hermeneutic research. It states simply that ‘an interpretation of a text is not presuppositionless’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:211). It points to the impossibility of achieving phenomenological ‘bracketing’ because an ‘interpreter cannot “jump outside” the tradition of understanding he or she lives in’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:211). While this is the case, the interpreter may attempt to make his or her presuppositions explicit. I have addressed this issue in the literature review and in my outline of how I came to choose an interpretive approach to this research. This canon emphasises the central role of the researcher: the interpreter’s questions and presuppositions ‘co-constitute the meaning interpreted’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:201). The seventh and final canon ‘states that every interpretation involves innovation and creativity’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:21). The interpretation arrived at is a better understanding because it extends the meaning of the text by identifying new interrelations in it. In Chapter 4 I present the data and in Chapter 5 I examine how the data serves to address the research questions. I discuss my understanding of the meanings, which were ‘expanded and refined through interpretation’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:211), in order to suggest future considerations for teacher induction in Ireland.

My interpretations were developed as I continued the transcript analysis, but this mainly involved adjusting the sub-categories identified. As I did not encounter new themes that might have required radical, as opposed to minor, revision of the early interpretation, I did not revisit participants after the research had been written up, although I had discussed with them the likely shape of the outcome. The issue of who makes decisions about the use of data in interpretive research has been addressed by Garrick (1999:153): while meanings are co-constructed or negotiated with participants, the final interpretation is the researcher's.

### **3.11.11 Member checking**

The search for an interpretation began with designing the interviews. I did not seek 'one and only true meaning' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:212), as hermeneutics allows for 'a legitimate plurality of interpretations' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:212). Nevertheless, my interpretation had to be critical (Sullivan, 1984:149), yet had to reflect back sensitively to the participants. I used member checking to test the adequacy of my interpretation. Meeting the participants to discuss my evolving interpretation allowed them the opportunity to question, to correct and to help revise the interpretation. Member checking aids in the negotiation of an interpretation, and is 'the most crucial technique for establishing credibility' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:314). It can be formal or informal, continuous or done as a once-off event. By attempting to ensure that the findings and interpretations of qualitative research are meaningful to the research participants, it serves a number of purposes:

1. Each participant is afforded an opportunity to confirm whether the researcher has made an accurate interpretation, to correct errors and to suggest an alternative interpretation;
2. It allows participants to reflect on their responses and to revise or elaborate on them;
3. It reduces the risk of participants claiming at a later stage that responses were misrepresented by the researcher;
4. It enables the researcher to assess what participants meant by particular comments or actions;
5. By requiring the researcher to summarise, member checking is the first step to data analysis.

Conducting member checks enhances credibility and offers participants the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the research process (Doyle, 2007: 894). I used a common member checking method. I returned the transcripts to the participants for verification and confirmation. I invited them to modify or elaborate on their responses.

Few would argue that it is feasible for a participant to reflect on or validate the intent of a statement made in a prior interview, given that their own understanding of the topic is changing and will evolve as a consequence of participating in research (Caelli et al, 2003:8).

Participants were afforded the opportunity to clarify responses given during the interviews in order to ensure that the analysis reflected their considered responses, which sometimes differed from their initial interview responses. I discussed their transcripts with participants and asked them to check them for accuracy. I returned a week later and spoke again with each teacher. Most participants made minor amendments. One made substantial revisions to the transcript and one chose not to alter her transcript, stating that it reflected her thoughts accurately.

By allowing the transcripts to be edited in this way, I have tried to ensure that the interview is 'a negotiated accomplishment' (Fontana and Frey, 2005:717). Unless the researcher has reason to doubt participants' integrity, member checking is 'a reasonably valid way to establish the meaningfulness of the findings and interpretations' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:315). Also termed 'respondent validation', the checking of the faithfulness with which the researcher represents the meanings of others is best done directly with participants (Woods, 2006:4). In this way, it represents one of 'the best ethical safeguards' as it allows for the testing of the analysis with respondents (Measor and Sikes, 1992:219). By bringing the transcripts back to the teachers for them to check and edit, and by discussing with them my initial analysis of emerging themes, I was able to ensure that my interpretations were consistent with the meanings intended by the participants. Woods cautions about situations in which such checking is not appropriate, as when criticisms are being advanced or when the research becomes entwined in internal politics of institutions. In this research, I encountered no such obstacles. On my final visits to the schools. I spoke to each teacher and sought their views on the developing interpretation. I found a high level of agreement with my tentative interpretations, based on my initial coding of the transcripts. No conflicting interpretations were presented.

### **3.11.12 Reporting**

The data are presented thematically in Chapter 4. My aim was to create ‘an understanding of lived experience derived from participants themselves’ (Garrick, 1999:148). Participants’ commentaries assist the data analysis. In Chapter 5 I return to issues discussed in the literature review and explore these further in light of data from this study.



## CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the interview data. I use participants' quotations to show 'how overarching themes are supported by excerpts from the raw data to ensure that data interpretation remains directly linked to the words of the participants' (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006:82). In Chapter 5 I examine the data in order to engage critically with the research questions while here I am structuring the report around themes from the analysis so that I can remain close to the views of the participants.

My analysis required me to treat the interview narratives as 'situated, constructed reports, not actual representations of facts or "true" experiences' (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008:431). 'Constructionist sensibilities' (Koro-Ljungberg:432) require that analysis and interpretation focus on shared meaning making generated during interviews. The goal is 'informed, vivid and nuanced reports that reflect what the interviewees have said', but while analysis includes interviewees' descriptions, 'interpretations in the final reports are those of the researcher' (Rubin and Rubin, 2005:201). In this study, my post-interview interactions with participants helped me to meet the goal of accurately representing what they had said, while also allowing me to negotiate an interpretation with them. While the final interpretation is mine, no teachers offered contrary interpretations of the data, nor did they show any signs of being uncomfortable with the emerging interpretation. There were high levels of agreement among all participants on the interpretation that developed in the course of our discussions.

I used a hermeneutic approach to transcript analysis which 'does not involve any step-by-step method, but is an explication of general principles found useful in a long tradition of interpreting texts' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:211). The emphasis is on understanding the meaning of a text. I have detailed the seven 'canons of interpretation' in Chapter 3, (Section 3.11.10). In summary, these principles are (1) an initial interpretation is developed in a spiral process through reading the transcripts repeatedly to develop an initial and tentative global interpretation of the text; (2) the initial interpretation is complete when a 'good Gestalt' has been reached; (3) part-interpretations are checked against the global meaning; (4) participants' statements on a particular theme are prioritised when trying to understand their life-world; (5) the researcher must have extensive knowledge of the theme of the text; (6) the researcher's

role is central: the interviewer's questions and presuppositions co-constitute the meaning that emerges; (7) an interpretation must have innovation and creativity, and is accordingly a better understanding because it extends the meaning of the text.

#### **4.2 Considering two different perspectives on teacher socialization**

Research into the socialization of teachers generally falls into one of 'two major viewpoints' (Knowles, 1992:100). One of these considers the years of pre-service education and early teaching experiences as having the greatest impact on teacher socialization. In this view, relevant influences include the school structure, other teachers, and the classroom itself and the forces in play within it. The other view is that teachers' beliefs and practices are already formed long before they become student teachers, largely as a result of the long 'apprenticeship of observation' which they have served in schools (Lortie, 1975; Sugrue, 1997a, 1997b). This model of teacher socialization emphasises the 'whole life perspective' (Woods, 1985:260).

As my research questions focused on exploring all of the factors that the teachers considered influential in the formation of their teaching identities, I devised schedules to guide the semi-structured interviews which would have admitted the collection of data consistent with either of the two viewpoints. The schedules covered the teachers' biographies; school context factors, including other teachers; classroom influences, including pupils and parents; and literature. Woods had identified 'books, literature, art' (1984:249) as a formative influence. When formulating the interview schedules, it was necessary to devise a format which would admit all of the above factors, or others, if they emerged in the course of the interviews.

#### **4.3 Coding the transcripts: identifying themes**

As often occurs in semi-structured interviews, I encountered topics raised for the first time by participants during the interviews. While using an interview schedule (Appendix 4) to ensure that I asked teachers about my areas of interest, I was open to other themes raised by them, allowing these themes 'to emerge whenever possible from the words of the speakers' (Nias, 1989:8).

Coding is an interpretive act and not a precise science (Saldana, 2009:4). Coding can be concept driven, using codes developed in advance, or data driven, in which codes develop through close reading of the data (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:202). I used

both. The codes developed in advance arose from themes identified in the literature on teacher identity, so that when coding the transcripts, I anticipated that some participant responses would refer to the influence of significant figures in teachers' personal histories, including teachers by whom they had been taught and lecturers they had encountered. I also expected that NQTs' experiences with people they met during their first year teaching would affect the development of their teaching identities. Therefore, I was alert to their perceptions of how they had been influenced by pupils, by parents and by colleagues.

Thematic analysis involved searching for themes emerging through careful reading of transcripts and was 'a form of pattern recognition within the data' (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006:82). Emerging data were assigned to categories. I used Woods's tests for adequacy: categories had to be generated from the data and not superimposed; exhaustive, accounting for all the data; mutually exclusive, so that data fitted into only one category; and on the same level of analysis, relating to the same criteria (Woods, 2006:26). Woods's first test demands that categories emerge from the data.

After transcription, I used Weft QDA software to code transcripts. Twenty four sub-categories were initially constructed during analysis. I then found that some data could have been placed in more than one sub-category. Therefore, it was necessary to revise the classification so that categories obeyed 'the rule of mutual exclusiveness' (Lofland and Lofland, 1984:96). Having re-examined the data and how they were categorised, I reduced the number of sub-categories to nineteen. An example of this was my decision to include my earlier sub-categories of 'positive teacher role model' and 'negative teacher role model' under the 'teacher role model' sub-category. My reasoning for this was that teachers were influenced uniquely by teachers they met, and teachers had 'both positive and negative impressions of teachers and images of teachers they [did] not want to become' (Knowles, 1992:104). So it would have been possible for individual students to have been influenced differently by teachers, depending on how they experienced them and how they responded to their teaching styles. Similarly, my early categories of 'positive experience with lecturer' and 'negative experience with lecturer' were separate from the sub-categories which referred to teaching practice experiences and I felt that these were more appropriately considered under the sub-category of 'college experience'.

My analysis was conducted ‘within the context of full and extensive knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the actual setting’ (Lofland and Lofland, 1984:96). While it had been convenient to use Brookfield’s four lenses in designing the schedule for the semi-structured interviews, it was necessary to broaden these lenses to incorporate themes not mentioned explicitly by Brookfield. For instance, the importance to primary teachers of the parents was not a factor that Brookfield, as an adult educator, had addressed. When I completed my analysis of the transcripts, I invited teachers’ views on how I had categorised the data. While changes would still have been possible at this stage, no alterations were suggested in my discussions with the teachers, while they agreed that it was appropriate to reduce the number of sub-categories.

Appendix 6 provides an extract from the WEFT QDA output which shows how responses were grouped under the chosen categories. The final set of themes which I created to represent teachers’ views on the factors that were influential in their development was:

- **Biographical influences**
  - Family influence
  - Teacher role model
  - Friends
  - Personal vocational commitment
  - Personal reflection
  - College experience
  - Positive teaching practice
  - Negative teaching practice
- **Pupils and their parents**
  - Pupils
  - Parents of pupils
- **Colleagues and other school-based influences**
  - Teacher mentor
  - Principal

- Other colleagues
- School culture
- Staff selection – the job interview
- DES Inspector
- **Theoretical literature**
  - Educational philosophy
  - Other literature
  - Continuing professional development

I discuss these themes in turn and I summarise and illustrate how each theme reflects the teachers' comments. This discussion will form the basis for my conclusions in Chapter 5, when I will address the research questions using insights generated in this chapter.

#### **4.4 Biographical influences**

The results of case studies by Knowles were congruent with earlier research by Crow which suggested that 'early childhood experiences, early teacher role models, and previous teaching experiences' were most important in the formation of an identity as a teacher. During the interviews, I was struck by participants' willingness to give details of very personal experiences. Like Nias, I also saw it as 'important for all teachers to have someone in or outside school to whom they could talk freely about their professional values' (Nias, 1991:149). In my study, participants' responses covered a period of several years from childhood to adulthood. The influence of family members, past teachers, and others encountered on the road to becoming qualified teachers, all contributed to the development of teachers' identities. This bears out findings from 'research literature which suggests that personal biography, life history, and "apprenticeship of observation" play a significant part in forming practitioners' images of teaching' (Sugrue, 1997c:50-51). Accordingly, structures which might be created under new models for teacher induction in Ireland, as elsewhere, must ensure that such factors are recognised appropriately and addressed when helping beginning teachers to explore their own development.

#### 4.4.1 Family influence

The assistance of family members did not always equate to unqualified support. The student was encouraged to reflect thoroughly before making a life-changing decision. Using non-directive approaches, some parents guided the prospective teacher, while others gave more active encouragement towards a teaching career. Sometimes in the same family, there was both cautious and enthusiastic support. Sometimes family views changed as a result of observing the teacher's reactions to the issues that arose from their teacher role.

Shauna's father was concerned she might not qualify for entry to teaching, and was careful not to build her hopes up, while her mother was more confident. Her father was quite perceptive, especially for someone with no experience of teaching. His caution stemmed from his knowledge of his daughter's personality, and he was proved right when Shauna became a teacher.

[He said] it would be a job that I wouldn't be able to leave in the workplace – that it would always affect me... he feared I might not be strong enough for it... Even now, he says it to me... "This is what I was talking about"... he could see before I could see how much the job does affect you (Shauna).

Other teachers also spoke of encouragement received from parents. Some had teacher parents who encouraged them to teach. Again, the parents' close knowledge of their character was respected by the prospective teacher.

My dad would be the one that I'd turn to... he knew that teaching would suit me. He's a great judge of character (Ciara).

The home was not always a source of encouragement. One teacher's sister tried to save her from a life in teaching, warning her that she would follow blindly in their mother's footsteps and that she would 'probably end up teaching in her school and doing the same thing as she does' (Ciara). Ciara's sister forced her to examine her motives for wanting to teach and their conversations helped Ciara to clarify her own motives. The discussion was helpful for Ciara's, despite their opposing views.

It was good to have... the debate... it set me straight on just how much I wanted to do it... it reaffirms my decision. It made me think about it more, about whether teaching would be right for me and if I was making the right choice (Ciara).

When Ciara began teaching, the visits by her dentist sister to her classroom allowed both an opportunity to reconsider their initial positions. The sister's reassurance that

Ciara had made what was for her the appropriate career choice was welcome. For some teachers, family influence was not always beneficial. Parents' initial help was welcomed, but as the teacher grappled with the difficulties that arose on a day to day basis, their perceptions also changed.

My dad... thought that maybe I would like teaching... although his attitude has changed... he sees that it is a lot harder than he thought (Maura).

All of the teachers except one had discussed their career plans with a parent or sibling. Often the family member's intimate knowledge of the prospective teacher enabled them to provide helpful insights which helped the decision-making process.

#### **4.4.2 Teacher role models**

Troman and Raggl (2007) met teachers who had had positive experiences of school and were attracted to a career in teaching as a result. Knowles had found that all of the teachers in his research 'were greatly influenced by their experiences with teachers' (Knowles, 1992:129). This influence was usually positive, but not exclusively so. Many teachers in this study mentioned the positive influence of a teacher. Often, when speaking of a formative incident in their deciding to become a teacher, they told of how a teacher had made a direct connection with them. Sometimes they identified a pivotal moment in their schooling.

I didn't interact very well and I never put myself forward to join anything... until... one day... I was 'on' in a game.... There was literally just a moment in that game where I felt he gave me the confidence to speak in front of people... I wanted to be a person like him, not necessarily a teacher, but a person like him (Shauna).

In secondary school Shauna was inspired by other encouraging teachers who 'always seemed to be positive... seemed to like the job they were in, seemed to enjoy coming into the classroom'. Several teachers spoke of teacher role models and of teachers with whom they had discussed their aspirations to teach. Ciara was told repeatedly by her career guidance counsellor that she should become a teacher. Some of the teachers were advised to consider carefully what lay ahead, but in Elaine's case, she did not understand the significance of the advice given until she began her own teaching career.

I was listening to her but I didn't really understand until I came out into the classroom... until I was actually out... that you really see the differences. They talk about it in college but until you actually see it in practice it's a whole different kettle of fish.

Susan's significant model was her dance teacher, who spotted her talent for teaching.

He would have had me teaching from when I was eight or nine years of age... I learnt on my feet... how to teach things, how to break material down... I suppose I realised at a very young age that I was able to do that.

From him Susan began to learn about the complexity of teaching, that it changed in different contexts and for different pupils.

He would have motivated us all differently... for me he would... tell me that I hadn't worked enough, that I should have done this and I should have done that... That would fire me up... But then you'd turn and see him motivate another child with, "Now, you've done your best. All you need to do is go and try"... he's taught me that you motivate different kids differently.

Paradoxically, meeting a negative teacher encouraged some to enter teaching to offer a different experience to others. Knowles cites the case of a teacher who 'had clear conceptions of the teacher she did not want to be, rather than an image of herself as a teacher' (Knowles, 1992:129). Although none of the teachers in this research allowed a conception of a teacher they did not want to emulate to adversely affect the formation of their teacher identity, some reflected on negative experiences with past teachers as they considered what teaching might entail for them. Shauna imagined what teaching might have been like for one such teacher.

I assume that her professional life didn't make her any happier in her personal life, because they didn't seem to correlate. She didn't seem like a happy person... I think she influenced me, but in a positive way, as to what not to do. She probably did me a favour.

Several other teachers mentioned unpleasant experiences with teachers. While these incidents might have been expected to discourage them from teaching, they often had the opposite effect, and made them more determined to become a very different kind of teacher to the person who had treated them badly.

#### **4.4.3 Friends**

Friendships were an important influence. Sometimes, the friendship developed in school and continued through to college. In other cases the friendships began in college. Participants spoke of the value of discussions with friends for them. Shauna found peer support to be of greater benefit 'than any teacher'. She found it easier to accept the opinions of friends of her own age because 'they don't have any – ulterior motive... they're giving you what they feel for no particular reason' (Shauna).

During teacher education programmes, the practical value of collaborating with friends became apparent for some teachers while they were preparing for teaching practice. It

became usual for teachers to help each other with preparation of lesson plans and resources. They then discussed their teaching experiences with each other in a 'network of people' (Elaine). This networking persisted after the teachers qualified, and they continued to seek advice and feedback from each other.

Everything was done with two heads... your weakness was being covered by somebody else's strength, and your strength was covering somebody else's weakness (Susan).

It's like... you're living and breathing school... even today you'd still be bouncing ideas off each other... (Elaine).

Friends were not always helpful. Fiona had been influenced negatively by her peer group while in secondary school.

I got into a crowd who weren't interested in going to college... I went a little bit wild for a while and it had huge effects on my grades.

Fiona's experience was unique for teachers in this study, the rest of whom had been influenced positively by their peers, with whom they had been able to discuss concerns in a forthright and unthreatening way. Perhaps there is scope to develop the use of peer reflection for teachers during induction. At present, where there are mechanisms to promote reflective practice, it is possible that probationary teachers see themselves as unequal participants in the discussion, and feel obliged to always defer to more experienced colleagues. This would be less likely to occur with peer groups.

#### **4.4.4 Personal vocational commitment**

Woods noted that teacher motivation 'tends to be taken for granted' in educational research, and argued that differences in the levels and types of commitment given by teachers to teaching 'must inevitably affect teaching efficiency' (Woods, 1990:11). The participants in this study had been chosen in part for the commitment they had demonstrated during their probationary year. Shauna spoke of how her sense of vocation grew as she gained in experience.

I see it as a much more important job than I did in the beginning... It's a much more enjoyable job than I would have ever hoped... when I walk from the staffroom to my classroom every morning... I feel very proud... I feel very excited and interested and motivated (Shauna).

Aoife spoke of her strong and continuing commitment.

You can give a lot to a job like this, where you're working with children and you can share a part of yourself... it never ends... the more you develop the more you can give to it (Aoife).

Shauna and Aoife illustrate what Woods refers to when discussing the effects of teacher commitment on their ongoing formation. Their making sacrifices for their career increases their commitment to it in a process that is 'self-validating, self-reinforcing and frequently irreversible' (Woods, 1990:94). Woods says that teachers view the trials that they face in their first years as initiation rites which become 'a matter of pride to those who have successfully negotiated them' (Woods, 1990:95). Elaine had sacrificed financial security to return to college, but is happy with her choice.

I had thought so much about it... I'd given up basically everything to go back. I haven't any regrets that I've... made the right decision (Elaine).

Not only does Fiona see her decision to teach as having been vindicated; she also shows that she has no option but to continue to be committed to her teaching role.

Primary-school teaching is the ideal job for me... if you're doing something that you absolutely love it just comes out automatically. You can't help it (Fiona).

Woods calls this 'continuance commitment' (1990:94) and argues that its strength for teachers lies in the fact that they are trained for no other jobs. However, several of the teachers in this study had left other careers to pursue teaching, but had demonstrated the same kind of commitment to their teaching roles as those who had gone directly into teaching from school. When Fiona determined to become a teacher, returning to college, having previously dropped out of Art college, allowed her to rewrite her story.

I'd given up an awful lot. I'd given up my job. I didn't want anything to distract me... I was determined... to prove something to myself because I had failed... It worked out well, but I think it was about time that things started working out in regards to the amount of sacrifice and effort that I had made (Fiona).

Fiona left Art college to work in business, and eventually found her way into the training department of her company. This rekindled her desire to teach. Knowles had found that 'prior teaching experiences were highly significant for some individuals' (1992:131). In this study, this was most apparent in Fiona's story, and her positive experience in the training department made her resolve to pursue teaching as a career.

#### **4.4.5 Personal reflection – how teachers respond to their first challenges**

Beginning teachers face a challenge to their identities when they start in a new school, as they realise that their 'as-yet-untested thinking about pedagogy, and even their values about teaching' come under assault (Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:279). Often they

respond by attempting to align themselves with the culture of the school by trying to ‘fit in’ and not ‘rock-the boat’. These are socialisation pressures that they may not have been made aware of in advance, and can result in their setting aside other ideas which would be important in their professional development. Several participants in this research mentioned the trauma of the first day in front of their own class, for which they felt ill-prepared. Shauna admitted to being ‘absolutely petrified’ of the parents. She also worried whether she would be able to control the class. Her nervousness reflects the uncertainties that all teachers experience on their first day, when the identity that they have been creating is called on to reveal itself.

Before opening the door, shaking, wondering am I wearing the right thing, am I going to do the right thing – how to greet the parents. Should I go out and shake hands, should I stand back? If I go out and shake hands, does it make me too approachable? All the questions that you just don’t know, and you’ve been told different things... and you just don’t know until you actually are there, and you see how you instinctively react (Shauna).

Her need to feel in control was paramount. All other concerns were of secondary importance.

I just wanted to know I had control over my class, respect from my class, and after that I’d worry about everything else... if I didn’t have that – if they weren’t settled I couldn’t have done anything else.

Postlethwaite and Haggarty suggest that knowledgeable mentoring could help beginning teachers ‘through and beyond the process of socialisation’ (Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:279). With such support in place, they stress that the socialisation that teachers experience could be seen both for the benefits it provides and also for the limitations it may place on both the teachers’ and the institution’s development. However, in this research, support of this kind was not available to the teachers on their first days. Ciara speaks of the uncertainty and isolation felt by new teachers.

Very few people would come out of college bursting with confidence... You’ve just been put into a school where you might not know anybody... You are on your own (Ciara).

Instead of being given guidance to help her through the early period of her career, she had to make her own way, by ‘learning, just literally, from being in the position and thrown in the deep end’. How teachers respond to this challenge can shape the identity they go on to develop. Several of the participants were able to adopt a reflective approach, reflecting critically on their work. When lessons had not worked out as desired, Shauna looked to her own practice.

I think every year your mistakes make you a better teacher the following year... You have to critique yourself and say, "Maybe I didn't teach it the way I should have. Maybe I didn't explain it the way I should have."

Elaine is cognisant of classroom factors that change each year.

Every year I think it's going to be different... You can't say, "I did this last year. This is going to work for me this year". It's not the case. It depends on the dynamic of the class – how the children get on with each other as well as getting on with you.

Teaching requires the ability to devise solutions to new problems, and Elaine suggests that this is developed by working through each situation and applying the skills learned in this process, 'because teaching is all about self-evaluating and learning from your mistakes'. Such a conception of teaching is consistent with views expressed by teacher educators, who often 'saw teaching as responding to the complex needs of individual learners in specific contexts' (Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:264).

Ciara kept a diary during her first year and found that it helped her to reflect and to improve on her teaching.

My teaching strategies have developed, my classroom management – I feel I have more control... You are – "more secure" is a good way of saying it.

Susan had needed to develop reflection-in-action in order to survive as a professional dancer, and she now uses these insights to guide her teaching.

When you're thrown out on stage and have no option but to wing it... somebody gets injured, you are literally called, with seconds to go, and you're out, and you're looking – "Alright, I have no idea where I'm supposed to go. Where am I supposed to go?"... you literally can figure it out on your feet. You use whatever it is you have to figure out where you're supposed to go.

Brendan, one of the principals interviewed, sees value in systematic reflection by teachers.

That has been hugely beneficial, because they're affirmed in something that has worked, they build on it, and they are the stepping stones to good practice, I think it's about finding what works for us and developing it and keeping it. And then, at the other side, finding things that haven't worked as they should, and either amending them and changing them or dropping them and finding some new way of doing it.

He stresses that this reflection is important for teachers at every stage of their careers.

It's so very important in developing them and building on their image of a good teacher... as a teacher you never stop learning provided you continue to reflect.

Brendan's espousal of the importance of reflective practice shows that he recognises the place it has in 'shaping the horizons of the individual's knowing' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994:154). However, his comments do not provide any detail of what he considers to be effective reflection and it appears that he sees reflection as an unproblematic term that defines itself. He does not indicate how this reflection occurs, what tools, such as knowledge of theory, of alternative practices, of values, that teachers use to help them to evaluate their own experience.

#### **4.4.6 College experiences**

Knowles had found that beginning teachers' classroom practices were minimally influenced by their experience of university. Only 'those viewpoints and orientations to practice that were congruent with previously held images of teachers' work' were retained by teachers (Knowles, 1992:133), and there was no evidence that the university preparation experience had influenced either their teacher role identities or their classroom practices. A challenge experienced by many beginning teachers is the need to fit into a 'doing' culture in schools, where the emphasis is on 'teaching methods that enable teachers to manage classrooms and create conditions that promote pupils' learning' (Skinner, 2010:290). This results in the 'ideas derived from theory and research' to which they were introduced in university losing their relevance.

When speaking of college, teachers in this study recalled incidents which they felt had helped to shape their identities. Many of them spoke of college in very positive terms. Shauna found that in her college,

You're not just a number. I always felt if anything bad had ever happened, there would be a huge support system, a network there for me.

When they spoke of the content of their college courses, some teachers criticised the lack of emphasis on 'practical' classroom issues. Susan had many negative memories of her B.Ed. course, in which 'you get lots of written material about what you need to know about teaching, but [nothing about] the practical aspect of how you manage a classroom with thirty children'. She advocates 'a more hands-on, practically minded course, where you're doing seventy percent of the time what you intend doing for a living'. She is critical of the academic structure of the B.Ed. degree.

I had to do an academic degree in Geography... at the end of the three years you find out that it's not a real degree – that it doesn't stand outside St Pat's, but you've spent at least fifty percent of your time, while training to be a

teacher, doing Geography... and there's nothing that I could have possibly used for teaching.

Similarly, Elaine is critical of the perceived emphasis on academic rather than practical aspects of teacher education.

There was too much focus... on... academic subjects... I don't have a degree in Geography but Geography was what I studied for three years, and I just don't see the point of it... There wasn't enough emphasis put on how to teach the child how to write, how to teach a child how to read, phonics... After three years in college, training to be a teacher, is that not something that they should have focused on?

In many American preservice education courses the philosophy of education is considered 'a less serious enterprise than running a field-based program or teaching a "practical" course (such as "Classroom Management")' (Proefriedt, 1994:49). Both Susan and Elaine would appear to favour such a model to the one they experienced. It is likely that first year teachers are more concerned with establishing classroom routines and practices than with what they might perceive to be theoretical but impractical issues.

Susan's memories of her preservice course were not all negative. Her positive memories were of the pastoral care she received after the death of a family member.

They had... either a mentor or a tutor who was responsible for you... that person kept calling... to check in and see how you were doing... and to set your mind at ease that college would be fine when you got back.

She remains grateful for the support she received. She feels that this support will inform how she might deal with pupils experiencing trauma.

It's almost a role model for teaching for you... You've experienced that kind of support. You may do it yourself and not think it's a huge thing to do, but to receive it is a huge thing... what you do with a pupil can be very little to you... but it can mean a lot to somebody.

Principal teachers have a more positive view of what beginning teachers bring with them from the colleges of education. Brendan identifies benefits for the NQTs, arguing that 'the ground work done in the colleges of education is significant, and does prepare students for teaching'. He also sees ways in which schools can benefit by employing NQTs.

Somebody coming out of college will have new ideas, new ways of doing things, so they contribute significantly to curricular development of the school.

The NQTs in this study were less inclined to speak favourably of the impact of their college experiences on their development than either of the principals, who identified many positive aspects of NQTs' practice which they had brought with them from college. They welcomed what they perceived as the refreshing influence that recently qualified teachers brought to their schools.

#### **4.4.7 Positive encounters during teaching practice**

Among the influences on the development of teacher identity identified by Knowles (1992) were prior teaching opportunities. This was also the case for some of the teachers in this research. Fiona and Susan had worked at other careers before embarking on a teacher education course. Fiona had decided to pursue a career as a teacher having navigated her way to the training department of the telecommunications company in which she worked and having been encouraged by her experience there. Susan had assisted her dance teacher for many years and had realised that she was good at 'breaking material down' for pupils. For teachers who went directly from secondary school into a teacher education course, their first opportunity to teach came during teaching practice. Many felt reaffirmed in their choice of career after this experience.

I had a brilliant experience... I immediately felt really welcome (Shauna).

Teaching practice... walking out of the school and saying, "Yeah, this is what I want to do. I'm so glad I did this" (Elaine).

I looked forward to going home in the evening and planning lesson plans... I knew then that this was it and that I really wanted to do it (Maura).

Affirmation from a supervisor was significant, and in Shauna's case helped secure employment when the supervisor recommended her to the principal. Several teachers spoke of feeling that their work had been validated by teaching practice supervisors. Others felt that supervisors had prepared them well for teaching practice, and in so doing had also helped to alleviate fears.

She modelled how we should teach... you could nearly imagine yourself sitting in the classroom... watching the teacher. That's the way it felt. So you're picturing yourself in her shoes and you're watching her doing it, [thinking], "This is what I want to do" (Elaine).

I didn't really see how it was going to fit into – actual teaching... She said to me... "Just stick with it until your first teaching practice and then you'll know" And... when I did my teaching practice... I knew then that I really did want to do it (Maura).

After an encounter with a supervisor, Shauna felt that her decision to teach was being challenged. She took the criticism to heart, feeling that her supervisor was ‘the person who knew what they were talking about’. She responded positively and set about addressing the issues raised during feedback. In so doing, she made a very conscious effort to adjust her teaching style, and this required her to overcome her natural shyness.

I looked at all the criticisms... I made a conscious decision to change every single one of them. I became more dramatic... I basically forced myself to go in and to become a different person – to act confident even though I wasn’t, to put myself in situations of singing in front of the class, which I had really big issues with, dancing in front of a class... you have to force yourself to go through the fear barrier, because it’s... never usually as bad as you think it would be.

Shauna’s final teaching practice was in a disadvantaged area with a class of 12 year old pupils, in what ‘wasn’t a normal classroom situation – the children were coming from tough backgrounds that I wasn’t used to’. The class teacher helped her to settle in for the first week, but was confident enough in Shauna to allow her to work alone with the class during the second week. Shauna spoke proudly of the connection she made with a difficult child who the class teacher had ‘never seen her react positively to anybody in this school’.

Even the child said to me, “Teacher, you’re not like a normal teacher.” I just found a way of getting through to her... by the last day, I had a teacher-pupil relationship with her but I had a friendship with her too – I felt I broke through the barrier.

Shauna’s self-belief was strengthened by the experience. The teacher who emerged from the final teaching practice was very different to the diffident student who had had to re-think her conceptions of teaching after her early encounter with a supervisor.

That teaching practice... made me want to work with children like that... to open myself up to not be so judgemental and restricted. I saw the job as a good opportunity to change yourself as a person for the better, because you get to meet so many different people. And all of them influence you, and I think everyone that you teach influences you in a good way rather than in a bad, once you’re strong enough to notice the difference.

The challenges posed by difficult pupil behaviour are a fact of the teacher’s life, and would pose difficulty even for experienced teachers (Wragg, 1980). Assigning difficult classes routinely to beginning teachers may hinder the establishment of positive relationships with pupils, although it is desirable that all teachers have the opportunity, on teaching practice or at some time during their early teaching career, of working in contexts where ‘they have some problems if they are not to be professional cripples at

the start of their career' (Wragg, 1980:195). The evidence from Shauna's final teaching practice supports the idea that student and beginning teachers should be exposed to the full range of potential teaching contexts in order to provide them with the opportunity to develop their own identities.

Pre-service teachers already have an established teacher role identity when they come to teacher education programmes (Knowles, 1992:145). Sugrue argues that by deconstructing student teachers' lay theories of teaching, 'insights are gained into the most formative personal and social influences on their professional identities' (1997a:214-215). Fiona's experience is a good illustration of this. While she was alert to the challenge of teaching practice, she was self-confident, saying, 'I knew I was well able to teach'. Her strong pre-existing teacher identity is reminiscent of teachers in Knowles's case study, whose teaching identities, either weak or strong, were formed largely as a result of their own early school experiences. Fiona's lay theory of teaching remained dominant, while she doubted that what she had learned in college would suffice, being wary of 'the things outside of what they teach you in college, what they don't prepare you for'.

Niamh felt that supervision by the class teacher was helpful, although it did not necessarily make teaching practice easier. She felt that the constant supervision was 'the hardest thing I've ever done', but that it was helpful in her development. The class teacher's support made her more willing to experiment.

It wasn't just about what went right. It was about focusing on "What can we do better? What can I do differently to change it?"... I think I could take more risks, because I wasn't afraid that someone would come in and ridicule me for trying out something different.

It seems clear, as Niamh's story illustrates, that when teachers are encouraged to view teaching practice as a formative experience, in which they are not under pressure to perform perfectly but are allowed to explore creative ways to teach, they are more likely to embrace the challenge and to want to take more responsibility for their professional development.

#### **4.4.8 Negative encounters during teaching practice**

Some teachers' experiences of individual supervisors were not positive. When her first supervision did not go well, Ciara felt that her supervisor had misinterpreted her motives for wishing to teach and had thought that she had been pressurised into

teaching because her mother was a teacher. After the conversation, Ciara felt that the supervisor had ‘confused my upset... for regret’. For the first time, her certainty that she wanted to teach was challenged, leaving her feeling that ‘maybe I’m actually not good enough and maybe what she said was right’. When supervision went well, teachers felt affirmed. Several have negative memories of the overemphasis on written preparation, occasions when a supervisor had been unfair, or when they met an unwelcoming teacher.

There was an awful lot of pressure... emphasis... about the notes, never mind your teaching. They didn’t seem to focus an awful lot on your teaching (Elaine).

I have font size 11, and she noticed it wasn’t size 12... to pick on small things like that – it quite upset me (Fiona).

I couldn’t do anything with the criticism... whatever way I turned I was in trouble... I’d say it was the biggest negative experience... in my life (Shauna).

Susan needed all of her strength of character and the help of her lecturer to deal with a negative class teacher.

The impression I got... was she didn’t really want a student... I started jotting things down. I wouldn’t usually be emotional... it would take a lot to start to upset me, but this would nearly have had me in tears every day. The only reason I didn’t cry is that I chose not to, but I could have cried every day coming out of school.

Power dynamics were not in Susan’s favour. She was the visitor in another teacher’s classroom, and felt that all of her attempts to converse with the teacher ended up ‘being negative and confrontational’. She was intimidated by the power imbalance in play, ‘because you weren’t on a level with her’. She had the foresight to keep a diary of all incidents that occurred, and when the teacher threatened to report her, Susan showed her diary to her supervisor.

I spoke to that supervisor and explained... if I taught after break, I wasn’t teaching to the timetable – if she came in and she was ten minutes late... if I didn’t teach, they were running wild and I wasn’t using my initiative.

The supervisor observed an incident between Susan and the teacher, who had entered the room after a break and began to criticise Susan without knowing that he was sitting at the back of the class. As a mature student, Susan was concerned at how this teacher would affect younger student teachers.

I’m well able to take [criticism] hard, but... if this was my first experience of teaching, I would have walked out the door and never come back.

The response by the college authorities was as good as Susan had hoped for.

They followed up everything. They believed me as much as they could in their position – obviously they have to know that there are sometimes it won't be true either – but I felt like they followed it up.

Susan's faith in the college was vindicated and she now feels more sensitive to the needs of student teachers.

Number one: I had the faith to actually believe that they would help me; number two: the two people I dealt with... were absolutely fantastic, and followed it up afterwards to make sure that it hadn't affected my confidence; and thirdly: it now means that when I take in students, there's no way in the world I would ever mistreat them.

In spite of her own successful resolution of a difficult situation with a teacher, Susan would not recommend such experiences as a matter of course for beginning teachers.

I'd never think that somebody should have to learn something in that type of situation... that was one thing I never want to have to go through again.

Negative experiences on teaching practice can have positive formative effects on student teachers. Susan recognises this, asking, 'is it too much to say that a lot of good came out of that negative experience?' In her case, her experience left her with renewed confidence in college personnel and also with a determination not to have the same effect on any student teacher in the future.

#### **4.5 Pupils and their parents**

In the primary-school context, teachers deal with pupils on a daily basis, and almost as regularly with parents, particularly the parents of younger pupils. All of the teachers in this study recounted occasions when they interacted with pupils and parents. While research by Younger et al found that beginning teachers focus mainly on themselves, so that 'the location and importance of pupils in trainees' thinking remains altogether unclear' (2004:259), the teachers in this study were concerned for individual pupils and establishing relationships with them. They experience 'more anxieties about their relationships and interactions with parents than about almost any other aspect of their work' (Hargreaves, 2000:201).

##### **4.5.1 Pupils**

Woods had argued for the 'need for strong affective relationships between pupil and teacher' (1990:75). This often places teachers in the difficult position of trying to

maintain order in a classroom while attempting to nurture positive relationships with pupils. This can be difficult because ‘you don’t usually shout at your friends’ (Woods, 1990:73). Connecting with individual pupils is important for Shauna. One of her aims as a teacher is.

to touch one child at least in a way that will affect them as a person, and for their personality and character to grow as a result of something you said or something you did.

While eager to establish a relationship with pupils, she does so cautiously, conscious of her need for control. Her desire for affection is not strong enough to cause her to risk losing control.

Discipline... is the most important thing for September... the rest of the year only went well because of the hard work in the first month. It’s hard, because you want people to like you... I’m always told I’m too strict... but... if you have guidelines, and they’re followed, I think everything else just fits like a jigsaw.

Nias had found a widespread belief among teachers that to teach required the establishment of a relationship with pupils (Nias, 1989:186). Some teachers see teaching as the building of relationship.

They had respect for me and they like me as a person and as a teacher... they would have an awful lot of respect for me as a person, never mind as a teacher (Elaine)

I hope they know that I am a dedicated teacher... I absolutely love the job so the love for the children comes across and they know I look after them very well (Fiona).

Maura values her relationship with pupils, although often feels the tension between the desire for friendship and the need to be in control.

I think they see me as their friend – someone they can confide in and they know I care about them... I like... the relationship I have with them... they’re comfortable with me – maybe too comfortable sometimes – but I think that’s a good thing, because it shows that they do trust you.

The personal nature of relationships between teachers and pupils was likened by Liam, one of the principals, to ‘the interactions that you would see between children and their parents’. Some of the teachers interviewed by Nias had also seen theirs as a parental role, seeing education ‘as an extension of family life’ (Nias, 1989:186).

Ciara was more reserved than some of the other teachers. Her desire to retain control of the class overrides any concerns she might have about developing friendships with pupils.

I am their teacher... there to instruct, to support, to give advice where needed but that's my main job. I'm not here to be their friend. That sounds so cruel... I don't think I'd like them to feel that they could be overly friendly with me because then you're losing the control a little bit.

Similarly, in Nias's study, a minority of teachers felt that there can never be equality between teachers and learners, in the belief that 'teaching necessarily involves the exercise of power' (Nias:1989:188). Susan's approach is strict but consistent. While conscious of her own authority, she tries to be fair to pupils and to engage with them to develop positive behaviour.

I suppose that's one of my biggest tools – getting them to think out their actions and talk to me why... they're doing things or why things are working out for them. Consistency.

She knows that the perception of her as strict becomes more positive.

The first two words that came... were 'fair' and 'consistent'... I would view myself as being strong on discipline at the beginning... it's an opinion of me that changes as the year goes on.

All of the NQTs in this study were very careful to cultivate positive relationships with their pupils, although many were wary of appearing to seem too friendly and so to risk losing control. A strong concern is evident on the part of the teachers to ensure that their classroom management was not compromised by their friendliness to pupils.

#### **4.5.2 Parents of pupils**

All of the teachers in this study were sensitive to how they were viewed by parents, and were conscious of parents' watchfulness from the very beginning. Teachers are aware of the scrutiny of parents, particularly on the first day.

Every parent, grandmother, auntie, uncle, whoever, is watching you... and while you feel... so young and so inexperienced I just had to keep saying: "I've come through college. I've done this. I'm qualified. I have the experience. I have the qualifications. I just have to get on with it" (Ciara).

Generally, teachers received affirmation from parents. Praise from a parent is 'the highest compliment you can be given' (Aoife). Even with positive parental feedback, teachers remain wary. Several speak of feeling the need to prove themselves to parents. Parents are familiar with teachers' regular routines and practices. Shauna says that this makes parents 'the best judge of you' because they 'see you all the time'. Niamh wants them to know 'that you're capable of being here'. Susan is sensitive to negative

feedback from parents and she internalises it, but feels affirmed when the feedback is positive. She is always conscious that parents compare teachers to each other.

You can sense it... You walk out and you know when you're being talked about and you know when ...the comparisons are happening (Susan).

Ciara feels that she has learned from a difficult experience with a parent who had accused her of belittling her son. As a result, she has resolved to 'keep the parents close', but 'to be careful and cautious'. She looks for opportunities to collaborate with parents, and developed a close friendship with one mother.

Support from parents is vital. It's only when you see something going wrong that you realise: "I really rely on these parents"... [one mother] used to just come by every now and then... maybe she knew that as a brand new teacher I needed a bit of extra support and I was very grateful for that.

Both principals remarked on how teachers had developed positive relationships with parents. For Liam, this was due to the teachers' innate social skills, whereas Brendan saw it as the outcome of deliberate training provided by the school.

They're great at dealing with parents... I think after a very, very short period of time, when [parents] see the experiences that their children are getting... the teachers have the parents in the palm of their hands and we have found that the parents are absolutely... supportive (Liam).

A lot of time would be put in to... the language of the parent-teacher meetings... about results... how to impart them in a meaningful way, and then maybe how to highlight less positive bits of information... The language of that would be very important (Brendan).

A teacher is cast in the ambiguous position of being the adult 'on whom the stability of society somehow depends', yet who is judged by the 'ability to live by, and teach children to believe in, values that other adults cannot or do not actually take too seriously' (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1993:246). Teachers in this study felt the weight of such expectations.

#### **4.6 Colleagues and other school-based influences**

Levin sought to 'understand the complex nature of teachers' understandings as they develop' (Levin, 2003:229). Among the influences she identified were the contexts in which they found themselves teaching, including supportive and non-supportive colleagues and administrators, and their personal relationships within and outside school. Experienced colleagues provide one of the dominant sources of support for learning for teachers during induction, who expect them to be able

to provide insight into school systems, to be reactive by suggesting solutions when problems arose, to provide personal support and to be proactive by suggesting areas for professional development (Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:276).

Many teachers spoke of developing a mentoring relationship with a teacher, whether that role had been assigned or not. A senior teacher was one school's designated mentor. While the other school did not have an official mentor, several teachers adopted this role informally. All teachers commented favourably on the influence of experienced colleagues, whose advice was welcome especially at crisis moments.

#### **4.6.1 Teacher mentor**

Liam ensured that an experienced teacher was available to offer guidance to NQTs. In each class grouping which included NQTs, he ensured there would be an experienced teacher.

You always... have to have a bit of experience around somewhere... there are teachers who are here a good few years – nearly as long as myself – [who] have no problem in sitting in with the NQTs and working with them (Liam).

The idea of providing a mentor figure for teachers in the schools had existed prior to the introduction of the pilot mentoring project and grew naturally as probationers established working relationships with colleagues. The principal's foresight accelerated this process.

My predecessor... would always be careful about ensuring that there was somebody next door who he'd feel would act as – the word 'mentor' wasn't around at that stage – but he used the words 'guardian angel'. I think it captures the essence of what you'd require in somebody who looks out for and looks after, not just the professional needs of this young person – but even the personal things... helping them and easing them into the job, and offering help wherever needed (Brendan).

The success of this approach led Brendan to organise it more formally.

Our mentor... had developed her own little programme, but since then the pilot mentoring scheme... has been started – she is now part of that... she is very good at getting the group together, getting the teachers together and chatting to them about our school, the values we have here, the way we do things around the place... (Brendan).

Teachers often viewed the assigned mentor's role as assisting with issues such as school procedures and planning, but they relied on their informal 'mentor' for more practical advice. Bennetts argues that informal or traditional mentoring relationships, happens

naturally and becomes a 'vital and fluid relationship' (Bennetts, 2003:64), and contrasts with formally organised mentoring in which individuals are nominated by a third party to act as mentors. The traditional mentor relationship is underpinned by mutual affection and 'a deep sense of loyalty and affection' (Bennetts, 2003:64). It does not require the mentor to have undertaken any mentoring courses, to have received mentoring qualifications or to have received payment for the role. Elaine speaks of such a relationship.

I found her very approachable... She was who I was looking up to and who I went to for help, rather than going to a 'mentor'. Even though we had meetings and we discussed different things, I got more out of going to the class teacher... And no disrespect to my mentor or anything, but that's just what benefited me.

Brendan wants the mentor's role to remain supportive rather than evaluative. Proposed changes to teacher induction in Ireland, which would involve the mentor making a summative assessment of the teacher's performance, which would in turn govern whether the teacher would be entitled to register with the Teaching Council, 'does not sit easily with a formative role which involves questioning and critiquing trainees' practice' (Skinner, 2010:290). Brendan identifies the dilemma for both teacher and mentor.

It would change the relationship between the newly qualified teacher and the mentor, and the school in effect.... Can you be a guide and an assessor at the same time, and to be evaluating what a teacher does? I think that there would be a conflict there between the two roles... Becoming an evaluator would almost put a wedge between mentor and the teacher, and would actually damage that relationship, which is so valuable in creating a good staff member ultimately... You want a teacher who grows from being that newly qualified teacher into being a confident teacher... and becomes a good, loyal member of a school community that is gelled together.

The issue of who should evaluate NQTs' effectiveness has been a barrier to the revision of the current system for teacher induction in Ireland. The largest teacher union has refused to cooperate with proposals that NQTs be evaluated by colleagues, and this has led to the temporary retention of the present system. A possible solution to this question would be to separate teacher evaluation from induction. Now that the B.Ed. degree has become a four-year programme, there is scope for performing the evaluative component while teachers are still in college. This would mean that all NQTs would not only be fully qualified but also be eligible for recognition by the Teaching Council on commencement of employment. In such a scenario, the focus of the induction year would be entirely formative rather than evaluative.

#### 4.6.2 Principal

While designated mentors and other colleagues play important roles in working with NQTs, ‘the establishment and maintenance of the culture of collaboration owes a great deal to its leaders’ (Nias et al, 1989:95). Pollard says that it is likely that the headteacher will have the most influence in a primary school. They are ‘the main “culture founders” in their schools’ (Nias et al, 1989:66). A consequence of this reality is that it ‘leaves teachers, parents, ancillary staff and others negotiating only within the framework created by the headteacher’s influence and power’ (Pollard, 1987:108). When this influence is benevolent, teachers are allowed to develop. NQTs viewed the principal as one of the significant figures in their first year. They respected their advice and saw them as knowledgeable and supportive figures.

You definitely need direction in that first year. I learned through those meetings with really intelligent people, how to approach things differently (Shauna).

My professional development begins with the principal... He bestows his advice quite willingly and is always in support of teachers (Ciara).

Both principals support NQTs and see benefits for their schools in doing so.

If you can... lead them a step and then take away your support, they’ll go two steps... the end product is going to be far more steady, far more secure (Liam).

That initial meeting is critically important... making sure the teacher feels comfortable... a few basic understandings in terms of their knowing that we trust they’ll do the job, but if there was ever any difficulty, we want them to come to us... they know that they have my trust and that I’m there for them wherever possible (Brendan).

It is questionable whether principals could provide similar support if required to evaluate NQTs. Both principals stress that it is not a question of whether can evaluate teachers’ effectiveness, but whether their loyalties might be divided and staff relationships would be damaged as a result. Liam favours the status quo, where teachers are evaluated by an inspector from the Department of Education and Skills. The principal is free to support and advise the teacher, and he is not required to make the evaluative judgement on the teacher.

If I’m reporting... they know that at the end of that year I’m going to have to write a report, and I think it would put a lot of pressure on the relationship between the teacher and the principal... teachers would have to see me in a different light if they knew that I was the one writing the report... no matter what way you do it, no matter how true to yourself you were... if you didn’t write the same report for everyone, no matter how justified you were in

writing different reports, you would have people saying, “Oh, you have a favourite....” I think it mightn’t be the best for staff relations (Liam).

Brendan also resists the idea of principals becoming evaluators. Having been involved in the teacher’s appointment, principals would feel obliged to find the teacher satisfactory, as otherwise their judgement could be questioned. He says that the principal probably would be biased in favour of the teacher, and that ‘there’s great value in having an independent person, [who is] in a better position to look at them without any bias’. Like Liam, Brendan sees a continuing role for inspectors.

I think an inspector... offers another set of guidelines and opinions, and can reinforce, can affirm that newly qualified teacher... and guide them towards being a much better teacher (Brendan).

I believe that the concerns expressed by both principals would also be met if evaluation and induction were treated as separate processes. If the evaluation of teacher effectiveness for the purpose of deciding on eligibility for registration with the Teaching Council was conducted during work placement during the final year of the extended B.Ed. programme, teacher induction could then proceed during NQTs’ first year in school, unencumbered by the need for evaluation.

#### **4.6.3 Other colleagues**

Several writers have addressed the importance of developing staff relationships (Nias et al, 1989; Pollard, 1987, Proefriedt, 1994). Pollard identified the significance of staffroom cultures and of the ‘personal, social and institutional relationships among teaching staff in primary schools’ (1987: 100-101). Nias et al emphasised the influence of the peer group which is ‘controlled by allegiance to shared beliefs and values’ (1989:186). Arguing against behaviourist approaches to teaching, Proefriedt says that what is needed in its place is ‘a commitment to a lifetime of sustained reflection with other teachers on the work at hand’ (Proefriedt, 1994:18). He states that when teachers sit down with each other to talk about their work and argue about curriculum, to help each other in the preparation of teaching materials, when they visit each others’ classrooms and provide feedback and support for each other, they become ‘models for significant change in the direction of teacher education’ (Proefriedt, 1994:33).

Teachers mentioned the support they received from colleagues other than designated mentors. This support was informal and non-directive.

I listened a lot... in the staffroom you can hear people with different experiences... once you listen you can learn so much. You can avoid a lot of mistakes just by listening to other people (Shauna).

Affirmation from a colleague is highly valued. Maura spoke of working over time with a child who had 'actually created an awful lot of trouble'. When another teacher commented on how well behaved he had become, Maura 'was delighted, that someone with so much experience – acknowledged it'.

Through collaboration, communities of practice are established. The practice of engaging in collaboration provides the context in which 'teachers socially construct emerging understanding about teaching and learning' (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2007:278). When collaborative practices are established early, teachers see a benefit in continuing with them. There is mutual benefit; their membership of the group is negotiated with other group members and is not imposed from without; and the result of the engagement is a 'shared repertoire' which allows teachers to 'engage in conversations about their practice, and each other's practice' (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2007:278).

We would plan together as a group... you could have a great idea but by just adding a little bit more from somebody else, it makes it ten times better. It works. It has worked for us for the last couple of years and it's still working now, so, long may it continue (Elaine).

There are occasions when they feel that greater expertise is required. Then the need for outside help is recognised. On these occasions, the community of practice extends to include members of the special education team.

I'm not experienced enough, so I'd definitely go to the resource team and ask for their opinion – and generally it's the same as my own but I just need that extra assurance (Shauna).

Shauna sees a role for senior teachers in helping new teachers critique their work. She feels that praise alone is insufficient. She places greater value on the opinions of more experienced colleagues. Their comments are perceived as constructive, while with younger colleagues, 'there's a lot of praise but there's not a lot of critique'. Shauna feels that the reluctance of teachers to discuss their work with colleagues hinders collaboration. This reluctance prevents teachers from accessing support from colleagues.

People are very stand-offish when it comes to commenting on each others' work, which is a pity... I think there should be some sort of a... termly meet-up to discuss – and at least have a list of what went wrong in your class – where others are... encouraged to offer advice on what went wrong (Shauna).

As Shauna wonders how a collaborative culture might be established, she pinpoints difficulties which arise as teachers feel forced to adopt roles and attitudes which are not authentic. While she acknowledges that it would be difficult for the senior teachers who she sees should adopt the leadership role, she argues that the critique must come from within the school because ‘outsiders aren’t great because they can’t judge you on a day to day – so it seems to me at the moment a lose-lose situation’.

#### **4.6.4 School culture**

Closely related to the theme of other colleagues is the concept of school culture. When teachers spoke about the influence of colleagues on their developing practice, the emphasis was on what it meant for each teacher individually. School culture is broader than that and looks beyond the teacher’s immediate concerns, so that

having learnt the staff culture by participating in interaction with other staff members, individuals are able, in their turn, to shape the cultures to which they now belong (Nias et al, 1989:32).

In this culture, where new teachers are supported and welcomed, there is also an expectation that they reciprocate by supporting the school culture.

We work as teams, and I think that’s important... and that teacher is absorbed into that team, is helped along the way by his or her colleagues... but also contributes, obviously (Brendan).

As teachers find their place in the school, they help to shape the evolving culture of the school. Pollard had argued that terms such as ‘a school “climate” or “ethos”’ (Pollard, 1987:107) were used in ways that implied high levels of inertia and consensus. He suggested that instead, the symbolic interactionist of ‘negotiation’ be introduced into the discourse on school culture. The picture of school culture that emerges in this research is one in which NQTs are welcomed into the continuing negotiation that helps to reshape and redefine the school as an organization. Fiona is aware that her expertise in Art has enabled her to reciprocate the help she has received. and by doing so, she feels valued by colleagues.

People were open to suggestion, because they took a good bit of guidance... which made you feel valued. If they were experienced teachers, I would look up to them... it was great for them to look to me for the Art because it made me feel good (Fiona).

Liam recognises the contribution that NQTs can make. As well as being the recipients of support from colleagues, they also have something tangible to contribute to the

school. Liam argues that it is ‘not a one-way process – there is actually something that comes back’. He attributes increased collaboration to the presence of NQTs. He sees long-term benefits for the school of developing collaboration among staff, so that NQTs are not only helped and supported, but also are seen as a new source of energy for the school. Deliberately developing a culture of collaboration among staff has mutual benefits for NQTs and existing staff members.

The teachers who were here... have been brought out of their boxes by the enthusiasm and by the change in attitude towards work by the new teachers. I think that any school that has benefited from an influx... of newly trained, young teachers – has really benefited... If we have good teachers that are happy coming to work, you will get more from them – they have better ideas, they share these ideas, and in the long term – the whole-school community benefits from it.

Liam sees teachers’ development linked to how much they invest in ‘fitting in’ to the school. He is aware of the powerful influence that peers can have in encouraging NQTs to adopt the school’s values.

I would hope that the end product... has been something that has developed and come from – it’s an urging without too much pushing. It’s being in an environment that will make them feel, “I should be doing this. Other people are doing this and it’s working. Come on, we’ll try. We’ll go with it.”

The NQTs in this research acknowledged the influence their peers had on them. When there is close correspondence between the teacher’s and the school’s goals, teachers are more willing to commit personal resources to the job.

I can be influenced by the environment... if people were a little bit more lax around me, I could become a little bit more lax... So, it’s actually the environment in this school is helping me to keep on my toes and wanting to keep that standard (Fiona).

Everyone in this school works hard and we’re all very conscientious. And I’m not saying other schools aren’t, but... there’s a great atmosphere here of wanting to be the best at what we do (Maura).

Each school has a unique and tangible culture, which only becomes fully apparent over time. ‘Brief and infrequent’ visits to schools do not help one to comprehend a school: only the ‘personal knowledge which comes from living and working in them and which results from careful observation over time’ can do so (Nias et al, 1989, viii).

They talk about having a school ethos – just walking in here – it was lovely... It was very warm. Everybody was very friendly... very approachable and very helpful (Elaine).

Successful school cultures feature collegiality and collaboration. Cultures are complex and unique, made up of individuals who are in turn members of other ‘professional sub-

cultures (as, for example, ‘infant’ or ‘junior’ teachers)’ (Nias et al, 1989:47). Because of this, attempts at generalisation ‘distort the fine detail of individual cases’ (Nias et al. 1989:46). However, where strong beliefs exist among staffs about the ‘relationships that should exist between individuals and groups’ (Nias et al, 1989:46), shared values can be promoted through ‘openness and a sense of mutual security’ (Nias et al. 1989:47).

I’d like to think that in our school that there’s a great collegiality... there’s a collaboration there – I know that established and experienced teachers are very, very willing to go down and reach out to and to make younger and new teachers welcome... you need a person that feels welcome, accepted and happy (Brendan).

Both schools in this study encouraged collaboration between teachers, particularly in relation to planning. Elaine speaks of the collaborative approaches to planning: she stresses that teachers retain discretion over planning in their classrooms, while benefiting from conversation with colleagues.

They’re putting teachers that have experience with new teachers, and it’s nearly making them gel, and teachers that wouldn’t be used to planning like that are now doing it... They enjoyed it... We didn’t have to teach it the exact same way (Elaine).

Where harmony is found, where teachers identify with ‘reference groups’ (Nias, 1989) and particularly when the culture of the school is such that probationers find group membership beneficial, they are content to be influenced by the staff group. Brendan reflects on what happens when teachers engage readily with supports offered.

The successes are really the teachers who listen and are open to a bit of help, whether it be in the school or from the inspector... our message to the newly appointed teacher is not a million miles from what the inspector would say (Brendan).

Schools which foster a positive culture consider teachers as something other than units from whom work is demanded. When principals are aware that power differentials operate in every staff, they provide other means of providing the ‘friendly support of colleagues’ (Nias, 1989:44).

[Senior teachers] have pastoral care responsibilities for the teachers... while they might go in to chat about the children in each class, a very important part also is to chat to the teacher... establishing a little friendship and a support system – that if there’s anything that’s bothering them – that this would be recognised and that there would be a little bit of help where needed. This is less formal – it’s colleague-to-colleague – rather than principal-to-colleague, which in some ways might be intimidating (Brendan).

NQTs are conscious that the supports provided help to develop their sense of being part of the school as collaborative community.

Hopefully everyone will have a good support staff network. I think that's really important because if you're isolated in your classroom and you can't really talk to anyone then you're not going anywhere really (Niamh).

The school matters as to what kind of a teacher you'll be... I don't know how support makes you a better teacher but it does. You never feel on your own (Susan).

The foregoing views, from both principals and NQTs, confirms one of the central beliefs that underlie cultures of collaboration, that 'individuals are valuable both in their own right and because they have the potential to enrich the communities of which they are part' (Nias et al, 1989:53).

#### **4.6.5 Staff selection – the job interview**

Prior to interview, applications were studied to filter applicants. Teaching practice results were looked at and the reports analysed to see if the teacher performed well in the classroom (Brendan). The letter of application was read carefully to see if it 'might be able to express some ideas about why they became teachers or what motivated them' (Liam). Teachers' individual talents were also considered to see how they 'might fit into the jigsaw in the school' (Brendan). The selection process is the school's opportunity to match applicants to its requirements and by so doing, to choose members who will help it to sustain its own culture. The principals of both schools set out to judge how well candidates 'fit' with the culture of the school, and try to see potential that can be developed. In this, they are similar to the headteachers in the study by Nias et al, who 'talked about colleagues "fitting in", not about whether particular individuals had the right qualifications for the job' (Nias et al, 1989:136). Among the qualities that Brendan looks for in teachers are 'that they would have an enthusiasm for teaching, that they would be prepared to learn, and that we would see fitting into our staff'. He recruits teachers with very different personalities and skills sets. This also echoes the headteachers who 'looked for the capacity to adapt and adopt culturally appropriate ways of behaving rather than for particular kinds of personality' (Nias et al, 1989:79).

Arguing that 'good teaching is also about sharing your interests - your passions - with the children', Brendan goes on to state:

I love to see a teacher at interview having a passion for something, because if they have a passion for something it means they're driven by something and that they'll want to share that. If we've got many different teachers with

many different passions then the children are more likely to get a much broader range of experiences and you'll never know what it might unearth in the children themselves (Brendan).

In conducting interviews, both principals try to put candidates at ease because 'you see a true personality... when they're relaxed' (Liam).

I'm not looking to find out what they don't know – what qualities they haven't got – I want to know what do they know, what can they do, and how do they feel about doing it. (Liam).

The purpose of an interview is to provide an opportunity for the interviewee to show you that they have a genuine interest in teaching and children, that they are enthusiastic, that they are prepared to show you their talents and abilities, elicited through basically open-ended questions – we wouldn't be trying to catch anybody out – we're really trying to allow a person to show us how they would deal with various situations (Brendan).

Experience at interviewing helps principals to identify teachers with potential. Liam speaks of getting 'a feeling that this person is... pressing the right buttons'. Despite the care taken in staff selection, principals recognise that the interview process is fallible.

I'm never sure that you've found somebody who will become the great teacher you envisage in them... because obviously you'll have people who will talk the talk and may not necessarily have the wherewithal in the classroom (Brendan).

The teachers in this study, all successful at interview, have positive memories of interviews. They spoke of feeling 'comfortable and relaxed' and of feeling that the interviewers 'seemed like they wanted to be there, which helped' (Shauna), or that the interview was 'designed to make me feel comfortable' and that the interviewers 'weren't trying to catch you out in any way' (Elaine). Niamh described her interviewers as 'really friendly and warm'. As Liam explains, principals were looking beyond the 'right answers', trying to see what made individual teachers stand out.

Initially it would have manifested itself at interview, in something they would have said, but more often some idea that they might have outside the box, outside the routine answers to questions, that would impress you.

Liam attributes success in selecting good teachers partly to chance. I believe it more likely that the successful integration of these teachers into the school can be attributed to their entering a supportive environment in which their talents and potential are recognised and nurtured by perceptive colleagues.

We've been very lucky... I don't think that we've taken anyone in that I would want to have got rid of... the majority of them are still with us... They have given so much to the school (Liam).

Teachers see the interview as their opportunity to impress.

I wanted to show him everything that I had done, all of the effort I had made, and... I think the determination to become a teacher comes across, and all of the big efforts that I made. It shows you... all of the choices that I had to make to become a teacher - shows I really wanted it (Fiona).

Those who seize the opportunity succeed. Brendan recalls a time when the interview board was sure that it had seen enough candidates and 'that we weren't going to get anybody else that would do better than the people we had seen'. However, the eleventh candidate came in and 'did an absolutely fantastic interview' during which her enthusiasm and personality convinced the panel to employ her.

So she claimed a job in our school... Teachers claim the jobs for themselves... what they say makes the decisions for us (Brendan).

#### **4.6.6 DES inspector**

Wragg attempts a definition of skilful teaching 'which might win some degree of consensus, though not universal agreement' (1984a:5-6). He offers two criteria: that the teacher's behaviour '*facilitates pupils' learning of something worthwhile*' and that '*it is acknowledged to be a skill by those competent to judge*' (Wragg, 1984a:6). Among the competent judges of teaching, he includes teachers, teacher trainers, inspectors and learners. The list of competent judges is modified later to 'pupils, heads, experienced observers and fellow teachers' (Wragg et al, 1996:11). It is likely that the term 'experienced observers' includes inspectors and other visitors to classrooms. I was interested in how teachers might have perceived their relationship with the inspector during their induction. As I was the inspector, I felt it would have been inappropriate for me to raise the issue with teachers other than the school principals, as I felt it would have placed the participants in an uncomfortable position. It was possible to discuss the perceived impact of the inspector's role in teacher induction with the principals, as this would have a bearing on their own involvements in the process.

A significant difference between the Irish and English contexts is the role played by inspectors during teacher induction. Ofsted inspectors do not evaluate NQTs in the same way that DES inspectors in Ireland still do. Analysis of Ofsted inspection reports indicates a 'reluctance on the part of Ofsted to recognize the contribution that ITE can make to CPD, teaching and learning and to overall school improvement' (Hurd et al, 2007:323). While conducting the interviews in this study, I was very conscious that it would have been inappropriate for me to have initiated any discussion about my own

role during the teachers' induction. However, when teachers were asked to identify positive influences on their work during the year, some mentioned the inspector.

Ciara described the inspector's input as 'one of the main ways that I developed professionally'. Fiona welcomed 'constructive, honest feedback' in which the inspector 'would tell us where we would need to improve, but... would also tell us where we were doing well as well, and it was straight. It was direct'. Maura spoke of 'getting affirmation... and constructive criticism as well'. The teachers understood the inspector's evaluative role. The probationary process consisted of several visits from the inspector and concluded with a detailed report. While the process was challenging, teachers saw the opportunity to have their work affirmed.

I had high standards of myself – I knew that was the last... push... I knew I would have that sheet of paper that you wrote... following me for the rest of my life – so I wanted to go out with a blast... I wanted to have that, so when I got that sheet and I read what I read I was delighted... I said, "You know what, Fiona? You can actually do something" (Fiona).

Maura highlights a difference between teaching practice and being the teacher in the classroom. Teaching practice lessons are 'kind of a performance', whereas being the class teacher for a year is 'everything – it's teaching as a whole'.

Both principals offered positive views on the involvement of the inspectorate in teacher induction. Liam highlights the greater frequency of inspector visits to schools when there are teachers on probation as a factor in developing collaboration between the inspectorate and schools. He feels that 'the whole staff... realise that having a good relationship... [is] healthy'. He differentiates between this form of inspection, in which the inspector plays a supportive as well as an evaluative role, and a previous model in which the emphasis was entirely on evaluation.

It eliminates the fear that was there for a lot of us, when we talked about our probationary years, when we had someone coming in and sat... and you got a report and it was either... 'good' or 'satisfactory'. Now, at least when you get a report you know that it's going to be one that has been seen over a period of time, that there's a healthy relationship between the person who is writing the report and the recipient.

He views the participation of inspectors in the probationary process as an opportunity for collaboration with the DES. He does not wish to see the inspectorate vacate the probationary process.

I would miss the interaction that we get... because I think it's important that we pool and share ideas... It would be a waste of expertise, because the

people in your job at the moment are people who have been in the classroom, at the coalface... I would miss the sharing of ideas.

Brendan also emphasises the benefits for the teacher of the collaborative nature of the inspector's work with schools.

When the inspector and the school are working in unison, and there's a reasonable understanding between them, all of that is to the benefit of the young teacher muddling to find their way through all the challenges, curricular - classroom management - behavioural, that they encounter in their first couple of years.

He sees the inspector as someone who can share insights with NQTs. For him, the fact that the inspector visits many schools and is familiar with 'the day-to-day issues that happen for a young teacher' makes the inspector 'very well equipped' to share 'this large body of experiences' with beginning teachers.

From my experience of the inspectorate over the years, all those inspectors have offered young teachers great affirmation, great guidance, practical knowledge, practical ways of helping a teacher along the way.

He would regret the removal of the inspectorate from the induction process, arguing that the inspectorate's 'contribution is huge and is often undervalued in the system'. The role of the inspectorate has traditionally had evaluative and supportive elements. Brendan believes that both can be performed simultaneously.

I know that there's an evaluative element to the probationary period, but what I found most valuable is the actual guidance that young teachers get from it(Brendan).

#### **4.7 Theoretical literature**

In this study, few teachers identified literature or theory as having had an effect on developing their practice. Susan was the only one who identified explicitly with a theoretical viewpoint.

##### **4.7.1 Philosophy of education**

Susan's commitment to Montessori's method was evident. On returning from a career break, she found that Montessori schools had changed for the worse and had become more focused on childcare. Her disillusionment led her away from Montessori schools.

What would have originally drawn me was her philosophy and how it worked and how she believed the child's mind worked – and actually didn't happen in practice, because... you had to provide a service to parents who were working. In reality it wasn't possible to have it that way. So I lost

interest I suppose because I couldn't find the way I had trained for – I couldn't find it... basically it was childcare... that wasn't really my interest.

Susan used principles learned in her time as a Montessori teacher during her first year in the state system.

Her materials were expensive to buy, so it would have been instilled in you: if you can make it, make it. And if you are going to make it, make it correctly... she was very visual – into visual aids, very into organisation in your classroom or what she would have called your environment, but sections of your room – you should be able to walk into a Montessori room and pick out practical life, sensorial, maths, language... all that would have been training for me to transfer into a classroom.

She is conscious of the continuing impact of Montessori on her work, particularly in the area of classroom management and in the preparation of resources.

The amount Montessori is responsible for... would be huge... You find all the little ways of dealing with things... it was just a whole education on its own... They train you... they wouldn't accept second best.

#### **4.7.2 Other literature**

The influence of other literature was not evident to a great degree. Some teachers mentioned the Primary Curriculum and the internet as sources regarding lesson planning.

I was regularly in touch with my curriculum books and googling things on the internet and trying to get more information and making the lessons more interesting so that every day was a learning day (Ciara).

One teacher consulted literature when she met a child with Asperger's Syndrome, and another did likewise for a pupil who did not speak English. Colleagues directed these teachers towards relevant literature. While few of the teachers spoke of actively seeking out literature, some were receptive to it, especially when it offered the opportunity to help solve an issue they had not experienced. A teacher who overheard Ciara speaking of a difficult situation with a child presented her 'with this book with exactly what I needed'.

Elaine wanted practical classroom ideas and she found websites and colleagues more useful than books for this purpose. She used this to 'get ideas from other teachers of how they have taught things'. She was dismissive of books, but welcomed the more 'practical' advice she found on the internet, 'methods of how to do things or ideas of how to teach things'. Niamh disengaged from literature entirely during her first year.

She had described herself as having been ‘really into reading’ while in college, but does not ‘read much now about teaching’. She feels overwhelmed by the amount of literature available.

In this school we’ve so much stuff anyway, I feel sometimes if you get too much it can overtake you.

#### **4.7.3 Continuing professional development**

Aoife engages in short courses to develop aspects of her practice, ‘to refresh and to find appropriate techniques’, particularly in relation to classroom management and special needs. Niamh looks ahead to a career outside the classroom, and knows that it will entail further study. She is intent on doing a Masters degree.

I’ve always liked the idea of maybe working in St Pat’s and working with college students and possibly going out and supervising classes myself, for the simple reason that I’d like to be kind of a different inspector.

Shauna found her lack of professional knowledge regarding Down’s Syndrome challenging. She sought help from other professionals to devise a programme for the pupil. At her first case conference she felt that she had little to contribute.

I can make observations of what I’ve seen, but I didn’t feel my opinion was valued, because I didn’t value it myself at that stage and I just felt like drowning when I had people asking me questions and all waiting for an answer which I didn’t feel confident in giving.

She felt ‘forced to not only grow in confidence, but to go and research things’ for herself. As her expertise grew, her confidence developed. Her observation provides a very good illustration of how teachers can learn in a constructivist way, bringing their own experiences into conversation with the ideas of other colleagues.

By the end of the first year... I felt more comfortable when a psychologist would knock on my door... not to feel petrified that I’m going to say something wrong, but to feel, “Okay. This is my classroom. This is what I’ve seen,” and hopefully join the two together and come out with something good at the end.

Shauna understands that it would have been ‘just impossible’ for her pre-service teacher education to have adequately prepared her for every conceivable situation she might have met in the classroom. Susan argues that ‘the real experience’ begins when teachers are ‘out on the ground’, that it is then when they ‘start to learn, or start to develop as a teacher, as a professional’ with the support of other staff and the principal. Susan finds the behaviourist planning that the probation process demands restrictive, and now uses a less rigid model. She describes the limiting effects of trying to stay within the

behaviourist/objectivist approach to planning, and points instead to a ‘more real’ approach which allows space for spontaneity, and is resultantly ‘more genuine and more meaningful’. The responses of both teachers reflects a common tendency for beginning teachers to ‘question the relevancy of their formal training compared to what they learn on the job’, and emphasises the point that the provision of high quality training through induction programmes is critical (Howe, 2006:289).

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In this study, I explored with teachers the experiences which they perceived as most beneficial in the development of their practice. I was conscious that each teacher’s practice was a whole that was not always amenable to segmentation into categories. At the end of her second interview, Susan tries to identify the most significant thoughts that guided her through her first year. Her reflection illustrates the holistic perception she has of her developing practice.

You never stop learning... There’s always something new to try, and I think the day you stop learning as a teacher is the day you’ve gone as far as you can push yourself, because you’ve decided to stop learning... I’d say if you taught until you were seventy, you’d never know as much as you could know... the more experiences you have, the more you have to share with the child and the more you can teach that child about life. The more you’re learning as a person and the more things you’re experiencing, you’re then somehow passing that on to the child, because they pick up on so many things... from you.

This is Susan’s social constructivist approach to learning which informs pupil and teacher learning throughout their lives. Her openness to the diversity of opportunities for learning, her enthusiasm for teaching and her concern for her pupils are all evident. She sees her identity as a teacher as part of her overall identity, yet as something that is discrete from the self she projects outside the classroom.

How I think at home and how I think as a teacher are two very different things. Me as a teacher and me as a person– I know I may be one and I may be the other, but I’m very different... Very close friends of mine that aren’t teachers – honestly laugh at the thoughts of me in a classroom, because I’m so different outside the classroom they cannot visualise how I would stand up in front of thirty kids and teach them.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the themes that emerged from the data and I explore possible implications of the research for future approaches to teacher induction in Ireland.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

There is no fixed immutable truth in social science, no design (that we can know at any rate) by which things all fit together (Woods, 2006:3).

It is possible to refine our approximations of reality through refining our methods and applying them in increasingly rigorous ways. Guided by the qualitative researcher's interest in 'the meanings the participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations and what their perspectives are' (Woods, 2006:3), I set out to explore beginning teachers' views on factors they considered helpful in their development of professional practice during their first year. By conducting semi-structured interviews, I aimed to construct an approximation of the reality they experienced. All the teachers in the study had performed very well during probation, and I invited them to participate because I considered their work very highly. I wanted to find out what, in their words, they found most beneficial in their development.

My research followed the 'practical' approach and did not seek a 'rigorous scientific knowledge by which practice can be regulated and controlled' (Carr, 1995:48). The knowledge that this approach offers is 'always uncertain and incomplete'(Carr, 1995:48) but provides a basis for making prudent judgements about possible courses of action. This approach is similar to postmodernist approaches which involve dealing with ambiguities and uncertainties as part of an ongoing discourse which remains open to 'continuous redefinition' (Weedon, 1987, in Sugrue, 1997a). The choice of such an approach stems from a view of the aforementioned ambiguities and uncertainties not as inconveniences, but as valuable challenges that aid critical engagement.

Implementing any change in classrooms has always been notoriously difficult. Hoban argues that 'efforts for change need to be supported with a framework for long-term teacher learning' (Hoban, 2002:2). Failure to provide such supports will result in teachers resorting to a repetitive pattern of teaching the way they were taught, despite encountering many ideas and approaches to teaching in preservice and inservice programmes. Much of what students learn about teaching 'is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical: it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles' (Lortie, 1975:62). By trying to identify the factors which teachers' felt to have influenced their development, I hoped to identify themes and to

develop insights which could lead to such supports becoming more widely available to NQTs. In this chapter I discuss the themes covered in and arising from the research, and I offer insights to inform future teacher education and induction programmes.

## **5.2 Findings related to the research questions**

In the following sections of this chapter I address the research questions in light of insights generated during the participant interviews, in my subsequent analysis of the transcripts, and finally, during discussions with the teachers, in which my interpretation was tested and clarified. The research questions were:

- To what extent do beginning teachers see their teaching identities as having been formed by their biographies as students, their teacher education programmes, or their early career experiences?
- Whether, or to what extent beginning teachers see their development of teaching identity as the acquisition of competences?
- What do newly qualified teachers perceive as the dominant influences on their classroom practices during their probationary year?

In examining the data, I used Sullivan's four criteria for an adequate interpretation. It must be 1) negotiated; 2) present itself as an argument; 3) express an emancipatory praxis and 4) critical (Sullivan, 1984:145-149).

### **5.2.1 How teachers saw the early formation of their teaching identities**

My first research question was directed at exploring the extent to which beginning teachers see their teaching identities as having been formed by their biographies as students, their teacher education programmes, or their early career experiences. It is clear that all of these factors were significant for the teachers. All spoke at length, giving numerous examples of encounters and experiences that encompassed all of the areas. I believe that it would not have been possible to use this research to construct a hierarchy of influences. I found the interplay between the variables to be so complex, and so unique to each teacher, that to attempt such a task would involve making generalisations where none are possible. What can be said is that the multiplicity of factors does not blur the view of teacher identity, but enhances it and brings it into clearer focus.

My research supports Lortie's argument that teacher socialization is 'undoubtedly a complex process, not readily captured by a simple, one-factor frame of reference' (Lortie, 1973:488). Although he hoped for 'sophisticated and comprehensive studies assessing the relative contribution of the several agencies and mechanisms' (Lortie, 1973:488), this has not yet been achieved and the process remains complex and multi-faceted. Whether the sophisticated studies of the type Lortie hoped for could ever definitively identify the relative importance of the different agencies and mechanisms to which he refers is by no means certain. It is possible, to indicate how a range of factors were experienced by teachers and were felt by them to have influenced the development of their teaching identities. In my research, these factors were shown to include their biographies, including early experiences of school and family; their experiences of pre-service education; their pupils and pupils' parents; and the influence of their principals, mentors, other colleagues and friends. Theoretical literature was not considered to be a significant influence by most teachers in their first year.

### **5.2.2 The development of teaching identities as the acquisition of competence**

My second research question was devised in order to explore to what extent, if any, the participants saw the development of their teaching identities in terms of the acquisition of a set of competencies. The data in this study provide no evidence that teachers considered their teaching identities in terms of the acquisition of competence. My findings in this regard, however, must remain tentative, as one of my criteria for the selection of participants for this research was that they had all been adjudged by me to have performed admirably when I evaluated their work during their probation. It is likely, therefore, that the confidence they had in their own teaching was well founded. Apart from a few expressions of frustration when speaking of exemplar lessons in college which they perceived as being contrived, they did not seem overly concerned with competence issues. Generally, when they gave examples of successes they had during the first year, they referred to the satisfaction of crafting solutions to problems for which there was no template. They certainly did not see themselves as 'a cadre of skilled technicians [who are expected] to deliver the school National Curriculum programmes of study in an effective and efficient way' (Richards et al, in Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:264).

### **5.2.3 NQTs perceptions of dominant influences during the first year**

My third research question explored what newly qualified teachers perceived as the dominant influences on their classroom practices during their probationary year. It was clear that all were very much aware of the culture of the school as a positive influence. The schools in the study were situated close to each other in a community which is supportive of the schools. This contributed to the NQTs early success. Again, attempting to quantify the extent to which this was the case would be futile. However, while conducting the interviews and in the subsequent transcription and interpretation, the importance of the school culture for the NQTs emerged as a very strong influence. They spoke of the security they felt in their schools and of the support they received from experienced colleagues and the principal. This research supports findings in the literature that school principals are culture founders in their schools, and that they 'relied extensively on their staff to follow their lead and upon the schools' other leaders for support' (Nias et al. 1989:75). This was especially true when it came to teacher induction, and both principals in this study made sure that a strong and sympathetic support system was available to NQTs in their schools.

NQTs were very thankful for advice received from fellow teachers. They also spoke of the scrutiny of parents and of the perceived need to satisfy parents that the teachers were qualified to teach. Several of the teachers acknowledged the support they received from the inspector during probation. This was a difficult issue to explore with the teachers. I did not raise it with them and I only explored it gingerly, for reasons I have outlined in the Introduction to this research. In the next section, I discuss the themes that emerged from the interview transcripts. I then consider the implications of the findings of this research for NQTs and for those, such as teacher educators, school leaders, policy makers and inspectors, who play a role in the induction process, either by supporting NQTs or by setting the parameters within which their induction takes place.

### **5.3 Organising the themes that emerged in the study**

As the interview schedules had been constructed using Brookfield's four lenses, I thought initially that it would be feasible to group participant responses under the broad themes suggested by the lenses. However, I was cognisant of the warning that while 'conceptual frameworks may be useful in organising emerging data... care must be taken... to ensure that the framework is not used to control the data' (Morse and Field,

1996:96). Accordingly, as I engaged with the data I discovered that the tentative framework which used Brookfield's lenses needed to be altered to reflect the range of themes that emerged from the data.

Within each of the areas, there was scope for teachers to discuss any experiences that they felt had influenced them personally. My conclusions are based on ideas generated in the interviews. Not to have been conscious of the need for this would have allowed my own prejudices to have been prioritised. Hammersley and Scarth warn of selective interpretation of evidence and over-interpretation of evidence to support a particular point of view (1993:224). In coming to the following conclusions, I sought to incorporate all of the relevant elements of participants' practice described by them. I endeavoured to ensure that where I advanced a particular point of view, it was supported by the data.

#### **5.4 The range of influences on teacher socialisation**

People enter teaching for reasons that are 'varied and not necessarily rational' (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1993:245). Among the reasons Lawrence-Lightfoot mentions are personal history, early identifications with respected teachers, gender stereotyping in the case of women, and compromising on teaching when frustrated in the search for an alternative and preferred career. Knowles mentions similar reasons, and he concluded that teachers' early classroom behaviours were influenced to a great extent by past experiences (Knowles, 1992:125). Although he maintains that teacher education programmes had a minimal effect on perceptions of teaching in the pre-service year, Knowles cautions that it is extremely difficult to determine the complex ways in which biography interacts with context and experiences of teaching (Knowles, 1992:126).

My interviews included my explorations of how teachers had been influenced by families, friends, teachers, college experiences, and by people they met during their first year in teaching, such as school principals, their mentors and other teacher colleagues, their inspector, parents and pupils. It was clear that all of these factors had played significant but different roles for each teacher. Teachers perceived their experiences differently and certain incidents became memorable for individuals in ways that cannot be foreseen. It is not possible to create a hierarchy of influences because of the particular ways in which individuals perceived the effects of a broad range of

influences. In the following sections, I consider in turn the influences that teachers discussed with me.

#### **5.4.1 Biographical influences**

The teachers' autobiographies revealed how their teaching identity began to form in childhood. Lortie identified how childhood influences had encouraged some people to become teachers when in elementary school (Lortie, 1975:45). In his study, some teachers had teaching family members who had acted as 'recruitment agents'; others had been influenced by significant others who had recognised 'particular propensities' (Lortie, 1975:45) in them which predisposed them to the idea of becoming teachers. Many stated that they had 'always wanted to teach' (Lortie, 1975:43). Such 'early and affective decisions' to become teachers were widespread among teachers, and 'it demonstrates that teaching possesses recruitment resources beyond its relative attractiveness in cost and benefit terms' (Lortie, 1975:42). Other recent research indicates that most student teachers still say that they have always wanted to be teachers, even when they have difficulty articulating why (Sugrue, 1997a:216). My research also identifies the presence of such factors: both Niamh and Fiona spoke of always having wanted to teach, while several other participants considered it while still in primary school. Shauna spoke of wanting to be like her teacher, 'to be a person like him, not necessarily a teacher, but a person like him'. This kind of influence on beginning teachers has long been recognised in the literature on teacher identity, and remains a significant factor for many when deciding on a teaching career.

My research also found that personal and social factors had influenced teachers' career choice. On being told that her daughter had applied for primary teaching, Shauna's mother 'assumed everything was going to fall into place and became very proud'. Ciara's mother had assumed that she would pursue teaching: 'It wasn't so much whether I should be a teacher, more what college did I go to'. Her dentist sister had tried to dissuade her from teaching as a career. The sister debated with Ciara about her choice of career, but this discussion increased her determination to teach. In an instance of 'the attribution of occupational futures' by a 'significant other' (Lortie, 1975:45) Ciara's career guidance counsellor told her that she should become a teacher. This exemplifies how 'people's selves and identities were formed through their interactions with others, especially those who had a primary influence on their lives' (Hargreaves, 2010a:144). In Ciara's case, it is interesting that she listened to her mother and to her guidance

counsellor, but did not heed the advice of her sister. It is possible that the views of mother and counsellor were more closely aligned with Ciara's personal identity and her sister's contrary view was not strong enough to dislodge what was, for Ciara, an already strongly established part of her identity as a teacher.

Identification with teachers from an early age cannot occur without appropriate role models and 'environments which support the aspiration to become a teacher' (Lortie, 1975:42). Many choose teaching as a career because of positive experiences at school, and their positive memories hinged 'on the person of a key teaching figure who had managed to inspire them' (Younger et al, 2004:250). In my study, Shauna remembered identifying with a teacher, when he encouraged her to participate in a classroom game: 'I just felt a huge respect for him to be able to do that for me'. She later identified with other teachers, who 'really, really inspired (her)' and 'seemed to enjoy coming into the classroom'. Elaine related how, when asked what she wanted to do in life, she always replied that she wanted to teach. She identified two of her teachers as her primary influences. Later, when she discussed her intention to become a teacher with one, the older teacher warned her of increased intensification of the teacher's job. It wasn't until finishing college, 'until I came out into the classroom', that she understood what her teacher had meant. This illustrates the disconnection between the teacher identity Elaine had formed from her perspective as a student and the more complex one which her teacher had spoken of, and which she now recognises in her role as teacher.

Maura spoke of the influence of teachers she had, saying that she wouldn't mind being like them. Niamh and Susan also related stories about significant teacher figures. Even negative teachers sometimes had a positive impact, as Shauna stated: 'I think she influenced me, but again in a positive way, as to what not to do'. Niamh had a teacher who thought she would not qualify for entry to a college of education, and it pleased Niamh to prove her wrong. The experiences of both Niamh and Shauna highlight that teacher influence is not always positive. When considering teacher influence, it is important to be conscious of the fact that people do not just follow influential teachers. If this were so, it is probable that neither Shauna nor Niamh would have become teachers, or may have become very different teachers. Therefore, it is important that trainees and NQTs should be helped to realise just how powerful their own views and values are in shaping their actions and in influencing how they choose to respond to input from others. They must also be encouraged to keep the views and values under

explicit review in case they need to be altered as understanding develops. Not to do so could limit their professional development.

The impressions of role models were formed by individuals from their perspectives as students. Many warm memories were of kind individuals: there appeared to be a 'premium on the personality' which 'competes with pedagogical competence' (Sugrue, 1997a:220). Trainee teachers are 'often concerned more with personal characteristics than with teaching skills' (Younger et al, 2004:252). Sugrue argues that good pupils who have benefited from their participation in predictable and consistent classrooms will perpetuate the pedagogies and curricula which helped them, 'while alternative styles of teaching and learning may be precluded or excluded' (Younger et al, 2004:220), and there is little motive to 'reconstruct more elaborate teaching identities' (Younger et al, 2004:220).

The task for teacher educators is difficult, because while 'personality and an orientation to caring, nurturing and empathising [are] necessary but not sufficient for being a "good" teacher' (Younger et al, 2004:220), many student teachers already identify themselves as having appropriate personality traits to be "good" teachers, which 'may create a disposition which suggests that they are already empowered to teach' (Younger et al, 2004:220). Sugrue warns that if a teaching personality and a prescribed curriculum are 'the major prerequisites for good teaching, there is little... to be gained from collaboration with colleagues' (Sugrue, 1997a:221). Where this narrowing of focus occurs, it causes teachers to create theories with 'the hallmarks of conservatism, isolation, self-reliance and autonomy' (Sugrue, 1997a:221). If this is to be avoided, it will be necessary to ensure that the "'constructivist" approaches that expect teachers to practice reflective and collaborative action' (Howe, 2006:290) in 'exemplary' models of teacher induction be prioritised.

#### **5.4.2 Students (Pupils and their parents)**

Brookfield's second lens involves teachers visualising their work through students' eyes. Brookfield's own work centres on adult learners, while the participants in my study were primary teachers. Therefore, I also asked them to consider how they felt they were viewed by parents. Teachers spend a significant amount of their time consulting with parents about pupils' work, and 'work with parents and carers is an increasingly significant element of the work of early years' teachers' (Pollard, 2005:89). In this

study, the levels of contact with parents were highest for teachers of the youngest pupils, and contact was less frequent with parents of older pupils. It is likely that such consultation helps to bring about improvements in pupils' work. Also, to ignore the consultations between teachers and parents 'in conceptualising effectiveness simply because it does not normally occur in classrooms seems... perverse' (Campbell et al, 2004:15).

Maura's apprehension about meeting difficult parents was allayed by the principal. In telling of their apprehension about greeting parents initially, when 'every parent, grandmother, auntie, uncle, whoever, is watching you', the teachers show themselves to be sensitive to parents' perceptions. Shauna said she got her biggest encouragement from satisfied parents, and Aoife said that the 'highest compliment' a teacher can receive is from a parent. Liam spoke of teachers having 'parents in the palm of their hands'. The need for good relationships with parents is sometimes seen as an instrumental imperative, as Ciara shows: 'it's only when you see something going wrong that you realise - I really rely on these parents'. What is interesting in the teachers' comments on parents' influence is that they show the positive way in which they use the parents' views. When parents comments serve to provide validation of teachers' work, this may give the teachers the confidence on which other inputs to professional development can be built.

### **5.4.3 School culture**

One factor emerging in all of the interviews was the importance of the school environment and culture in which teachers found themselves. Fiona identified the critical influence of the school culture in her development, acknowledging that she had been influenced for the better by the environment in which she taught, while recognising that she would have been influenced differently, and therefore would have developed differently, in another school. The organizational culture of the school is one of the milieus in which teachers 'actively construct their own meanings and forge for themselves an ordered rule bound existence' (Nias et al, 1989:10). Not only do they utilise this culture as they construct that part of their social reality which is their school experience, their interaction with the school culture and with each other also shapes the culture.

The initial placement of teachers in positions where they were supported by principals and colleagues probably contributed to their success, as beginning teachers experience 'the strong influence of the norms and values of the workplace' (Flores, 2003:17). Other research indicates that placement of first year teachers may be 'the most influential variable in first-year teaching success' (Huling-Austin, 1990:543). Huling-Austin, echoing Wragg (1980:195), states that beginning teachers 'are often placed in teaching assignments that would challenge even the most skilful veteran teachers' (Huling-Austin, 1990:543). Testing this idea was beyond the scope of this research, as the teachers were selected because of their successful completion of probation, which, if Huling-Austin and Wragg are correct, was eased by their placement in supportive school contexts.

The importance of the school culture in shaping the professional practice of the beginning teacher is reflected in this study. Research indicates that successful change occurs in positive school cultures, in which teachers

have opportunities to share ideas, develop shared beliefs about what ought to be, have a clear focus on improving teaching and learning, are involved collaboratively in decision-making... and have a means to deal with issues openly (Macmillan, 2000:52).

Brookfield says that critical conversation can only happen in

a moral and political culture characterised by an openness to diverse perspectives and ideologies, and a respectful acknowledgement of the importance of each person's contribution, irrespective of seniority or status (Brookfield, 1995:140).

Developing this culture requires ground rules so that conversations between colleagues can be 'respectful, inclusive and democratic' (Brookfield, 1995:140). Shauna feels that this culture has not been established because teachers remain isolated from each other and are reluctant to comment on the practice of others while their own is less than perfect, 'when you might not necessarily be doing everything a hundred percent correctly yourself' (Shauna).

Liam would agree that a school culture is 'underpinned by jointly held beliefs and values' (Southworth et al, 1992:349). Often, these beliefs originate with head teachers. Liam related the story of a teacher in his school, who showed promise but left after a year because she did not share the school. Nias warns of this: 'unless [teachers] find in their initial encounters with their schools a harmony between their substantial selves and the social context of their work, they may try to cut themselves off from their

colleagues' (Nias, 1989:44). It was clear that Liam was disappointed with the teacher's leaving, and considered it a failure on the school's part that it had not been possible to accommodate the teacher, who he acknowledged as having been an effective teacher. This raises the question how of how the challenges and tensions that arise when people do not completely align with school culture are dealt with. In this case, the problem was resolved by the teacher leaving the school, but this will not always be an option, particularly in times when teaching positions are not easily found. In similar circumstances, there is a risk that the problem would not be tackled and would become submerged, which in turn would militate against the creation of an open and collaborative school culture. A healthy culture is more likely to be one which is not thrown around by every challenge but which is nevertheless open to change and to the accommodation of difference.

#### **5.4.4 Supporting teacher commitment through collaboration**

Teachers are more likely to turn 'for mutual support and reinforcement to those whom they perceive to have similar levels of commitment' (Nias, 1989:31). Fiona referred to this, saying she was influenced by the environment and by colleagues. She was glad to work with people who shared her commitment to teaching and consequently felt that she was 'working at the top of what I would have wanted to work up to'. The development of professional learning communities can only begin when teachers' interaction with other teachers is facilitated. As Hargreaves states, '(t)eachers can... only really learn once they get outside their own classrooms and connect with other teachers' (Hargreaves, 2010b:105). The potential of professional learning communities is strong, as 'becoming a member of a teaching community can be a critical step in becoming a better teacher' (Ende:83).

Professional learning communities require a school culture which encourages teachers to share their experiences. Hargreaves warns against 'substitution of more evolutionary and spontaneous forms of teacher collaboration by administratively controlled, safely simulated forms of collegiality' (Hargreaves, 1994:191). Support is given to teachers by head teachers and other colleagues 'not simply by providing referential support for their self-defining values but also by offering advice, guidance, assistance, and reinforcement' (Nias, 1989:135). In Shauna's words, this must be given in 'a way where everyone feels comfortable, and nobody feels like someone is being condescending'. All teachers in this study attested to the generosity of colleagues, and both principals

had organised the work settings of probationary teachers so that they would have access to experienced colleagues.

Successful mentoring programmes dramatically improve retention rates for beginning teachers and increase teachers' levels of confidence in their professional competence (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1999:400). The perplexing problem of teacher retention, where many qualified teachers abandoned the classroom after a short time, was addressed by the development of teacher mentoring programmes (Feeney Jonson, 2008:6). Modern mentoring approaches have moved beyond traditional apprenticeship models, in which beginning teachers mimic or copy their experienced colleagues, and have focused on developing 'reflective thinkers who explore their own teaching styles' (Boreen et al, 2009:9).

Hargreaves warns against a form of collaboration, or contrived collegiality, which diminishes teachers' individuality and discretion of judgement (Hargreaves, 1994:191). Where teachers are offered little guidance, the result is often 'solid but unremarkable' (Hargreaves, 2010a:148). When overzealous principals try to impose collaboration, teachers become resentful and collaborate less. Between the extremes were principals 'who knew how to provide just the right amount of scaffolding so teachers would drive most of the collaboration themselves' (Hargreaves, 2010a:148). Both principals in this study 'were closely associated with their school's beliefs, provided it with a sense of mission and felt a deep commitment to it' (Nias et al, 1989:132). Each played a key role as 'founder of the culture' (Nias et al, 1989:132). When schools are fortunate enough to be led by such individuals, collaboration among teachers which focuses on improving teaching and learning has a strong effect on students' achievement and on school improvement (Hargreaves, 2003).

#### **5.4.5 Theoretical Literature**

Freire says that 'we have to understand how books as theory and practice as action must be constantly dialectically together' (Horton and Freire, 1990:21). Brookfield (1995:185) identifies theory as the fourth lens for becoming a critically reflective teacher. He suggests that we use literature to 'investigate the hunches, instincts and tacit knowledge that shape our practice'. He lists ways in which theory can be used to develop critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995:186-189). While teachers should engage

with the literature specific to critical reflection, ‘for the majority of teachers... this literature might as well be in a foreign language’ (Brookfield, 1995:207).

The potential for literature to aid in teachers’ continuing development is not recognised by the beginning teachers in this study: perhaps dealing with immediate issues such as classroom management, lesson planning and preparing teaching resources left teachers with little time to engage with what they perceived as philosophical matters. Newly qualified teachers’ thinking is often dominated by concerns for classroom management, to the extent that pedagogical decisions are restricted by concerns about behaviour, as ‘difficult’ classes are seen to be too risky for them to try creative teaching approaches (Haggarty et al, 2009:5). Their preoccupation with classroom management is understandable in light of ‘the received wisdom that it is tantamount to personal failure if students cannot be properly controlled’ (Sugrue, 1997a:218).

The concerns expressed in the literature are just as real for the NQTs who participated in this study. When participants referred to literature, they meant that they consulted curriculum handbooks or websites for teaching tips. Ciara undertook an evening course during her first year, and was ‘surrounded by a wealth of literature’, but what she ‘immersed’ herself in reading about was classroom management. Only one teacher, Susan, spoke about educational philosophy, that of Maria Montessori, whom she had encountered before she entered a college of education.

The ‘culturally determined teaching identity’ which teachers create does not require them to engage critically with literature, and instead requires some or all of:

Being strict, presenting a stern face, being distant from learners, insisting on strict adherence to rules, sticking to the letter in relation to prescribed curriculum content and demanding accuracy without taking the learners’ perspective into account (Sugrue, 1997a:215).

Ciara speaks of distancing herself from the children: ‘the teacher is there to instruct... I’m not here to be their friend... My main function is to teach them’. Shauna felt compelled to be ‘stand-offish’ with parents, and with pupils she had kept herself ‘very professional – I didn’t chat, I didn’t smile for a very long time. That way I knew that I had the control that I needed’. She felt that her year had gone well primarily because of her emphasis on discipline in September. These views are not unusual, as ‘(i)t is repeatedly found that student teachers and beginning teachers are pre-occupied initially with fear of being unable to maintain “proper order” in their classrooms’ (Sugrue, 1997a:218).

Proefriedt says that beginning teachers 'often... seek help in the form of specific instructions for handling their classes' (1994:49). He is critical of colleges of education for their 'vocational tilt' and teacher educators for responding to teachers' requests for help by focusing only on training teachers in 'practical' behaviours (Proefriedt, 1994:50). He argues instead for helping teachers to engage in 'spirited analysis of important philosophical texts that focus on educational issues' (Proefriedt, 1994:50). As philosophers have addressed educational problems, he sees it as the task of teacher educators to engage intellectually with their ideas. Brookfield also argues that theoretical literature can help teachers name their practice; to explore ideas, activities and theories from outside their own practice; to act as a substitute for absent colleagues; to encourage teachers in peer learning groups to avoid developing an 'ideological homogeneity; and to help teachers to situate their practice in social contexts' (Brookfield, 1995:186-189). Literature protects teachers from going to 'ridiculous extremes' in valuing their own experiences (Brookfield, 1995:193). Along with the lenses of students' and colleagues, Brookfield argues, literature is one of the 'critical checks' required by autobiographical experience.

All educational practice is grounded in theory, whether stated explicitly or not, and is not 'robot-like behaviour that can be performed in a completely unthinking or mechanical way' (Carr, 1995:41). On the contrary, it is 'a consciously performed intentional activity' (Carr, 1995:41) and can only be understood through the tacit and partially articulated schemes of thought which teachers use to make sense of their practices.

Brookfield emphasises that while it is essential for teachers to learn from experience, educational literature 'can help us investigate the hunches, instincts and tacit knowledge that shape our practice' (Brookfield, 1995:185). Goodson argues similarly when critiquing 'the discourse of practical and reflective professionalism' (Goodson, 2000:186). He instances examples of teachers' practical knowledge having no educational or social benefit, and argues that its quality

depends on what that knowledge is, in what kinds of contexts it has been acquired, the purposes to which it is put, and the extent to which teachers review it, renew it and reflect on it (Goodson, 2000:186).

The degree of disengagement by teachers from literature is worrying: it is disconcerting that they appeared unaware of potential benefits of exploring educational literature. Literature, including material such as Goodson's, can help teachers and those who

would help them with insights that have been gleaned from other, sometimes similar, contexts to theirs. Brookfield makes a compelling argument for the use of literature to unmask the assumptions that guide teachers' practice. The value of literature as a 'mirror' through which teachers can examine their teaching is not recognised by the participants. A challenge for teacher educators and those, including principals, mentors and inspectors, who are involved in the induction of teachers, is to ensure that mechanisms are developed to encourage NQTs to engage purposefully with literature.

### **5.5 Towards a model for beginning teacher learning: *Phronesis***

Hargreaves and Goodson suggest that those who have attempted to express teachers' intuitive and practical know-how as 'visible, codifiable, professional knowledge' have destabilized 'the ethics and purposes that guide teachers' actions, and the extent to which teachers are able to pursue these purposes with fidelity and integrity' (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996:6). Goodson identifies components of 'principled professionalism', including having opportunities to deliberate the moral and social purposes of teachers' work; opportunities to exercise discretionary judgement; commitment to working collaboratively with colleagues and the wider community, including parents; being committed to the active care of students; being committed to continuous learning; and the creation of high task complexity (Goodson, 2000:187).

Many of these components are evident in the teachers' stories. Goodson insists that teaching is, 'above all, a moral and ethical vocation' (Goodson, 2000:187). Brookfield and Eisner emphasise the importance of teacher collaboration. Colleagues are one of Brookfield's lenses for developing critical reflective practice, and Eisner cites the practice of 'teachers deliberating with teachers' as a method of refining *phronesis* (Eisner, 2002:382).

Teachers' practice involves an element of performance that cannot be planned entirely in advance, but must be improvised during the activity. Preston sees students as 'constructors' of knowledge, active participants in the learning process. This understanding of learning demands a complementary view of teaching which is not 'limited to the application of technique and rules... [but] which involves complex, sensitive and informed judgements' (Preston, 1992, online). To teach effectively, teachers should be alert to multiple and complex factors that affect each student and be able to determine how to respond appropriately. This is 'the essence of the

professionalism of teachers' (Preston, 1992). This concept, of a technically-skilled teacher guided by an ability to discern when and how to employ these skills, and when to change direction, is similar to Eisner's idea of teaching as artistry, and also like the model of teaching in which *phronesis* guides *techne* and *episteme*. Susan encapsulated this idea when she stated, when speaking of finding herself in a new and unfamiliar situation, 'you use whatever it is you have to figure out where you're supposed to go'.

When attempts are made to categorize teachers' knowledge in technical, scientific or theoretical terms, this leads to 'an inevitable rift between educational study and research and practice' (Goodson, 2000:184). To correct this, it is necessary 'to accord dignity and status to the practical knowledge and judgement that people have of their own work' (Goodson, 2000:184). While this can help establish good practices, where teachers' experience is limited or their craft knowledge is restricted to a narrow range of settings, there is little scope for them to develop. Overemphasising practical knowledge could lead to teacher education and teachers' work being narrowed 'to pedagogical skills and technical competencies' (Goodson, 2000:186). When this happens, teachers' moral responsibility and professional judgement are diminished, resulting in practical knowledge being transformed into 'parochial knowledge' (Goodson, 2000:186).

Brendan suggests that schools and inspectors working 'in unison' can help young teachers 'to find their way through all the challenges, curricular, classroom management, behavioural - that they encounter in their first couple of years.' What Brendan is looking towards looks very similar to what Postlethwaite and Haggarty suggested when calling for mentors with a 'sophisticated understanding of beginning teacher learning' (2012:279) who will be able to help teachers to identify the advantages and limitations of the socialisation process in which they are engaged. Brendan uses the same term, 'muddling', as Brookfield does for the development of craft knowledge, but significantly, he does not see this as something that teachers should have to do in isolation, but under the guidance of the school and the inspector.

Goodson argues for a principled professionalism, which incorporates reflective practice and engagement with university knowledge, 'with the access it can give to independent inquiry, intellectual critique and understanding of other teachers in other contexts' (Goodson, 2000:186). Similarly, Sugrue contends that the archetypal teaching image, in which personality and the ability to control are central, is reinforced in initial teacher education courses which focus on individual development rather than encouraging

'closer scrutiny of curricula, institutional structures and the cultivation of more collaborative working relationships' (Sugrue, 1997a:218).

### **5.6 Participants' views on the benefits of participating in the research**

An unintended yet welcome effect of the study was the encouragement which participants found to continue to reflect critically on their practice. Susan's interviews have enabled her to identify aspects of her practice of which she would not have been aware had she not participated in the research:

When you first met us and I went away... I thought about it ... and realised, "Oh my God. That's responsible for that, that's responsible for that," but that's not a conversation I'd have with another teacher, because it sounds like I'm saying, "Oh, aren't I fabulous! Look what I was able to do! Look what I learned from when I was in college!"

For Ciara, starting her career as a teacher is when 'the real experience begins and that's when you start to learn, or start to develop as a teacher, as a professional'. She identifies the support of other colleagues and the principal as central to this professional development. Shauna articulated a similar idea, but hoped to use what she had learned in college in addition to learning from her own experiences and those of colleagues: 'you just have to... trust yourself... pull from senior teachers, younger teachers, and always taking from what you've learned in college'.

### **5.7 Implications from the research for teachers during induction**

Several teachers observed that their participation in the research had encouraged them to greater reflection. They found that our discussions had encouraged them to explore many of their assumptions about teaching and to uncover some of the influences on the development of their teaching identity. While their involvement in the study is complete, the challenge now for them is to try to remain alert to the range of influences that affect them as they progress through their careers. They also need to consider how their original ideas about teaching interact with and affect the new ideas they develop through reflective practices. The question that arises is whether the teachers would have been as probing in their self-exploration if they had not participated in this research. Several said that they had not conducted this level of self-examination before. All teachers, including the principals, who spoke of reflection were convinced of its value, yet for some, it was clear that it was only in the course of the interviews that they were brought into contact with their tacit and unarticulated views of teaching.

Challenges identified in a number of studies into the needs of teachers on induction are

remarkably similar: classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual student differences, assessing students' work, organising class work, coping with insufficient or inadequate teaching materials and supplies and handling communication with parents (Aitken and Harford, 2011:350).

Some of these topics are mentioned by participants in this study, although the fact that both schools served predominantly middle-class populations means challenges met regularly in disadvantaged areas were not often encountered. Howe identified several common features in his review of successful teacher induction programmes in a range of countries. These programmes included

opportunities for experts and neophytes to learn together in a supportive environment promoting time for collaboration, reflection and a gradual acculturation into the profession of teaching (Howe, 2006:288).

Such programmes would help to provide what Shauna described as the 'pulling from' colleagues and college, while respecting the need to 'trust yourself'. However, participants responses indicate that while they were pleased with the results of their in-depth reflection, it occurred only occasionally and haphazardly. It is evident that there is a need to promote such reflection and dialogue in a supportive yet rigorous manner. Perhaps the organisation of regular, perhaps monthly, meetings would facilitate such purposeful engagement by teachers. Were this to proceed beyond induction, it would support ongoing teacher development.

### **5.8 Recognising the agency of individual teachers in their own learning**

Despite the 'plethora of research' (Mayer, 1999) into learning to teach, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that it is 'a highly complex process that is very personalised and contextualised' (Mayer, 1999). Models used to describe the process by which teachers develop include occupational socialization and stage theories in which it is assumed that beginning teachers learn cultural norms and expectations to enable them to preserve the status quo in schools; and other, 'more constructive' approaches (Kirk et al, 2006:426) such as the dialectic approach, identity theory and situated learning theory, which see the teacher as having an active role, and whose involvement could lead to schools' organizational structure changing to accommodate new ideas.

A primary difference between the stage theories, the dialectic model and identity theory is that the latter two assume the active role played by the individual in negotiating and defining his or her position in the environment,

whereas the stage theories assume a more passive role of the individual in the socialization process (Kirk et al, 2006:432).

The responses of both principals in this research reflect the 'constructive' models of induction mentioned above. Their encouragement of the teachers to play active roles in their socialization is echoed in the teachers' responses.

Prior to entering teacher education, students have established 'tenacious and powerful' (Holt-Reynolds, 1992:344) beliefs about teaching and learning, which are 'disputable, more inflexible and less dynamic than knowledge systems' (Pajares, 1992:311). These implicit beliefs, constructed and consolidated during biographical experiences and 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975:61), and influenced by traditional teaching archetypes, serve as lenses through which new teachers view teacher education and 'play a critical role in the acquisition of new knowledge' (Ethell & McMeniman, 2002:216).

Students' lay theories are formed with no understanding of educational theories or pedagogical principles (Salisbury-Glennon & Stevens, 1999). Consequently, they pose a challenge to teacher educators. The obduracy of 'tacit knowledge lying dormant and unexamined by the student' (Holt-Reynolds, 1992:346) is highly resistant to change during teacher education.

It is by no means just their university training or student teaching that affects their [students'] thinking about education. In fact what typically is taken from the college or university are the orientations to teaching practice in line with previously held images of what it means to teach (O'Brien and Schillaci, 2002:34).

Many advocate teacher education programmes that enable students to constructively examine and analyse their pre-established tacit beliefs, and to evaluate the consequences on future professional practice (Blanton, Warner & Simmons, 2001; Salisbury-Glennon & Stevens, 1999; Tillema, 2000; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998; Wood, 2000). Effective teacher education should inspire student teachers to 'think of learning to teach as changing understanding of teaching' (Wood, 2000:1). Connelly and Clandinin use two metaphors for teacher education: one which sees it as injection by teacher educators of knowledge into prospective teachers, and one which sees teacher education as the reconstruction by the prospective teachers of their own stories in order to make sense of their learning (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994:148-149). They attest that preservice teacher preparation courses, which accommodate review and re-evaluation of students'

implicit theories, not only serve to correct misguided preconceptions but also inspire a life-long habit of reflection.

### **5.9 Facilitating ongoing teacher learning**

Sugrue argues that student and beginning teachers' tenacious lay theories and teaching identities must be acknowledged. The challenge then becomes

how can initial and ongoing professional development initiate, support and promote a dialogical conjugation between lay theories, their attendant teaching identities and the broader horizons of teaching and schooling provided by research-based approaches to professional growth and renewal? (Sugrue, 1997a:221).

As all of the teachers in this study had completed probation, they can be described as 'successful in the short run' (Hagger et al, 2008:174), but

the questions that need to be asked... concern the capacity of student teachers to *continue* learning. What happens to beginning teachers when the support structures and resources of their teacher education programmes are no longer there and they are obliged to function as real teachers? Are they equipped to go on learning in new and diverse contexts? (Hagger et al, 2008:174).

Haggarty et al found that for many NQTs the need to 'fit in' to the culture of the school dominates their thinking to the extent that they do not think and are not helped to think about developing their pedagogical subject knowledge (Haggarty et al, 2009:7). The role of the mentor has potential to help, but as long as mentors continue to share NQTs' concern that 'classroom management should be addressed before teaching approaches were developed' (Haggarty et al, 2009:7), discussions of practice between mentor and NQT will remain at a superficial level. Only when mentors recognise that NQTs have ongoing specific learning needs is the NQT's professional learning broadened beyond concerns for classroom management. When mentors look beyond helping NQTs to 'fit in', recognition grows of the complexity of the task of extending NQTs' thinking. This requires 'a mutual and sophisticated understanding of identities and understandings', but if this does not develop, NQTs are 'simply left to do the best they could do – or chose to do – on their own' (Haggarty et al, 2009:11). The perceived need to fit in can restrict teachers' learning so that they are never encouraged to enhance the narrow set of teaching approaches that enable them to survive induction. Haggarty et al argue that there is 'no systematic building on what has already been learnt' (2009:12), largely because the mentor's role has a filtering effect on teachers' continuing professional

development. Unless the beliefs of induction mentors change, ‘existing cycles of thinking and practice’ (Haggarty et al, 2009:12) will continue.

### **5.10 Implications for teacher educators**

Teaching is a ‘paradoxical profession’, mandated to create ‘the human skills and capacities that will enable societies to survive and succeed in the age of information’ (Hargreaves and Lo, 2000:1). Lortie questioned whether beginning teachers can develop practice as in crafts and professions because ‘the absence of a common technical vocabulary limits a beginner’s ability to “tap into” a pre-existing body of practical knowledge’ (Lortie, 1975:73). This lack of a common technical vocabulary is compounded by the isolation of teachers. Whereas beginners and experienced mechanics work together to solve common problems, new teachers usually try to work out their problems alone before seeking help from experienced colleagues. Shauna spoke of a dilemma she faced during her first year: should she admit her ignorance of an issue she had not encountered before and be thought foolish, or should she address the problem without consulting with another teacher and risk making the problem worse?

Teachers must experience ‘something of an ordeal’ (Lortie, 1975:73) at the beginning of their careers. In other professions, the sharing of the ordeal creates ‘solidarity and collegial feeling’ (Lortie, 1975:74). Teachers’ private ordeals do nothing to create the bonds necessary for a common occupational subculture. The isolation of beginning teachers prevents the natural induction process that occurs in other professions (Huling-Austin, 1990:535). In this study, Shauna laments the lack of ‘a team effort, rather than just one person who’s responsible for – not assessment of teachers – but, at least, direction’ so that NQTs are free ‘to voice concerns, and to know that it’s okay to have them’. In combating this isolation, induction programs acknowledge that teachers who have recently completed teacher education programs ‘still need supervision and support similar to that which was available in the student phase’ (Huling-Austin, 1990:535). Younger et al suggest that teacher educators must:

frame teacher education courses in such a way that beginning teachers are provided with the contexts and methodologies whereby they can reflect on their own preconceptions and refine their own understandings as to how they themselves learn as teachers, to enable them in turn to facilitate the learning of pupils and to fulfil their own clearly articulated aspirations to become quality teachers (Younger et al, 2004:262).

While Proefriedt agrees that teachers should develop a common language of discourse, he argues that this language must originate in 'individual teachers' reflective efforts to understand their own work and to alter it for the better' (Proefriedt, 1994:33). While vocabularies developed by psychologists, sociologists, philosophers and curriculum theorists can help to create a common language of discourse for teachers, Proefriedt argues that this language 'and a common culture for teachers will have to grow organically within cooperative enterprises by teachers' (Proefriedt, 1994:33). Proefriedt laments the infrequency with which teachers 'systematically and regularly' discuss their work with colleagues, plan programmes of work together, visit each other's classrooms and give feedback. When groups of teachers engage systematically in discussion, they provide support and feedback for each other. Too often, Proefriedt says, the discourse of the staffroom is unrelated to realities of school and frequently consists of complaints about students or the institution. The creation of a staffroom and school culture that supports teachers in their work can break the sense of isolation. In addition,

The presence of a supportive and collaborative institutional culture within the school can make the difference between advancing development and frustrated abandonment (Hurd et al, 2007:310).

### **5.11 Impact of the research on my own thinking and practice**

When I set out initially on this research, I did so with a vague hope of identifying what it was that had contributed to the development of beginning teachers whom I considered to be excellent. As I planned the research and as I read a wide range of literature, I became less hopeful that a list of key factors could be identified, crystallised, and then transferred to future generations of teachers. What became increasingly clear for me as my study progressed was that each teacher's identity was unique, and had been formed as the result of a myriad of influences, ranging from brief incidents in childhood to the nurturing effect of a supportive and collaborative school culture. This led me to question competence-based conceptions of teacher effectiveness and teacher identity, and through my questioning and my discussions with teachers, my inspector colleagues, fellow students and academic staff on the Ed.D. programme, I was led to a conception of teacher identity which I feel is richer and more meaningful.

I feel that my practice as an inspector has changed as a result of my research. I find myself being less concerned with whether a teacher has performed in accordance with any prescribed set of competencies, but I am more inclined to view the teacher as a fellow learner in a constructivist world where there are no certainties, but where new

knowledge is created by learners who are alert to the possibilities offered to them through critical reflection and dialogue with other learners, either orally or through literature.

### **5.12 Implications of the research for inspection practice and policy**

In conducting this research, I was conscious of the changing role of inspectors in the certification of teachers. I commenced this research believing that my own work with NQTs had contributed in some measure to their development. I was concerned that changes to the induction of teachers would not only significantly reduce the involvement of inspectors in the process, but would result in a vacuum where there would be no support for some teachers in place of that which had been provided by inspectors. An issue that continues to worry principal teachers and other teacher colleagues is that they will be required to replace inspectors as adjudicators of teacher competence. This would place them in a difficult position because it would not be possible for them to act as mentors for NQTs, offering them Rogers' 'unconditional positive regard' (Rogers, 1989:225) while simultaneously acting as assessors. I believe that the introduction of a four-year B.Ed. degree, with longer school placements, offers a simple solution to this problem. If all assessment was done prior to the induction year, this would allow teacher colleagues to concentrate on providing support for NQTs, free of the obligation to make critical decisions on colleagues' careers.

Such provision for the assessment of NQTs would change completely the nature of inspectors' involvement with beginning teachers. It would of course mean that inspectors would no longer work with NQTs, except when they met them in the course of other inspection activity. However, I believe that it would reduce the perception that inspectors are concerned above all with teacher competency. With inspectors freed from their roles as assessors of NQTs, there is a possibility that they might once again be seen as trusted colleagues, rather than the auditors.

### **5.13 Teacher learning: a reciprocal process**

In both schools in this study, there are promising indicators that the conditions which Proefriedt awaits are being created. He argues that the isolation which teachers experience can be countered when teachers

systematically and regularly sit down with their colleagues to talk about their daily work... develop teaching materials together, argue over

curriculum matters, exchange classroom visits, and generally provide support and feedback for one another (Proefriedt, 1994:33).

Both principals acknowledge that this happens as NQTs engage willingly with the supports provided by colleagues. The expectation that they will reciprocate is evident, and NQTs familiarity with changes to the Primary Curriculum and their individual talents, such as Fiona's prowess in Art, allow them to contribute to the shaping of collaborative cultures in their schools. This reflects the view that teachers 'influence and shape the structures into which they are being socialized at the same time that they are being shaped by a variety of forces' (Zeichner and Gore, n.d.:online).

Ways of understanding the world are formed as we attempt a 'systematic formalization of theory' (Sullivan, 1984:2). Our theoretical perspectives 'structure perception and practice as a prism filters light' (Sullivan, 1984:2). Sullivan illustrates differences between the metaphoric prisms of mechanical and organic metaphors of understanding. In the mechanical metaphor, a mechanistic worldview derived from the physical sciences serves as an analogue for the understanding of human behaviour. Behaviourist theory uses mechanical tools to look at 'human events as mechanisms not unlike complex machines' (Sullivan, 1984:3). On the other hand, the organic metaphor or prism sees human actions in terms of processes, and views a person as a living organism, 'a living adaptive unity that *transforms* itself while relating dynamically to its environment' (Sullivan, 1984:8, original emphasis).

#### **5.14 How this research contributes to knowledge in the Irish context**

Researchers who try to use scientific principles to study teaching as relationships between variables believe that if they employ methods that 'accord with accepted scientific theory and practice, their results may safely be accepted as knowledge about teachers and teaching' (Fenstermacher, 1994:7). This 'conventional' approach does not attempt to 'capture the human drama or narrative unity of a person, group, culture, or the entire species' (Fenstermacher, 1994:43), but tries

to understand this drama in ways that permit explanations, perhaps even predictions, that are at a level of abstraction and generalization sufficient to provide for the construction of robust theory and an expanding, increasingly sound body of knowledge (Fenstermacher, 1994:44).

Policy-makers have a limited perspective of what it means to be a teacher.

The view of teaching as relatively simple, straightforward work, easily controlled by prescription for practice, is reinforced by the 'apprenticeship

of experience' adults have lived through during their years as students in schools (Darling-Hammond, 2001:761).

Because the 'apprenticeship of experience' begins again with each generation, conceptions of teaching formed as a result will persist, at least among those who are not directly concerned with teaching. If these are not to prevail, alternative conceptions must be articulated. Howe rejects the 'spectator view of knowledge',

the view that knowledge is built up piece by piece, by accumulation of an evergrowing and increasingly complex arrangement of passively received observations. Instead, knowledge, particularly in social research, must be seen as actively constructed – as culturally and historically grounded, as laden with moral and political values and as serving certain interests and purposes (Howe, 2001:202).

An alternative contextualist understanding of teacher knowledge accepts the 'essential fluidity of knowledge' (Edwards et al, 2002:50). It is constructed rather than prescribed. The Teaching Council's consultation document on the Career Entry Professional Programme (CEPP) is not written from the perspective of one who believes that teacher knowledge can have this kind of fluidity. Instead, it represents another 'assault on teacher autonomy' (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002:97) and will only further diminish teacher identity and increase the sense of powerlessness that teachers experience.

This research presents an opportunity to empower teachers and presents an alternative model to developing teacher identity, one that does not emphasise teacher competence at the expense of all the other threads of what can become the tapestry of identity. The teachers in this study speak eloquently of such threads. If their voices are listened to by those who shape policy in this area, then there is potential for teacher induction to be seen as an opportunity for growth and personal enrichment, rather than an ordeal which must be negotiated in a pre-ordained linear fashion.

### **5.15 Scope for developing this research**

This research focuses on the experiences of a small number of teachers who successfully completed their probation in schools where the principals and colleagues provided supportive environments in which the teachers were helped to reflect critically on their developing practice. While it now appears unsurprising that this would be the case, the principals of both schools also tell of teachers who had not been as successful and who had moved on from the schools at the first opportunity. This research has not explored how teachers such as these might have perceived their induction into teaching.

It would be interesting to examine how they perceived the impact of individuals and the dominant cultures in the schools on the development of their teaching identities. The focus of this research is solely on teachers who had apparently negotiated probation without difficulty. While this was a primary reason for their being invited to participate in the study, it must be acknowledged that a range of other, possibly more negative, impressions has been left unexamined. It would be worthwhile in future research to explore the experiences of a broader population of teachers, other than those who I had identified as being highly successful.

Possible gender differences in teachers' perceptions have not been explored in this study. All of the participant NQTs in this research are female. It was not a deliberate decision to exclude male teachers. While I had also encountered a number of male NQTs during my time as inspector in the district in which the selected schools were located, and while some had impressed me, for logistical reasons it was not desirable to extend the sample beyond the two chosen schools. My district was fragmented, with some schools in a neighbouring county to Dublin. By restricting the sample to teachers in two schools I was able to ensure that I was able to visit a number of teachers on each trip to the schools, both when conducting the interviews and when returning to conduct member checks and to discuss the emerging interpretations.

Another possible avenue for future research would be to follow the participants through their careers to explore how their perspectives change over time. Longitudinal studies offer the possibility of examining how teachers' thinking can alter. Levin's work spanned a period of fifteen years, over which time she was able to identify multiple factors that influenced the development of her participants' understanding of pedagogy (Levin, 2003:18). By meeting with her research participants on six occasions over the fifteen year period, she was able to discern change and growth in their perceptions.

### **5.16 Final reflections on the research**

In order to develop a view of teaching which acknowledges the central role of the teacher as an intelligent, creative, and reflective social actor, we must look beyond mechanistic models and competency-based approaches to teacher education and development. Instead, we should look to develop *phronesis* or practical wisdom and to structure teacher education and induction programmes using organic rather than mechanical metaphors. The challenge for teacher educators in doing this involves

helping teachers ‘to learn about the realities and complexities of teaching without losing that highly motivating idealism’ (Younger et al, 2004:259). One way of doing this would be to introduce a level of ‘confrontation and ethical justification’ (Day, 1993:86) which would involve analytic rather than comfortable reflection, and which would be done in dialogue with others.

In my research I have engaged with individuals to try to capture their dramas, to hear and understand their stories. As I spoke with teachers, and to a greater extent when I transcribed the interviews, I was struck by their generosity in sharing personal experiences which they remembered with various feelings of satisfaction, elation, regret or dismay. In my literature review I explored the idea of ‘the self who teaches’ (Palmer, 1998). In conducting the research the significance of this phrase became apparent to me very clearly: I was privileged to explore with teachers the motivations and hopes that had brought them into teaching in the first place, and it was satisfying to hear that they had felt empowered by their participation.

Freire says that teachers and educators ‘have first to get the knowledge about how people know’ (Horton and Freire, 1990:98). This involves learning to understand the way they speak. Then, ‘we have to invent with people the ways for them to go *beyond* their state of thinking’ (Horton and Freire, 1990:98). For those concerned with teacher education and development, the challenge remains to continually seek ‘sophisticated understanding of beginning teacher learning so that they could take student teachers through and beyond the process of socialization’ (Postlethwaite and Haggarty, 2012:279).

## APPENDIX 1: Participants' Consent Form

**University of Exeter: School of Education and Lifelong Learning**  
**Towards Professionalism:**  
**A Study of the Development of Professional Practice in Teachers' Early Careers**  
*[initial working title]*

I am a student at the University of Exeter, and I am conducting interviews for my research into teachers' perceptions of the factors that influence their development of professional practice in the early years of their careers.

During this study, you will be asked to answer some questions on your perceptions of which factors you believe to have been most influential on your professional development. The interview is designed to be approximately an hour in length. However, please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or move on to the next question, whichever you prefer.

All the information will be kept confidential. I will keep the data in a secure place. The data will be stored on computer and on SD card and a transcript of the interview will be made and kept by me. Only I and the faculty supervisors mentioned above *[this biographical data has been removed]* will have access to this information. Upon completion of this research, all data will be destroyed.

### **Participant's Agreement:**

I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation.

The researcher has reviewed with me the ethical procedures which will be followed in the course of the research. I am aware the data will be used in a doctoral thesis that will be publicly available at the Library in the University of Exeter and may be used in future publications. I have the right to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information prior to the submission of the thesis. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to my personal identity unless I specify otherwise. I understand if I say anything that I later wish to retract or alter, I may do so.

If I have any questions about this study or about my rights as a research participant, I am free to contact the researcher or the supervisors (contact information given above) *[information removed]*. I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference.

I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer's signature

## **APPENDIX 2: Participants' biographical data**

Pseudonyms are used for all of the teachers who participated in the research. A total of ten teachers were interviewed. Two of these, Liam and Brendan, were the principal teachers of the selected schools. The schools are situated in the western suburbs of Dublin city, in what is generally described as a relatively affluent area where there is little evidence of educational or economic disadvantage. Both principals had many years' experience as teachers and principals, and in their time as principals of their respective schools, they had seen many NQTs complete probation.

Shauna, Aoife and Ciara taught in Liam's school. All came from middle-class backgrounds in Dublin. They had gone directly from secondary school into colleges of education in Dublin, and all had completed a three-year B.Ed. degree. Ciara's mother was a teacher and is now a school principal. Ciara was the only participant who had a close relative who was a teacher. Susan, Elaine, Fiona, Maura and Niamh taught with Brendan. Maura, from Dublin, and Niamh, who came from the west of Ireland, had also gone directly into a B.Ed. programme having completed secondary education. The other three had all worked for a number of years in other jobs before embarking on courses leading to B.Ed. degrees.

Susan and Elaine went to a college in Dublin, while Fiona went to Limerick. Fiona, a Dubliner, had worked for a telecommunications company after dropping out of Art college, and had decided on a teaching career after a stint in the training department of her company. Elaine went to work in tourism on completing secondary school. Susan had completed a diploma in Montessori education and had then toured with an Irish dance company for five years. Unlike the other participants, each of the three who returned to college as 'mature students' had given up their other careers and had to forego their incomes to spend three years as students.

### APPENDIX 3: Schedule for Teacher on Probation

<b>A. Planning, preparation and recording of progress/Pleanáil, ullmhúchán agus taifead ar an dul chun cinn</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Adequacy of class timetable referenced to the specified minimum weekly time framework</i></li> <li>2. <i>Clarity of teaching objectives, both long-term and short-term</i></li> <li>3. <i>Suitability of objectives: extent of reference to Primary Curriculum (with due regard for its underlying principles) and the School Plan</i></li> <li>4. <i>Range and appropriateness of resources</i></li> <li>5. <i>Provision for differences in pupil abilities</i></li> <li>6. <i>Quality and effectiveness of progress records</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Oiriúnacht tráthchláir an ranga i gcomhthéacs na sain-riachtanas seachtainiúla ó thaobh dáileadh ama de.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Soiléireacht na gcuaspóirí teagaisc, idir fhadthéarmach agus ghearrthréimhseach</i></li> <li>3. <i>Oiriúnacht na gcuaspóirí: an méid a tagraíodh do Curaclam na Bunscoile agus a bhunphrionsabail á gcur san áireamh) agus don Phlean Scoile</i></li> <li>4. <i>Raon agus oiriúnacht acmhainní</i></li> <li>5. <i>Freastal ar chumas difreálach na ndaltaí</i></li> <li>6. <i>Mianach agus éifeacht na dtáifead ar dhul chun cinn</i></li> </ol>
Evidence Statement/Ráiteas fianaise	

<b>B. Classroom Management and Organisation/Eagrú agus bainistíocht an tseomra ranga</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Promotion of good discipline and behaviour</i></li> <li>2. <i>Caring relationship with pupils – use of praise and positive feedback</i></li> <li>3. <i>Overall attractiveness of environment (layout, quality of display including pupils' work, interest centres etc.)</i></li> <li>4. <i>Accessibility and use of resources</i></li> <li>5. <i>Management of SNA support (where appropriate)</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Dea-smacht agus dea-iompar á gcur chun cinn</i></li> <li>2. <i>Gaol comhbhách le daltaí- moladh á úsáid chomh maith le háiseolas dearfa</i></li> <li>3. <i>Tarraingteacht ghinearálta na timpeallachta ( leagan amach, mianach na dtaispeántas, láthair shuime)</i></li> <li>4. <i>Insroichteacht agus úsáid acmhainní</i></li> <li>5. <i>Bainistíocht na cabhrach CRS (más ann di)</i></li> </ol>
Evidence Statement/Ráiteas fianaise	

**C. Quality of Teaching across Curriculum Areas/Cáilíocht na múinteoireachta thar achair an churaclaim**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Variety and suitability of teaching methods-whole class, group or individual learning</i></li><li>2. <i>Match of work to pupil ability with particular reference to attention levels and receptiveness of pupils</i></li><li>3. <i>Communication skills e.g. questioning, explaining, responding, and quality of relationships and interactions between teacher and pupils and pupils with each other</i></li><li>4. <i>Assessment procedures, monitoring and recording of learning</i></li><li>5. <i>Structure and pace of lessons</i></li><li>6. <i>Regard for continuity and progression</i></li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Éagsúlacht agus oiriúnacht na modhanna teagaise – foghlaim mar rang iomlán, mar ghrúpa nó foghlaim aonair</i></li><li>2. <i>Comhoiriúniú na hoibre do chumas na ndaltaí le go háirithe i leith a réitíre agus glacachta</i></li><li>3. <i>Scileanna cumarsáide m.sh. ceistiúchán, míniú, freagairt, agus mianach chaidrimh agus na hidirghníomhaíochta idir an oide agus daltaí agus idir daltaí féin.</i></li><li>4. <i>Modhanna measúnachta, monatóireacht agus taifead na foghlama</i></li><li>5. <i>Struchtúr agus luas na gceachtanna</i></li><li>6. <i>Aire do leanúnachas agus do dhul chun cinn</i></li></ol> |
|---|---|

Evidence Statement/Ráiteas fianaise

**D. Quality of Pupils' Learning in Curriculum Areas/Cáilíocht fhoghlam na ndaltaí**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Extent to which pupils are on task and working purposefully</i></li><li>2. <i>Range and suitability of material covered</i></li><li>3. <i>Pupils' knowledge of subject matter, skills and attitudes</i></li><li>4. <i>Quality of learning outcomes, including written work</i></li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Conas atá na daltaí ar thasc agus ag obair go diongbháilte</i></li><li>2. <i>Raon agus oiriúnacht an ábhair atá clúdaithe</i></li><li>3. <i>Eolas na ndaltaí ar an ábhar agus mianach a scileanna agus a ndearcadh</i></li><li>4. <i>Mianach torthaí na foghlama, an saothar scríofa ina measc</i></li></ol> |
|--|--|

Evidence Statement/Ráiteas fianaise

**E. General Comments and Summary of Advice Given/Ráiteas ginearálta + achoimre den chomhairle a tugadh**

**Signature of Inspector:**  
**Síniú an Chigire:**

(Cigire Ceantair/Roinnchigire)

**Date of final entry/Dáta an iontráil dheireanach:**

**THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE RETAINED IN CASE OF APPEAL  
NÍOR MHIESTE AN DOICIMÉAD SEO A CHOIMEÁD I GCÁS ACHOMHAIRC**

## APPENDIX 4: Interview Schedule

Date:

Teacher 00

*Setting the stage: The purpose of the interview. To explore as much as possible the influences on the development of your professional practice as you feel are relevant.* **Use of two digital recorders – explanation that the interview will be stored for transcription later.**

**Why? What? generally before How? (but main questions should be in a descriptive form)**

*When did you realise you wanted to be a teacher?*

*Why did teaching attract you?*

*Can you tell more about...?*

*Who were the people who you spoke to about becoming a teacher?*

*What advice did you get from ...?*

*Were you encouraged to pursue teaching as a career?*

*Did anyone try to dissuade you?*

*How did you feel then?*

*Do you remember starting your course in the College of Education?*

*Where did you train?*

*What were your first feelings on commencing the course?*

*Do you remember an occasion when you felt that maybe you had made the wrong career choice?*

*How did you feel then?*

*What happened then?*

*Can you think of a time when you felt certain that you had made the correct career choice?*

*What do you remember of how you felt when you got your first teaching job?*

*Since you started teaching, how do you feel you have developed as a teacher?*

*What kinds of things have you consciously done to develop your own practice?*

*Who has helped you?*

*Do you have any further examples?*

*Can you give a more detailed description of what happened?*

*What had you done to create that occasion?*

*What did you do as a result?*

*Further examples*

*Can you give an example of a time when someone gave you practical help or advice which you found useful?*

*Has your idea of teaching changed from your initial view?*

*In what ways (if so)?*

*I have no further questions. Is there anything else you would like to bring up or ask about, before we finish the interview?*

*Informal conversation after the interview.*

## APPENDIX 5: Unedited Transcript (Sample)

**Note:** In this interview, the teacher used the term ‘inspector’ to refer to both her teaching practice supervisor and the DES inspector. For clarity, I have changed ‘inspector’ to ‘supervisor’ where appropriate.

- | <i>Line</i> | <i>Interview</i>  |
|-------------|---|
| 1           | <i>MH: For the purposes of the research, you’re participant number 10, Teacher number 10, and today is the 30<sup>th</sup> of April.<br/>The purpose of the interview, and my purpose here, is to explore as many influences on the development of your professional practice as you think are relevant. The way I would like to approach it is maybe initially starting by looking at your life before you became a teacher and to see if you remember – can you remember – was it an occasion, was it something that happened, any event that inspired you to become a teacher – can you remember the decision being formed, “I would like to become a teacher.”</i>  |
| 2           | <i>Teacher 10: In primary school, all the way up until Fifth Class, I only spoke if it was required of me to speak. If I was asked a question I’d answer it, but friendship-wise, I had one close friend, and other than that, socially I didn’t interact very well and I never put myself forward to join anything that wasn’t school work or academic. Until Sixth Class – I had my first male teacher, and there was just one day – we did work every single day – but one day we had kind of an enjoyable day, where I was ‘on’ in a game where we had to hide something in the classroom. Everyone became involved. There was literally just a moment in that game where I felt he gave me the confidence to speak in front of people, to laugh in front of people and for it to be okay. And to laugh at myself in front of people and I just felt a huge respect for him to be able to do that for me, because I felt I was hard work as a child – I was very contained within myself. After that I came in and I felt – not confident in front of everybody else but in front of him and just within myself. And I asked him – he asked me how I was finding the class and I said I enjoyed when I was praised, but not in front of other people. So he made a point of taking me out if there was anything positive to be said, because I felt I was developing a complex of – you know, if I got ten out of ten in a spelling test, I’d be left standing up by myself, and I didn’t like being pinpointed as that person. So I felt he made changes appropriate to me as a person, and I just finished primary school on a very positive note, whereas, throughout, the whole experience hadn’t been a positive one for me. So I just kind of wanted to be a person like him, not necessarily a teacher, but a person like him. And then through secondary school, meeting similar people, I just thought I’d go in that direction. So that was pretty much where it started.</i> |
| 3           | <i>MH: Initially it started – wanting to be like the personality -</i>  |
| 4           | <i>Teacher 10: The personality.</i>   |
| 5           | <i>MH: - the way the person operated.</i>   |
| 6           | <i>Teacher 10: Yeah.</i>  |
| 7           | <i>MH: When did it crystallise into wanting to become a teacher?</i>  |
| 8           | <i>Teacher 10: Probably around my Leaving Cert – Fifth Year – when we were asked for, you know, hopes for the future, plans for the future, what we wanted to focus on, and we were given a list of things. I looked at a lot of jobs that initially I’d rule out as not being able to influence people in the way that I hoped to. So obviously I went for anything that involved helping somebody, like</i>   |

*teacher, nurse, jobs like that. Around Fifth and Sixth Year I began to concentrate on it more, and then when I asked for direction on it from the teachers who were involved in career guidance, they really, really inspired me, I suppose, just from their own experience, which always seemed to be positive. Anyone I've had seemed to like the job they were in, seemed to enjoy coming into the classroom. I never had – I had one experience in First Year where I thought, "This teacher doesn't want to be here," and it wasn't nice, because you didn't feel like you were wanted in that room. But Fifth and Sixth Year really kind of concrete – Fifth Year I was finding Irish difficult and I made the decision in Fifth year to go for Irish grinds. So, once I set my mind to something, I went for it.*

- 9** *MH: You mention how positive the career guidance teachers had been. Can you give me an example of, or do you remember the particular time where you broached the subject of becoming a primary teacher with any of them?*
- 10** *Teacher 10: It was always the job that was suggested to people – we were always suggested to go for engineering jobs, teachers, something concrete that they thought you'd get, you know, a good pension, and everything was done, more based on money, "You have a good pension. You have stability." That aspect was approached, but not necessarily what you'd personally get out of the job. But when I sat down – we had a one-to-one meeting with our career guidance, and I kind of pushed it that direction, you know, "Do you enjoy being here? Do you stay late after school? Do you come early to school?" I always remember my dad telling me if you look forward and get up early to go to work, then it's always a good sign. If you stay back half an hour and don't resent it, it's a good sign. So I was asking those kind of questions, and again I received all the answers that I wanted to hear. He was someone who was happy in his job so I had the right answers that I wanted to hear for that purpose.*
- 11** *MH: Did you speak to anybody else – you mentioned your dad there? Would your dad have encouraged you or would other people in your family have encouraged you to do teaching?*
- 12** *Teacher 10: My dad always said, "Pick a quiet job that involved no stress and make your life as easy as possible." And I think he felt, because I found Irish difficult, he assumed that I wouldn't get it and he didn't want to encourage me too much in case I was disappointed. My mam was the complete opposite. She – as soon as I mentioned I had an interest – she remembers it from younger than I remember it, but as soon as I mentioned I had an interest, around Fifth Year, she automatically assumed it was going to happen, and automatically assumed everything was going to fall into place and became very proud, which, just seeing the proudness in her before I even did anything in itself, was an encouragement to prove that I could do it. So home was always very supportive all the way. If I had chosen anything else, they would have been just as supportive, but I think teaching always had a higher level of respect than other jobs for my mam and dad's generation. They would look on it – if you managed to become a teacher, then you were doing quite well for yourself. So all relations, once I said that I was thinking about doing it, would be very encouraging.*
- 13** *MH: Apart from your career guidance teacher and people in your family, would there have been anybody else you would have spoken to about -*
- 14** *Teacher 10: My best friend in secondary school – both of us wanted to do it from Fifth Year, and through Fifth and Sixth Year, worked together, studied together, applied to the same college, and then went through and qualified together, so I was surrounded by -*

- 15 *MH: - she's teaching as well?*
- 16 *Teacher 10: Yeah. In St P \_\_\_\_\_'s*
- 17 *MH: Okay.*
- 18 *Teacher 10: So, I think I was surrounded by people who wanted to do well in the same area as me, so it really helped.*
- 19 *MH: Can you elaborate on that a little bit – “surrounded by people” -*
- 20 *Teacher 10: In primary school I was in a class that was quite difficult – I was surrounded by people who didn't want to learn, who didn't want to do well, and I think that's why I probably felt so isolated in the fact that I wanted to, or that I did my homework, but in secondary school, because we were streamed, I was in a class with people who had really high ambitions, and a lot of them – teaching was one of them, and not everyone achieved it, but in the process of doing exams, and homework, I was surrounded by people who were very similar to myself. Any doubts that you'd have, “Oh, I'm not going to get this,” or concern, “Maybe it's not for me,” you'd just have a chat with people who you didn't feel intimidated by, but you could settle any doubts or nerves you may have. So that one girl was brilliant for me. I know both of us together kind of kept ourselves on track. I just found peer support was better than any teacher or guidance counsellor can give you – especially – some of the girls had sisters who were teachers or knew people who had gone through college, and they would ring and let us know how the experience is, whether it's enjoyable, that kind of thing, so I think you can respect your peers a lot more. They're your age group, they don't have any – ulterior motive isn't the right word – they're giving you what they feel for no particular reason, just that's how they feel at the time, and you can take it – you don't have to feel obliged by anything.*
- 21 *MH: - you feel that there's nobody trying to manipulate you or control you.*
- 22 *Teacher 10: Exactly. You know with a career guidance counsellor, you kind of assume, they're in a position, they want you, I always felt, to go a certain way – obviously to make the best of yourself, but sometimes if you'd say, “I might want to do this,” they'd say, “You might not get those points. What about – look here,” rather than, “This is your ambition. Go to that direction.” But peers are the same as yourself, and I was surrounded by very similar people to myself in secondary school.*
- 23 *MH: And that was a positive influence.*
- 24 *Teacher 10: Oh definitely.*
- 25 *MH: Now you mentioned earlier that in First Year you had a negative experience of a teacher. Now you seem not to have let it impact too much on you, but I wonder – if we can speculate for a second – what that might have done, if you had seen more people like that, as opposed to the people that you did meet later on.*
- 26 *Teacher 10: I guess I'd just – looking at that teacher I would assume that her professional life didn't make her any happier in her personal life, because they didn't seem to correlate. She didn't seem like a happy person. I immediately would link your job with personal satisfaction as well though. In here, I think, if you see people with a smile on their face, generally they're happy to be here. In a way she did affect me, in that she came in for Christmas or summer exams – rather than give you a list of topics to study, “You study \_\_\_\_ - some of them may come up, some of them won't – look at the draw, see how well you do, based on what you've learned.” She gave us a summer test and said, “Use the book to answer the questions on your summer test.” Rather than do it in an exam situation, so basically everyone copied information onto the test paper. Everyone did well. Obviously she thought it reflected well on her, and that does*

*affect me when it comes to Drumcondra tests. Just teaching on a day to day basis – not to give answers. I just think it was so wrong, because I worked very hard for that exam, and I got – whether it be 95, 96 percent, but the person beside me who didn't work hard also got 95 or 96 percent, and was given the information. I just – even now I remember the day – I just felt it wasn't fair, whereas now – the exact same thing – I think if children work hard I think their work should reflect how hard they work. I don't think a teacher should influence it or change it, other than, obviously the direction you're meant to give – I don't think you should ever tell a child to rub out work and change it to a right answer. I know some teachers do, especially towards the end of the year and it's not right. I do think she influenced me, but again in a positive way, as to what not to do.*

27 *MH: Almost unknown to herself, or despite what she was doing -*

28 *Teacher 10: She probably did me a favour.*

29 *MH: Okay. Did anyone, among the people that you spoke to – you mentioned how influential your friends were in your decision-making – either among your friends or among teachers, was there anybody who tried to dissuade you from becoming a teacher?*

30 *Teacher 10: Not one person.*

31 *MH: Not one person.*

32 *Teacher 10: Nobody.*

33 *MH: So you had no negative -*

34 *Teacher 10: No. My dad did say to me that it would be a job that I wouldn't be able to leave in the workplace – that it would always affect me, and that I'm a very sensitive person, and he feared I might not be strong enough for it, but he said, "If you feel you are, go for it, but never feel like you have to stay somewhere that you don't feel comfortable." It wasn't necessarily a negative, or trying to persuade me not to do it, but he did have fears about me doing it.*

35 *MH: It was a cautionary -*

36 *Teacher 10: Yeah.*

37 *MH: Do you understand why he would have done that?*

38 *Teacher 10: I do see – and even now, he says it to me if I come home – work does affect me an awful lot – and he can identify it straightaway. "This is what I was talking about." It's literally a daily learning process, how to not form twenty eight relationships that follow with you every hour of the day. I'm getting better, but he could see before I could see how much the job does affect you, but he thinks it's made me stronger, and I do as well, but he was right in what he said in the beginning. I think I've proved myself to him in that I've coped with it, when he didn't think I could. But never any negative remarks about it.*

39 *MH: You've taken steps, such as the grinds you had in Irish to ensure you'd have the minimum qualifications to enter a college of education, and you've completed your Leaving Cert, you got to some stage in August when you realised that you've done very well, and when the places for college were published, you realised that you had a place in-?*

40 *Teacher 10: Coláiste Mhuire, Marino.*

41 *MH: Tell me a little bit about the feeling when you realised that this aim, this goal, this ambition was about to be realised.*

42 *Teacher 10: The Leaving Cert gave me a lot of confidence that I didn't have in myself before. I've always done well in school, but it gave me an added confidence because it was something official. I felt very confident about going to college. I had spoken to a girl who had just completed the three years, and she gave me nothing but a glowing report of the college and I didn't feel nervous. I*

would be an apprehensive person anyway, but I didn't feel nervous – I felt I had proved myself in my exams. Having said that, when I got there I didn't expect such a high standard of work to be expected. But before, in August, the feeling was confidence – just very excited about going. I just saw it as one small step to what I wanted to do. I didn't see it as a three year – I saw it as, "This is the next thing I have to do and then I'll be finished." August was a good feeling. I think the exams did me the world of good.

43 MH: And then you started in college, sometime in September or October?

44 Teacher 10: October.

45 MH: Your first day in college – do you remember it?

46 Teacher 10: Back to feeling like I did in primary school. Straightaway – new people. The girl who was in my class in Leaving Cert sat beside me on the first day of college and I think that's that only thing that kept me stabilised for that first day. Marino did an induction week, so for every day we had different social activities – it's a small college, with three classes – twenty eight in each, so by the end of that day you would know at least ten people quite well, through different games and activities, and you had to do – on the Friday – it was kind of typical of me – you had to do a party piece in front of the whole college – you could do it individually or in a group – and I left and went home at twelve o'clock because that was going to be in the afternoon.

47 MH: You were trying to avoid it.

48 Teacher 10: Avoid it at all cost, because I felt in the limelight, sort of, but that was the only time I've ever run away from anything, and I regret running away – you know, when you go back you hear such a person sang, such a person played an instrument. It sounded like great fun, but I couldn't put myself – normally I would force myself into a situation I don't get comfortable with, but I couldn't force myself to stand up in front of those people. I just was too shy, too nervous, but from then I grew, but I found that week tough. You walk up to people you don't know, introduce yourself. You weren't given any page with ten questions to ask – you go up and you make conversation, and some people were really friendly – they were a mixture of ages, a mixture of personalities, and other people daunted me, who seemed quite professional and well experienced already, even though they were only the same age as myself. That week was tough, and definitely a learning experience and probably – obviously they think – that's the purpose of it I suppose, to make you grow into -

49 MH: - was it worthwhile?

50 Teacher 10: Oh definitely. Definitely.

51 MH: Once you become – established isn't the word, but settled in college – what was it like? What was your experience of college like in the three years?

52 Teacher 10: I'd go back to Marino any day for any course. It was a very family – homely environment. The lecturers didn't appear to be on any higher standing than the students, other than the professional development lecturers. They were very personal – they'd email, you would have mobile numbers to ring over teaching practice, for exams they'd go above and beyond what I'd expect lecturers to do. Everyone was known on a first name basis. If you came in, they'd greet you by your name, you're not just a number. I always felt if anything bad had ever happened, there would be a huge support system, a network there for me. In Second Year, I found Second Year very hard – with exams and personal life – I went up and explained that I was finding it tough – and they were brilliant – people that you normally wouldn't have any dealings with – the higher lecturers and administration staff – everyone was very supportive. So definitely, only pleasant experiences about the whole three years.

- 53 *MH: Was there any occasion during your three years in college when you felt, “Maybe I’ve made the wrong choice here”?*
- 54 *Teacher 10: In Second Year – around November of Second Year, I definitely thought – and I don’t even know what – I know I had a teaching practice in that September where the lecturer put doubt in my mind and said, “Are you sure this is right for you?” That question I’d never asked myself, but when someone else asked me – immediately I doubted myself. I looked at the supervisor as being the person who knew what they were talking about, so I assumed there was a basis for that question. So then I asked myself that question, whereas if I got sixty eight in an assignment instead of the seventy, I would assume that was because I wasn’t good enough to get the seventy, rather than, “I didn’t study hard enough, or if I did I could have reached it.” I just said, “No, this is my ability. This is what I get.” I just think a lot of doubt crept in. In Second Year they just expect a lot more of you than First Year. But then, Third Year – I thrived under pressure – I thrived on having high expectations and I loved to meet it, and if I didn’t meet it I’d ask for something else to prove that I could. But Second Year, I think, there was a big jump, and just that one remark from that one supervisor put doubt.*
- 55 *MH: If you don’t mind I’d like to probe that a little bit more. It obviously touched a nerve?*
- 56 *Teacher 10: Yeah.*
- 57 *MH: Do you want to elaborate a little on what happened?*
- 58 *Teacher 10: I think in my first year, I was here [in this school] and I had a brilliant experience for my first teaching practice, and I got on fabulous with the supervisor, and the supervisor said it to the principal, and I immediately felt really welcome in the field of teaching, more so than just this school. I felt, “Okay, this is for me.” And then, the second time, in September of Second Year, the school wasn’t as comfortable, it wasn’t as welcoming. But that was okay, but it was my school from when I was a child and I think I probably had negative feelings, because I didn’t have a brilliant time in primary school. I probably held a grudge against it, even though I didn’t realise it. So when I went in, I think I had my guard up – I had my defences up. I know now, looking back, that I didn’t let myself become very involved in teaching. I was very stand-offish. The class was the class and I was here, and we didn’t mix, whereas now I see you can’t not let your whole body and soul become involved for that three weeks. That’s who you are.*
- 59 *MH: So do you think the supervisor was justified in what -*
- 60 *Teacher 10: - looking back now I can see where she was coming from. I do think she was harsh in what she said. I think there was a lot of negative focus rather than the positives that were there too.*
- 61 *MH: How might she have handled that situation in a way that would have been more supportive for you?*
- 62 *Teacher 10: I think I can take criticism quite well. I can take constructive criticism. I just feel it wasn’t constructive in how she said it. I felt it came across as an attack. I’ve had criticism in all my teaching practices over different things and I’ve changed them as a result of that, but just the question, “Are you sure it’s for you?” as if I hadn’t considered it properly or – I just took it as a personal attack on me – on my ability rather than, “Okay, this lesson has gone a certain way and let’s change this.” I felt it was me as a person was being -*
- 63 *MH: - undermined?*
- 64 *Teacher 10: - undermined, yeah. I don’t know, I just -*
- 65 *MH: How do you respond to that? How do you recover from that, or what*

restores you after that?

- 66 *Teacher 10: I think the only thing that can restore confidence in your practical teaching is a good experience with practical teaching. And I didn't get that till Third Year. I had an absolutely fabulous Third Year – my final TP was brilliant, my initial one in September was brilliant, which was great, and they go a lot harder on you in Third Year. And I probably worked – pushed myself a lot harder than I would normally do because of the experience in Second Year, but I don't think – words can't change it – someone telling you, "I'm sure it was fine and you'll do better next time." That can't change it. The only thing that can give you confidence is when you walk into a class and – you have to get confidence from everywhere – from the children, how they respond to you – the principal and what he says to you on the final day can give you great encouragement or else cut deep – and obviously the supervisor – what the supervisor says too. So I needed a positive teaching practice to recover from that.*
- 67 *MH: Were you aware going into to final teaching practice that you had something to redress, or that you had something to fix?*
- 68 *Teacher 10: Oh I had a point to prove.*
- 69 *MH: You had a point to prove, so – how were you going to do it? What specifically did you do to prove that point?*
- 70 *Teacher 10: I sat down and looked at my very first one, and I assumed that if I went in for my first teaching practice – I had never taught before and I managed to do a job well enough to get the grade that I got – but there must be something in that teaching practice to take from – to put into my Third Year ones. Then again I looked at all the criticism written on my sheet from my second year and I made a conscious decision to change every single one of them. I became more dramatic, more – I had to change my tone of voice – lots of different things were mentioned, and I worked really, really hard on each of them. But definitely I went in – my notes, my folder has always been my strong point – it's never been an issue – I like to do really comprehensive notes, and I enjoy having a lot of work to look at and saying, "Well yeah. I can be proud of that folder, or I can be proud of this one." It was always just my practical teaching that I didn't have the confidence with, so I basically forced myself to go in and to become a different person – to act confident even though I wasn't, to put myself in situations of singing in front of the class, which I had really big issues with, dancing in front of a class and – I just had to – you have to force yourself to go through the fear barrier, because it's not necessarily, and never usually is as bad as you think it would be, but I had all these walls in my mind that I had to overcome. And I did all of them in my first – the September of Third Year, so by the final teaching practice I felt back in my stride again. I do think that if a teacher had a negative experience in Third Year, that they either wouldn't go on to do their dip, or would postpone doing their diploma, or would just always have a grudge or a chip on their shoulder when it comes to their ability or any criticism they may face from anybody.*
- 71 *MH: I get the feeling from listening to you so, that you have – you'd left college having successfully redressed all the issues that you felt had been pointed out to you as – had been raised as possibly negative factors for you, and you had 'conquered the demons' we'll say, in Third Year.*
- 72 *Teacher 10: Yeah, definitely.*
- 73 *MH: That leads me into my next question – having asked was there an occasion when you felt that teaching wasn't for you – the opposite of that is – a specific occasion when you said, for whatever reason – you were watching something*

*happening in the classroom or you were thinking about something – that the notion appeared in your mind, “This is for me – yes, I’ve made the right choice.”*

**74** *Teacher 10: My final teaching practice was out in St M\_\_\_\_’s estate – you know in I\_\_\_\_\_, and it was a very tough school and I had Sixth Class.*

**75** *MH: Has that school closed?*

**76** *Teacher 10: The boys’ school has closed. I was in the girls’ school. In Sixth Class – it was a small class, but there were two special needs’ assistants and they were both for one child who was quite violent. This girl was taller than me – bleached blonde hair, huge earrings – I went in on my first day – the surrounding area of the school frightened me. The layout of the school – a lot of the windows were all – metal on them – they had a lot of vandalism and things like that. Initially I felt, “Oh, God! I can’t do this,” just when I walked in. I said this was going to be really tough. And then we didn’t know what class we had yet – we walked in and the principal said, “Will you take Sixth Class?” and I said, “Okay, no problem.” I had had them in September and it was fine, so I didn’t worry about the Sixth Class – it was just the nature of the children I had my issues with. I went in – the first two or three days were very difficult. The class teacher always had these two adults with her for this one child, and sometimes had to lend themselves to another child if she reacted badly to anything. There was a certain discipline you had to follow – it wasn’t a normal classroom situation – the children were coming from tough backgrounds that I wasn’t used to – they were more streetwise than I was – and for the first week the teacher said, “Well, we’ll work together to make sure that they react well to you. You can’t be on your own with them in this kind of situation.” But by the second week, I was left on my own for the mornings and a part of the afternoon, where the SNA would even leave as well, just to see how they’d react for when the supervisor would be there. And then on the third week, Irish – they were doing the twenty questions and this girl said – every day she said, “I’m not doing it. I’m not doing it. You can’t make me do it,” and she’d sit there, cross her arms, slouch down on the chair and refused – but by the third week was dying to become involved in it – and the teacher said, “I’ve never seen her react positively to anybody in this school.” And the principal came up and said, “It’s the first time I can feel comfortable to leave her with you on your own.” And even the child said to me, “Teacher, you’re not like a normal teacher.” I felt like I got through – I think it’s because of my age, and I just found a way of getting through to her, and – by that stage I knew I could teach the content of a lesson, I knew I could do my notes to please whoever was going to come and look at them, but I didn’t know if I could deal with a very disadvantaged setting like that, and that girl was the most difficult of many, but by the last day, I just – I had a teacher-pupil relationship with her but I had a friendship with her too – I felt like I broke through the barrier I had of letting myself become involved, but not too involved. That teaching practice I think just – I don’t know – it made me really want to do it. It made me want to work with children like that. It made want to open myself up to not be so judgemental and restricted. I just saw the job as being a good opportunity to change yourself as a person for the better, because you get to meet so many different people. And all of them influence you, and I do think everyone that you teach influences you in a good way rather than in a bad, once you’re strong enough to notice the difference. So that teaching practice and that one child was probably the biggest – the most pride I got out of any class I’ve taught. So I think yeah – that would be it.*

**77** *MH: Obviously a very significant moment for you, you know, that -*

- 78 *Teacher 10: Yeah – you know when you just develop such – you’re so proud of this one child that you don’t really know – you’re there for three weeks – and one child could do it – and then you could teach a class of twenty eight for two years – and for it not to happen, and you feel like – yes, you’re teaching, yes, you’re doing what you’re meant to do and they know what they’re meant to know, but you don’t feel like you’ve really done anything significant. Whereas I think that’s the most important part of teaching – is just to find something, not necessarily for every child, but touch one child at least in a way that will affect them as a person, and for their personality and character to grow as a result of something you said or something you did. So I think that’s more important than anything else.*
- 79 *MH: That’s your final teaching practice.*
- 80 *Teacher 10: Yeah.*
- 81 *MH: And your experience of your college supervisor at that stage – during that time?*
- 82 *Teacher 10: Very positive experience. I had two different supervisors in Third Year and both of them – they were known to be tough, and once I did well with them, I thought I’m okay.*
- 83 *MH: Rolling the clock a little bit further forward. We’re getting very close to your first teaching appointment – you’re still in the same school – tell me a little bit about the process. You saw the job advertised – you heard about it, or -*
- 84 *Teacher 10: My first teaching practice, I was here – I was only seventeen – my supervisor went up to the principal and said, “I would recommend her.”*
- 85 *MH: You did your first teaching practice in this school?*
- 86 *Teacher 10: Yeah. In my very first teaching practice, and she said, “I would recommend for you in the future, if she’s available, to ask her to work here.” So the principal said to me initially, when I was seventeen, “Come back to me in Third Year.” So, I thought nothing of it – I didn’t know any better, so, Second Year I came to the senior school, and he came across to the senior school to ask me how I got on in my teaching practice there, and he said, “Come back to me in Third Year.” So in Third Year, I had to do a special ed. placement, so I came back here, and it literally came from that. So I knew of the job before it was advertised, but I obviously went for interview. It happened that three of the girls from my class in Marino applied at the same time, so we all began together, so it was very – it didn’t seem like a stressful process. I went for other job interviews. I applied everywhere – I got negative letters back, saying, “You haven’t been successful.” I’ve gone for interview – it hasn’t gone anywhere. And then I was offered two jobs, one here and one in I\_\_\_\_\_ after my final teaching practice. Just because of – I had a great experience here, and then the locality as well – it’s close to where I live, so I just obviously accepted here, but no regrets about coming here.*
- 87 *MH: So you already had an experience of the school before you actually went to interview. Do you remember anything of the interview itself that made you feel, “This is coming for me – this is coming my way – this is going well”?*
- 88 *Teacher 10: I found the body language of the people who interviewed me was a very good telltale sign of whether you have any chance or not. I think if it’s relaxed or – just the way they sit, the way they phrase – the tone in which they phrase questions – gives you an idea if you’re answering right or if you’re getting yourself into hot water. Other interviews I’ve gone to have been very – I don’t know – they seem quite rigid in their manner and I don’t think it’s just based on – it could be just their different – the person itself – I just think the principal, if he’s comfortable with you – his body will reflect that, his tone will*

reflect that. Instantly when I go into an interview I can either answer questions well, based on how I feel, how comfortable I feel, or else – when I went for an interview in H\_\_\_\_, I immediately felt very nervous, very tense, because I felt that they weren't comfortable with me, and everything seemed quite rigid. Whereas here was very comfortable and relaxed.

- 89 MH: So their body language was telling you that they were being open to what you were going to say. Was there anything specific about what they were doing, what they were saying and the way they were saying it, in addition to the body language, that made you feel at ease?

Teacher 10: I think when you answer a question and they react with a nod of the head or if they expand on that same question – you know, if you answer a question and they stop it and they go on to the next one, you assume that you haven't said anything there that has interested them, or has made any sort of a difference, whereas if you're stopped – a lady here stopped me and, "Please expand," – I can't remember the question – but "Please tell me why you feel like that, or what made you feel like that," and you feel like they're actually getting to know you rather than listening to you answering a question for the purpose to make up a number, that you actually are of interest to them.

Definitely, more the tone of voice rather than – and how they smile, or if their eyes seem open to you, rather than, you know, "I'm here just in a professional manner, to do an interview and I'm not that interested." They felt – they seemed like they wanted to be there, which helped me.

- 90 MH: You arrive in and it's your first class. Up to now, your experience of teaching has been a guest, on teaching practice, in somebody else's classroom, for a restricted period of time, to be honest, and even if the experience is positive or negative, it's time limited. Now, you get the phone call, "Will you come down here?" or you get the letter, or whatever it was – I'm sure it was a phone call?

- 91 Teacher 10: A phone call.

MH: "You're starting on – whatever day – and well be expecting you." Tell me a little bit about your feelings on the very first morning, facing your own class for the first time.

- 93 Teacher 10: I was petrified – absolutely petrified. Not of the children, but more of the parents. And I was worried about the control I would have over the class, for the first instance when the principal would come in to see how I was getting on. I wanted to know I could settle them, for it to look calm. That was only in the very beginning. Literally after five minutes I felt settled. I just needed them to come in. I needed them to sit down and after that I just felt fine. I just – I felt comfortable – I didn't feel like it was a new thing for me. I guess knowing the school helps, but half an hour before opening the door, shaking, wondering am I wearing the right thing, am I going to do the right thing – how to greet the parents. Should I go out and shake hands, should I stand back? If I go out and shake hands, does it make me too approachable? All the questions that you just don't know, and you've been told different things from different lecturers, and different advice from different teachers, and you just don't know until you actually are there, and you see how you instinctively react. In the end I was stand-offish. I stood and I figured that if they want to come and speak to me, I'll speak to them. I won't put myself out there immediately. The same approach with the children – kept myself very professional – I didn't chat, I didn't smile for a very long time. That way I knew that I had the control that I needed, and then eventually I could melt away a little bit. Nervous and fear up until five past
- 94 nine, but then, really enjoyed it, straightaway.

- 95 *MH: What kind of things did you consciously do from an early stage, to be successful?*
- Teacher 10: I listened a lot. Whether I'm involved in the conversation or not, in the staffroom you can hear twenty-odd people with different experiences – some older, some younger, just starting out – once you listen I think you can learn so much. You can avoid a lot of mistakes just by listening to other people and how they've come through them and changed as a result of them. Listening is really the main thing – I got a lot of advice – some of it I didn't follow – some of it immediately my head said, "No, that's not going to work," so I think follow your heart. Your head is well informed from college and then in school, you're pointed in the right direction. I think control is – and even now I think is the most important thing with any teacher. I just wanted to know I had control over my class, respect from my class, and after that I'd worry about everything else. And I think that my aim for my first month was just to keep everything in place, the way it should be. And everything worked because of that. I think if I didn't have that – if they weren't settled I couldn't have done anything else – it*
- 96 *wouldn't have been a success.*
- 97 *MH: So you spent the first month establishing your authority, establishing a presence.*
- Teacher 10: Discipline I think is the most important thing for September. And I think the rest of the year only went well because of the hard work in the first month. And it's hard, because you want people to like you – you want praise from people but you don't necessarily get it. I'm always told I'm too strict, or the rules suit some children but don't suit others, but I just think you have to – I just found from school as well – if you have guidelines, and they're followed, I think everything else just fits like a jigsaw straightaway. They'll learn if you create an environment that they can learn in, and I've just been in so many classrooms where that isn't the case, and where you're trying to teach, but you've already set yourself a barrier where you can't do it because there's too much noise, too much distraction. I just think calm – I think I want my job to be calm, to be enjoyable, to be relaxed but professional at the same time. The 1<sup>st</sup> of September has to be how you plan to do the rest of your year. So, that's how I*
- 98 *started and I still am the same.*
- 99 *MH: Looking specifically at the first year, how would you see your own professional progression during that time, from the successful student to the successful teacher?*
- Teacher 10: I think it took me time. It took me – I had to do a lot of growing as a response to different incidents that happened. But I don't think I'd change a huge amount during the year in terms of my professional work. I don't think – I think I adapted things, but I don't think at any stage I said, "Okay, I have to be completely different to what I was doing," and I think I started off uncertain, but somewhat sure of what I was doing. And then once I got praise, from, whether it be the principal or resource teachers or parents, or the children themselves, or teachers who'd just come in and out during the day – I knew how to continue or adapt it a little bit – but I think I started off on the right foot, and I just continued on that same – there was never a period through the year where*
- 100 *I felt -*
- 101 *MH: You mentioned that you had to do some growing as a result of certain incidents.*
- 102 *Teacher 10: Yeah.*
- 103 *MH: Can you give me an example of sometime where you were stretched, or encouraged to grow, we'll say, as a result of -*

*Teacher 10: I had a child with severe Downs Syndrome in my class. I just felt – I started to teach at – qualified at twenty, and I had no experience with Downs Syndrome, other than one lecture in college with brief notes – bullet point, A4 page on Downs Syndrome – and suddenly, within two or three weeks, I had occupational therapists and psychologists and a lot of people who I would admire from a distance without even having to speak to them, just from how well they’ve done to be in the position they’re in – and for a collection of those people to be in a room with me – who I felt at that time – I had no standing to even – I can make observations of what I’ve seen, but I didn’t feel my opinion was to be valued, because I didn’t value it myself at that stage and I just felt very – like drowning at stages when I had people asking me questions and all waiting for an answer which I didn’t feel confident in giving, but was in a position where I had to give an answer. I felt a lot of responsibility that I didn’t feel comfortable with initially, and I think that through those kind of meetings I was forced to just, not only grow in confidence, but to go and research things, whereas I could have been lazy and complacent, but I was forced into developing my knowledge in each area, depending on what the issue was with each child. But by the end of the first year, and definitely by the end of the second year I felt more comfortable when a psychologist would knock on my door to say, “Okay, A, B and C,” and not to feel petrified that I’m going to say something wrong, but to feel, “Okay. This is my classroom. This is what I’ve seen,” and hopefully join the two together and hopefully come out with something good at the end. A lot of fear was involved. A lot of doubt, nervousness, embarrassed at some stages, when I couldn’t answer a question that they asked, or felt I was being, not looked down on, but -*

**104** *MH: - patronised.*

*Teacher 10: - patronised, in a way, but I can understand from their position – they’ve gone through so much training – they’ve seen so much, and here’s some twenty year old who doesn’t actually know – and I didn’t know. I can’t blame the training college for not adequately preparing me, because you can’t prepare someone for every eventuality. It’s just impossible, and I think you have to learn through that way. Obviously with a dip inspector and a principal, they can give you more direction than if you were just on your own to find out – it’s not good to learn through mistakes, I think – you definitely need direction in that first year. But I learned through those meetings with really intelligent people, how to approach things differently than I would have done initially. So I learned a lot from that.*

**106** *MH: There’s a lot of learning going on there. In addition to the challenges that were being set for you, having to deal with those situations, were there any supports available to you from within the school or from elsewhere?*

*Teacher 10: I find in the school that there is a big support system, if you go and look for support. I don’t think support comes to you. Then you’re left with this – it’s your first year – you’re doing your dip. Do you want to ask for help and be looked upon as needing help, or do you try and do it by yourself and be quite immature, and think, “I can do this on my own,” and for it to be quite successful at the end. It’s only halfway through where you find a balance between both – not to go and ask for advice on every single thing, but to be able to pinpoint, “Okay, this is important, this is significant. I can’t make this decision on my own.” There are people there that will help you and don’t mind helping you, but they won’t come and knock on your door and say, “Okay, today I’m here to give you advice on this,” so I don’t know if that’s a good or a bad thing. I think some*

**107** *teachers may not be confident enough to go and ask for the help and because of*

*that the year may not be as successful as it would have been. I don't know.*

*MH: So obviously, making the decision about the issues that you're going to seek help on – okay, we can funk it I suppose by saying, “Okay, let's not seek help,” – as you've said – and then suffer the consequences. But, as you've said yourself, we've had to get a balance between getting help in certain areas, not getting help in other ones. How did you decide what were the areas that you felt*

**109** *it was appropriate to seek out help on?*

*Teacher 10: Anything involving special needs education I would always seek advice on. Not so much anymore because I've had experience with different – obviously Downs Syndrome, I would at least have a basis – to know where to start – I wouldn't have to go initially, but if I ever encountered anything got to do with special needs, I would go immediately and ask for help, because I think a week is a long time for a child who has special needs – to leave it a week is wrong – to leave it any longer than a week is just ridiculous. Other things, like behaviour – I think there's different strategies you can try. It's not right to go with problems about behaviour – it could happen every single day – you just have to find a way within yourself to find a discipline strategy that works and obviously it would be different for every child in every class. I can pinpoint immediately – okay, yes it might take me a while, but I can solve this problem, or else – no I'm not able to solve this problem. You kind of know instinctively as a problem arises, whether you're able for it or not, and it's not necessarily that you're not able for it but you might need assistance, and definitely I don't feel comfortable to make a decision on a child in terms of dyslexia, dyspraxia – yes, you'd have an idea, but I don't want to give any definite answers to parents coming in. I'm not experienced enough, so I'd definitely go to the resource team and ask for their opinion – and generally it's the same as my own but I just need*

**110** *that extra -*

**111** *MH: - assurance.*

**112** *Teacher 10: Assurance, yeah.*

*MH: Can you give an example of sometime in your first year teaching where you would have noticed that something you were trying was working extremely*

**113** *well, or had suddenly clicked, or had moved on to a higher level?*

*Teacher 10: I think just working socially with a child who had Asperger's Syndrome. I think – say on the first day of September, he literally couldn't do anything independently. He could do his work, but socially he couldn't become involved in a group situation or work in a group situation. And by the end, the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, his SNA had been withdrawn, and I just think so much work – I was just determined with that one child to make sure – I could see in him that he was able, and I could see he just didn't know what way to go about it. Literally on a weekly basis I would note – an assessment – you'd notice immediately with him, every day was better, every day was stronger for him. Then by May, he said, “I don't think I need help anymore.” And he didn't need help anymore, and he's over now – no SNA, no support and doing really, really well – and I think that kind of - you'd notice as is goes on – obviously academically you can see as you correct work, if a child is progressing or not, but I think again, socially is always the most important thing – to have a happy classroom. By the end of June – I started off with two children in my classroom who weren't happy and by the end of June they were happy. So, I could see that change through the*

**114** *year, which was great.*

**115** *MH: And you had been specifically focused on that.*

*Teacher 10: Especially that one child because of the nature of Asperger's*

**116** *Syndrome. I had to be especially focused on him, and I was delighted by the end*

- of June. His mother, father said, “We didn’t expect this change,” so I think, you just -
- 117 *MH: You mentioned there that parents have come back to you and given you that good feedback. Does that help to affirm you in your role?*
- Teacher 10: I had a very close relationship with all the parents of my last class – not so much this time because of the change in nationality – the culture – they don’t feel, they don’t come up to talk to you as much. I do find with Irish parents, they’re very – if you open your arms to them they will come – and the parents were absolutely brilliant I think. I got my biggest encouragement from them. When in June a parent would say, “Is it okay if ask can you have them next year?” – if you hear things like that you immediately feel, “Okay, well, I’ve done something right.” You may not be able to pinpoint exactly what it was for that child but you know the parent has seen something that they are happy with, so you immediately feel, “Okay, something went according to plan.” So I found the parents were definitely – they see you on a daily basis – they see you – literally how you mark homework, how you respond to their children as they walk in the door, how you deal with any behaviour issues. They see you the day of the Communion, how the class react to you. They are the best judge of you really. Like, a principal can see you ten minutes in a class at most during the day. An inspector might see you three or four days out of the entire year, but*
- 118 *parents literally, along with the kids, see you all the time.*
- MH: So you’d give a lot of weight to the feedback you’d get from those two*
- 119 *sources.*
- 120 *Teacher 10: Yeah. The parents and the children, yeah.*
- MH: You mentioned inspector, you mentioned the principal. They would be other sources of affirmation, critique. Who else – or let’s talk about the other sources – parents, pupils – now let’s talk about the other sources of – is it dialogue, or sources of illumination, we’ll say, on your own practice. The other*
- 121 *people who might be involved.*
- Teacher 10: The only other really would be the most senior teachers in the school. They definitely would be the only ones who would comment on it. Younger teachers, I think – you could think something but you might not necessarily verbalise it – but the most senior teachers would comment if they saw you doing something that they thought was a good idea or if the vice principal would see something happening in the class, she would give you advice on how to approach it, based on what she has had experience with. But there’s not very many senior teachers left in this school. It’s quite a young school, so the younger teachers don’t really comment on each other, or –*
- 122 *there’s a lot of praise but there’s not a lot of critique.*
- MH: How might that be developed? I’m just wondering how that might be*
- 123 *developed.*
- 124 *Teacher 10: I don’t know.*
- MH: The interaction with senior teachers – maybe I’m wrong on this – but that*
- 125 *seems to be informal -*
- 126 *Teacher 10: Oh yeah.*
- 127 *MH: - that if somebody noticed something, then something was offered.*
- Teacher 10: There seems to be a feeling where people are afraid to mention anything, in case they’d step on anybody’s toes, or insult somebody. You don’t want to be seen as one who is commenting on other people when you might not necessarily be doing everything a hundred percent correctly yourself. So people are very stand-offish when it comes to commenting on each others’ work, which*
- 128 *is a pity – I think even within a group – First Class, Second Class, Infants – I*

*think there should be some sort of a – not a monthly, but a termly monthly meet-up to discuss – and at least have a list of what went wrong in your class – where others are, not forced, but encouraged to offer advice on what went wrong. But it's very hard to organise, and people – once they go into their classroom – can become very involved in just staying inside the four walls. There isn't a lot of assessment, after your dip, on what you do day to day, or – yes – cuntais mhíosúla [monthly reports] – I don't know if they reflect properly what you've done through the year. I think there should be something, but I don't know how to go about doing it without – I think it should always be – well, no, it shouldn't always be – but it would always be a senior teacher who would be in charge of something like that. And I don't think it's fair for them to feel under pressure – I would assume you feel the same when an inspector comes into a staffroom or into a classroom – everybody immediately feels nervous, and puts on this – not a front but you go into overdrive and you don't feel comfortable – and I don't think an older member of staff would feel comfortable walking into a class or staffroom if people were going to change how they reacted to them – instead of being comfortable and, “Good morning,” to sitting up straight and trying to speak correctly – this kind of – I do think that's the only barrier. People just feel it'll create issues or create tension in the school, which it shouldn't, but I think it would. I don't know how it could be changed. It would be a good idea if it was changed, but I don't see it happening in the near future. And again, outsiders aren't great either because they can't judge you on a day to day – so it seems to me at the moment a lose-lose situation. Obviously if you put a lot of thought into it, but you'd have to have a very strong personality, willing to – I don't know -*

**129** *MH: - introduce -*

**130** *Teacher 10: Yeah – put oneself into that position.*

*MH: It's trying to find ways of tapping into that expertise in ways that don't make people ill at ease.*

**131**

*Teacher 10: Exactly. That's it. And then you need to have the right personality as well. You don't want a very domineering person to be – or a very righteous person to go around and issue – not ultimatums, but, “You do this and you do this.” You need a balance, or more of a team effort, rather than just one person who's responsible for – not assessment of teachers – but, at least, direction. I think just even – nothing official – bit just be able to have a chat and to voice concerns, and to know that it's okay to have them. I know, with the dip girls, they'll ask us rather than go higher because they feel more comfortable – so it's just to work a way where everyone feels comfortable, and nobody feels like someone is being condescending to them, which is always a fear. It would take a lot of organisation. It would be well worth it, but I don't see anybody in our school at present who would feel comfortable putting themselves in the situation – to be on a team of four to five people – to be involved with that – I don't see anybody willing to put themselves under that amount of pressure. I don't know.*

**132**

*MH: It's an interesting one. It certainly is something that is mentioned in the literature – looking at our practice collaboratively – to seek ways of developing everybody's professionalism. What you've said, in terms of the difficulties in setting it up, reflects also what has been found by people who've thought about, reflected on, and tried to figure out ways of putting such structures in place. Obviously you feel that there is scope or there is a role that colleagues might ideally play in the development of each others' practice. And that might be informed – if I'm interpreting what you're saying correctly – through your positive interactions with senior teachers, and the guidance that you might have received from them. So, my question – who were the people that you would have*

**133**

*spoke to about developing good practice – you’ve answered that one. But in the good advice that they gave you, or the advice that you found helpful, why do you think what they had to say was of use? What was it about either themselves or what they had learned?*

*Teacher 10: It wasn’t always necessarily of use. I think you can always take what someone has to say and take parts of it. I don’t think I’ve ever followed anyone’s advice to the letter. Being her for my teaching practice in First Year, I could see the senior teachers now, in classrooms, but they’re not anymore – they’re in language teaching – but in classrooms I could see them at the time – and a lot of the advice, or the people I would ask for advice now, are the ones whose classrooms I was in and felt it was very well organised, very well run and they seemed very respected in this community – if you’re out in restaurants, and people ask, “Is such a teacher still there? Oh, brilliant!” And you hear recommendations from other people who you don’t really know, but from years ago, of their experience here, rather than judging them – to look at them now – you don’t know who to listen to, who not to listen to – what advice to take and what not. You can only judge on what your instincts are, and people give you information. Some information I’ve taken and some I haven’t, but it’s best to ask a variety of people and take pieces from each person’s advice, rather than to*

**134** *rely on one person.*

**135** *MH: When you’re deciding what to take and what not to take, how do you filter that?*

*Teacher 10: I just trust my gut instinct. In college you’re told what to do. I don’t think it’s necessarily realistic to the classroom environment now, with the mixture of children we have. I just join that together with what they tell me what has worked and what hasn’t worked. But also, I think young teachers, the last two or three years, have a very good idea, because with the new curriculum, I know a lot of the senior teachers here would ask us, “We aren’t trained in the curriculum. Inservice days were helpful but we don’t have a good idea – as good an idea as you would have,” and they come to us. You kind of just pull advice from experienced younger teachers and then the senior teachers – more about management. And then college – you just kind of pool it all together. Sometimes when someone says something to you, instinctively you know that’s not going to work in my situation. You just know. Before you start teaching you don’t know. It’s only when you’re in a classroom and you know your class – straightaway, if you read in a book – if you’re researching something – well I could discard that straightaway, that wouldn’t work. Other things you’re not so sure about, you can try, and they’ll either fail or succeed. And then, other people give you ideas where [clicks fingers] straightaway you say, “Yeah! I can see success written all over it.” So you just have to – I think – trust yourself. Not trust yourself in the sense to stick with what you think and that’s it, but definitely pull from senior teachers, younger teachers and always taking from what you’ve learned in college is the best way to go. I think it would be poor to rely on one senior teacher because people get into bad habits and become complacent – and again, they were trained in a different curriculum to us. They say themselves they wouldn’t feel as confident teaching drama or any of the arts as we would feel, so I think you just have to pull everyone together to see what*

**136** *suits you and what doesn’t.*

**137** *MH: Can you think of an occasion with your pupils where things were humming – a lesson where you just found yourself saying, “Wow! This is happening even better than I had hoped?”*

**138** *Teacher 10: Probably last week. I was only doing renaming in addition – tens*

*and units – and it was something I had put off. I didn't want to start too soon because in my dip year I was kind of – you want to do everything straightaway – timing was always an issue with us – we all planned together but it was probably not the best idea – there were three First Classes and we were all dip students – we planned together but we had no experience to pull from – so I probably made mistakes and rushed things in that first year, whereas this year, I really did a lot of build-up work. So last week when I did renaming I thought it would take a lot longer than it took. They understood quite quickly, which I didn't expect. That's where you can see it's good where you do the cycle again. I did First and Second Class, now back again. I do think it's better. I did a much better job this time and I avoided a lot of the mistakes I made the first time around. That's just one example of many where you know what works, what doesn't, what pace to go at, and just how to phrase things as well. In my first year I probably did lessons that did not work with how I explained things, whereas I've changed, based on what worked with my last class.*

**139** *MH: So you continually evaluate the effectiveness of lessons.*

*Teacher 10: Oh, yeah. I think every year your mistakes make you a better teacher the following year. Definitely. You have to pay attention and evaluate yourself. You have to not say, "Oh, the child didn't learn that. He didn't pay attention, or he has difficulty with it." You have to critique yourself and say, "Maybe I didn't teach it the way I should have. Maybe I didn't explain it the way I should have. Maybe the vocabulary wasn't suitable for that child." I think it's very easy to say a class is weak, when it's quite possibly not the case at all, so I think repeating cycles is a really good idea.*

**141** *MH: How do you think your pupils see you?*

*Teacher 10: This year different to last year. Initially – I do think I come across as a warm but strict person. I'm firm. I do think they think I'm fair. I always try and rationalise and explain to them every decision I make. We were always told in college – one example – not to open a window if you're hot – you're not the most important person in that room – ask the children are they hot – and it was just something that stuck with me. I always try to have a friendship with all of them by June, but not before December. I kind of work it like that. Strict but*

**142** *fair, I would hope.*

**143** *MH: Are there any ways in which you would like them to see you differently?*

**144** *Teacher 10: No. I don't think so. No.*

**145** *MH: You feel you've got an appropriate balance.*

*Teacher 10: I do think so. Sometimes parents can come in and say, "I feel you're too lenient with my child." – "You're too strict with my child," and all of that can tilt you one way or the other but I feel generally I've found a balance. My first year – I was too friendly by the end of it, which this time – now I know not to do that. But I'm happy with the balance I have. I don't think I'm swaying*

**146** *one way or the other.*

**147** *MH: Has your idea of teaching changed from your initial view?*

*Teacher 10: I see it as a much more important job than I did in the beginning, and a much more influential job. I didn't think that – I always felt school could influence you – but I didn't think – me – what I say, what I do – the smallest action – can have such an effect. And not just on parents, but through parent-teacher meetings, one of which went on for forty five minutes – where a parent broke down – I didn't realise the nitty-gritty part of teaching. There's a lot of psychology involved in it, that I didn't think before. It's a much more enjoyable job than I would have ever hoped it to be. I get a lot from it that I didn't think I*

**148** *would, and I just think that when I walk from the staffroom to my classroom at*

*none o'clock every morning, or five to nine, I feel very proud – I feel very – every day I feel very excited and interested and motivated. I don't see it getting any less – it grows with every day because I feel like I'm finding my feet a little bit more.*

**149** *MH: A huge change from your initial perception.*

*Teacher 10: Yeah. I just have to – I feel a good sense of pride in myself when I think of primary school – when I couldn't interact – and I just feel so much more confident in myself – and I can give the children in my class who normally would go missing – who you could go home and not think about – it's those children that make an effect on me because – that was me. There's a child in my class now whose parent is very concerned and I just have to say to her, "That was me. You just have to give that child time to come into his own, but just not worry, not fret," I just love that side of it. It's a very rewarding job. Every time you go to the shopping centre you'll meet somebody who is happy to see you. You'll meet somebody who is thanking you for a very small thing that you might not have realised you did or said. And obviously you have issues. The Friday before the mid-term I had a parent – I had a very aggressive parent, who can influence you in a bad way – for two weeks I felt afraid, or upset about coming back – but once I'm back in my classroom I feel confident, but when I'm outside – when I'm at home and I think about it, I doubt myself, but within the walls of my classroom – within the school building, I feel very confident in the position I'm in. I feel like I deserve to be there, which – even now when I go home – I'll doubt myself over different things – but once I'm back in I'll say, "No. It was the right decision to make." So I think even just the building itself can give you*

**150** *a huge amount of inspiration.*

*MH: Without wanting to probe the specifics of your negative experience with that parent, what do you think were the reasons for that occurrence, in general terms.*

**151**

*Teacher 10: Basically it was issues that arise with the children being collected - and certain guidelines were written out in September – "My child is to walk out to the car every day to meet me" – signed by the parent and that was fine – and every day from September and suddenly – this is where you have to be quite confident and assertive as a teacher or you'd be walked over quite easily – parents I've never met before – a father I'd never met before – arrived, deciding he was going to take this child. And you're left in a position where you have to make a decision instantly as to whether you're going to allow this child to go or you're not going to allow this child to go. You're trying to think – to college – legally, what should I do – policy of the school, what should I do – what result can happen with each decision I make and you have to make that – literally in a millisecond, and know your decision is going to have a lot of consequences. Now, thank God, I made the right decision at the time, but obviously, a huge argument ensued when the child wasn't allowed to go. But there's a huge support network in the school if that happens – parents are called in – apologies are written – this kind of – but you have to be a very strong person to be able for that. Luckily I didn't have it in my first year – I wouldn't have been strong enough to stand there and not to break down and not to show weakness, and I don't think it's right to show parents that they have the power to affect you in that way. But I did go home – I did feel shaken – I did get upset – and I felt, "I'm too young to be in this job. People don't respect me like they would if I was older." And you do have moments like that, but then you go back in and you say, "No. Well, this child can read – and he couldn't months ago. This child*

**152** *can do such a thing." And like the child who went to the senior school – that*

*child doesn't need any support, such as an SNA anymore, so you just have to try find a balance and rationalise things in your head. The positives definitely outweigh the negatives. There are very few incidents – that was one extreme – but unless you're a confident person, I think it could wear you down – I think you could become quite stressed. And it's not right that parents are allowed to have that sort of contact with you, but I think the nature of the junior school – it happens.*

**153** *MH: I'm just wondering, how could we protect teachers – protect isn't the word – but how could we minimise the negative impacts of such interactions?*

*Teacher 10: I think there should be just a straight ban on teacher-parent contact that isn't planned for through an office. I think if there's something important enough to say, and if a parent really feels they should say it, they should be made – like a meeting, and done that way. I think especially with young teachers – they feel, "Okay, I may be able to just knock on the door at ten past nine and interrupt a lesson. I may be able to jump in at twelve o'clock and have a chat." They would not do that with a senior teacher – they just wouldn't – so I think it's just to have, across the board, one rule – "No. It's not allowed." And to have outside doors – I know, fire safety – they shouldn't be open, I don't think, during class time, because that's where parents – they don't even knock, they just open the door and waltz in. And you can tell them not to and be assertive – which I do – and to go to the office – but it's still that interruption for that thirty seconds where the lesson stops – and that's only one out of twenty eight parents. So I think there just has to be – to help the younger teachers who are just starting – parents should be told straight, "No. You're not allowed to come in and interrupt." I think parents don't respect teachers like they used to. I don't think they respect the lesson – if they knock on the door they don't think that the lesson is important enough to leave alone. So I think the respect issue is a huge one. I don't think there is any anymore. It's very hard to expect children to have respect for you when the parents don't. Obviously, age comes into it. I think how you speak to them, the tone of voice you use can – I think the first day in September if you're very assertive with parents, they'll respect you from then on – and they'll know – they'll try to push buttons when they can – but it's up to you to put that barrier down and say, "No, you cannot cross that." But not everyone is able to. There are teachers here who will still be chatting to parents at half three because the parents want to chat, whereas I don't think there should be that kind of a relationship. I don't think parents should come in at ten to nine to find out how your evening was. I think there should be very professional – and I think the line is very blurry, lately – in the last few years –*

**154** *of where that should be.*

*MH: How to let parents know that you're welcoming of them, but at the same time, how there must be – as you said – respect – they must have respect for the*

**155** *school timetable and class timetables.*

*Teacher 10: Exactly. It's very hard to get a balance of both. But I think a school policy is all that's needed, because you need to be able to back up what you say. You know, if I say to a parent who knocks on the door at five past nine, "No, it's a school policy to go and make an appointment to come and see me," I have nothing on paper to show them that, and they think that I'm making decisions that suit myself. So it has to be a very detailed, structured school policy which everybody follows, no matter – even if you think the parent is just going to say something quick – it has to be followed rigidly, or else people can take*

**156** *advantage.*

**157** *MH: Thank you. We've been talking for an hour and eighteen minutes.*

**158** *Teacher 10: Really?*

**159** *MH: You've been doing most of that! I've no further questions.*

**160** *Teacher 10: Is that okay?*

*MH: Is there anything I haven't touched on that's been a significant or even any kind of contributory factor to what has made you the professional that you now are, and has been recognised as such, other than the things we've already*

**161** *discussed?*

**162** *Teacher 10: No, I don't think so.*

*MH: What we'll do is – I'll come back to you in due course with the transcript and we'll be able to review it and we'll see if there are any other things at that*

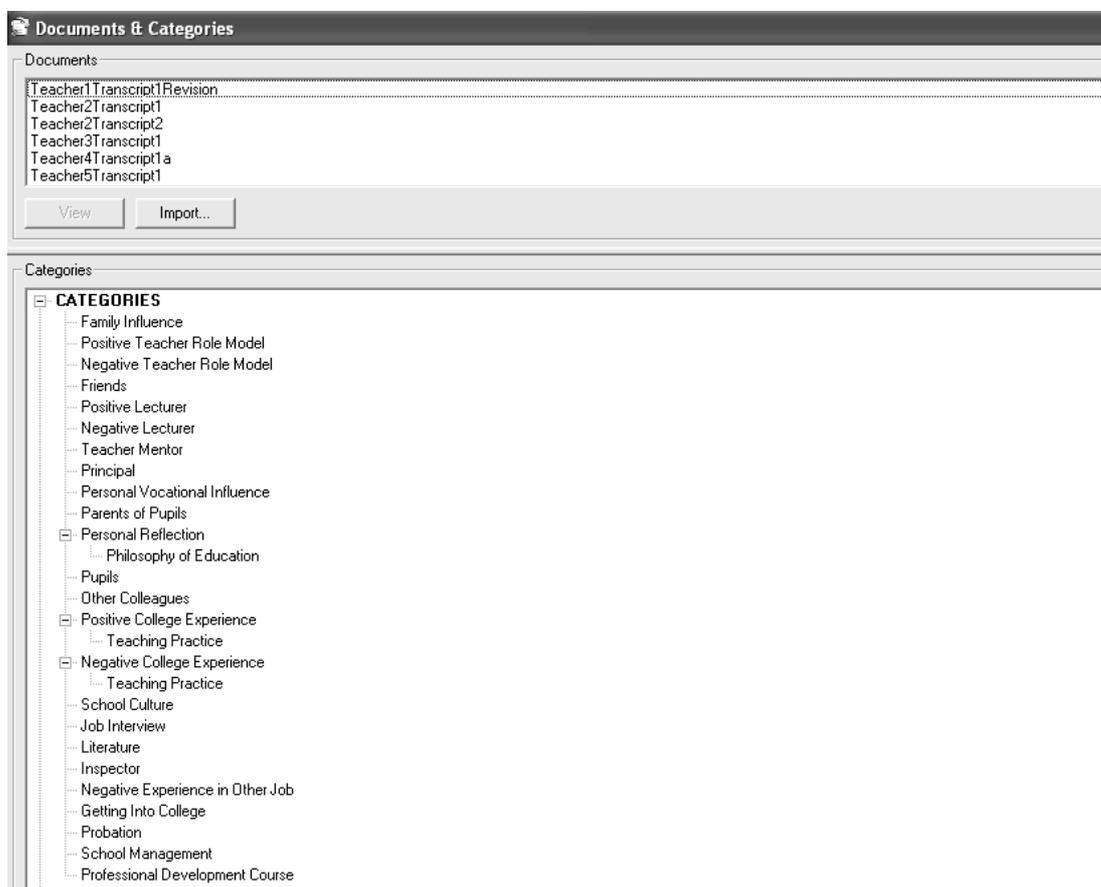
**163** *stage that we might like to include.*

**164** *Teacher 10: Yeah.*

**165** *MH: Thank you very, very much.*

## APPENDIX 6: Example of coded transcripts

WEFT QDA user interface Showing categories and links to transcripts:



**Extract from WEFT QDA output showing how participants' responses were categorised:**

### **Biography: Family Influence**

**Shauna** But when I sat down – we had a one- to-one meeting with our career guidance, and I kind of pushed it that direction, you know, “Do you enjoy being here? Do you stay late after school? Do you come early to school?” I always remember my dad telling me if you look forward and get up early to go to work, then it’s always a good sign. If you stay back half an hour and don’t resent it, it’s a good sign. So I was asking those kind of questions, and again I received all the answers that I wanted to hear. He was someone who was happy in his job so I had the right answers that I wanted to hear for that purpose.

**Shauna** My dad always said, “Pick a quiet job that involved no stress and make your life as easy as possible.” And I think he felt, because I found Irish difficult, he assumed that I wouldn’t get it and he didn’t want to encourage me too much in case I was disappointed. My mam was the complete opposite. She – as soon as I mentioned I had an interest – she remembers it from younger than I remember it, but as soon as I mentioned I had an interest, around Fifth Year, she automatically assumed it was going

to happen, and automatically assumed everything was going to fall into place and became very proud, which, just seeing the proudness in her before I even did anything in itself, was an encouragement to prove that I could do it. So home was always very supportive all the way. If I had chosen anything else, they would have been just as supportive, but I think teaching always had a higher level of respect than other jobs for my mam and dad's generation. They would look on it – if you managed to become a teacher, then you were doing quite well for yourself.

**Shauna** My dad did say to me that it would be a job that I wouldn't be able to leave in the workplace – that it would always affect me, and that I'm a very sensitive person, and he feared I might not be strong enough for it, but he said, "If you feel you are, go for it, but never feel like you have to stay somewhere that you don't feel comfortable." It wasn't necessarily a negative, or trying to persuade me not to do it, but he did have fears about me doing it.

**Shauna** I do see – and even now, he says it to me if I come home – work does affect me an awful lot – and he can identify it straightaway. "This is what I was talking about." It's literally a daily learning process, how to not form twenty eight relationships that follow with you every hour of the day. I'm getting better, but he could see before I could see how much the job does affect you, but he thinks it's made me stronger, and I do as well, but he was right in what he said in the beginning. I think I've proved myself to him in that I've coped with it, when he didn't think I could. But never any negative remarks about it.

**Aoife** I think actually from quite a young age – that I realised. And then, in secondary school, I suppose I looked at different options, different careers, and then I did my teaching practice and I just really felt it was for me.

**Aoife** My family, definitely. Em, sure they listen to me talking about school twent- you know, when you're coming home and telling stories and that, and - they would have definitely encouraged me and you know since, like, most definitely.

**Ciara** Em, my mother's a teacher, and the day before the "change of mind" form - I had originally put down Science - the day before the change of mind, I said "Maybe I should just put down teaching and see how it goes. So it was a bit of a chance thing, but I'm very happy that I did it. It was one of those moments in my life that I think it was - a good choice.

**Ciara** Well as a teacher herself, she ehm, there were plenty of her colleagues that were willing to offer advice. It wasn't so much whether I should be a teacher, more what college did I go to at that stage? Because I'd thought about it. Now, my mam is great for that type of advice, but career wise, my dad would be the one that I'd turn to. He'd, he's a real working, he's got a great work ethic and attitude and he knew himself that teaching would suit me. He's, he's a great judge of character, of all, of all of my siblings and myself. So I asked a lot of advice of him. He helped me with the CAO and everything.

**Ciara** My sister said that - she's older than me - and she would have a fair influence on my life, but she thought that, in doing teaching, it, I suppose she thought "you're just going to turn into Mam. You'll be the same as her. You'll probably end up teaching in her school and doing the same thing as she does".

**Ciara** But I don't think she realised that it really did suit me. She's, she's a dentist herself, and she'd be very, brains to burn I suppose, plenty of ehm, she'd be quite a professional person and would be interested in really having a professional approach to things, whereas I'd be much more hands-on, you know, sleeves up. I'd be far more patient than her when it comes to kids. She even still says, you know "you made the

right choice, but I could never do it. I don't have the patience as a lot of people do" But she was the only person who kind of said, "Are you sure?". She'd never stop me from doing something I wanted to but she was, as well as that, she was more about having the college experience. She always said "Why don't you do an Arts degree? Get the college experience that you mightn't get in, in a teacher- training college, and ehm, then go back and do teaching if you want".

**Ciara** It was good to have, I suppose, the debate that we did have at the time but, it just set me straight on, on just how much, I suppose I wanted to do it.

**Ciara** Ehm, what I often feel is, you know, I don't think she realised that we're quite different. We're quite different in ways and we'd have different interests and different hobbies and that type of thing. But I, as I said, it reaffirms my decision. I, it, it made me think about it more, about whether teaching would be right for me and if I was making, making the right choice, and it really did. I was happy almost that she had done that because then I knew, well this is what I want to do and I'm going to do it properly now and I'll, I'll put everything into it. And if I, I don't get the college experience, which I actually did - the college was great fun - I said there'd be plenty of time outside of college, to do other things or whatever,

**Ciara** I'd say in a way now she can see that perhaps I'm ehm, maybe I did make the right, the right choice. I have the, well as she calls it, the easy hours and the summers off and that. She does completely understand that, the amount of work that goes into it, with planning and preparation and after school work and even summer work as well. You know, there's no stop to teaching as some people might say, but, ehm, I suppose it's like she says: she didn't have the patience. I had her in la- at one stage to do work with the kids, because as a dentist I had her in with healthy teeth and that, and at the end of the day she said, "Hats off. It seems like your cup of tea. I couldn't do it myself." So, it proved to me, and to her, that while she challenged me on it, that I'd picked the right, I had made the right decision, as did she, you know. It suits certain people.

**Ciara** As I've mentioned before, my mother is a teacher. She's actually a principal now and I get quite a lot of advice from her, quite a lot of help. She really – she knows the run of things, I suppose, she's been round the block and she's great to give advice, especially around managing children.

**Fiona** There was a huge emphasis on education in my house because my mum and dad, due to their social standing – I don't know if that's the proper word – came from a time where they weren't able to go to secondary school. My father was working when he was thirteen and my mum was working from when she was twelve. So they wanted us to do better in life and not to have to struggle as much as them. So that's initially where it came from in regards to education. Everything was put into education even more so than hobbies or anything like that. Other people would be going into that – school was our thing.

**Fiona** I've an older sister and a younger sister and surprisingly enough the younger teacher became a secondary school teacher as well.

**Fiona** And the older sister didn't, but to be honest she's not spoken of as much as the two of us, which shows you even now – mam and dad – not that they're more proud of us, but in a way the education is still a huge thing for them.

**Fiona** Everything was about us and about our education, making sure that the right schools were picked and that everything we had in regards to helping the teachers or having your books or just helping in any way. Any help we needed – grinds, or mam and dad would sit down and do our homework with us. In every sense everything was in regards to helping us to get a good education.

**Fiona** To be honest with you I was very, very proud of myself. I was really excited starting off, and also to know, of course my mum and dad would have been proud whatever I would have done, but to know that – my mum never stops talking about it – as soon as she meets someone she says, “Well, my daughter is a primary school teacher”. She’s so chuffed. It’s nice to know and as well as that mam and dad know that I’m in a job that I’m secure in. Mam and dad would have always – that’s what they were worried about when I was leaving Eircom, because the pay was so good and it was a very reputable company, and there were great opportunities in the job as well, and I was doing very well and I was very professional and all the rest – they were very happy that I was starting, and starting off in a good school.

**Fiona** I just think experience speaks it all. I just think they have – they just have more experience than me and an awful lot of them have children of their own – they’re parents. Last year, very funny, I would have always gone to my mum and say “Mum, they’re doing this in school. What does that mean?” And my mum would have an input, even though she’s not a teacher, but she brought up us and she brought up her own family, because my grandparents – whatever – weren’t around, so she just have experience of children, so I would have put her knowledge of children above mine.

**Fiona** It would have been personal with mam and dad, in the way in which they brought me up. I was very lucky in that sense.

**Maura** I was never one of these people who always wanted to be a teacher. I never really thought much about it and it was only then in my Leaving Cert year and I was filling out the CAO, and I was filling it out with my dad. We were talking about it, and I would have always been kind of Mathsy? – numbers kind of thing so I was looking at accountancy. I had accountancy down – my first two – and my dad said, “What about teaching? Would you consider teaching?” So we talked about it and that was when I first started thinking about it

**Maura** I think everyone’s parents are important to them but I’d listen to everything my parents had to say. I think at the time – I don’t know did he feel that I’d be suited to it or what, but he thought that maybe I would like teaching, because he does think it is a nice career. Although his attitude has changed to it even since I’ve started teaching – he sees more that it is a lot harder than he thought at the time.

**Maura** Sometimes I talk to my parents but then they kind of annoy me because they don’t – you know, mum would say something like – it’s been a long time since they were in school and they were used to the – well, there was no corporal punishment in my mum’s school, but I know dad’s school was very bad laughs . Mum would be like, “Can’t you just put them standing in the corner and ignore them for the day, and I’m like, “No, I can’t.” So I don’t really – I used to talk to them about it but now I don’t because it just annoys me, what I get back.

**Maura** Dad would often say, “I notice you’re very tired today. How did school go?” And I’d say, “It was hard – I had a bad day today” or whatever. They weren’t really listening, and I suppose it’s kind of, even now I just feel that he doesn’t really know what he’s talking about, so I wouldn’t place huge value on what I’d get back.

**Niamh** Well, my older sister is a teacher now. She trained before me, but there’s no real history of teaching really.

**Niamh** I did apply for secondary school teaching as first. I was going to go for biology and home economics teaching at home, but I kind of knew I wanted to be a primary teacher, at the same time. I was chopping and changing and I remember talking to my mum about it, talking to my friends about it.

**Niamh** I remember I knew the code of the course – it was P and I was waiting to read it – I was screaming and yelping and I just remember my mum was just so proud of me, and my dad, because my sister trained in England. She did the – she went to St Pat’s as well but she did Arts and then she went to England. Mum didn’t want me to go away as well when she knew that I wanted to be a teacher, so she was really happy that I could train in Dublin.

**Niamh** It was hard being away. That’s what I found hard at first – being away from home, and I’d just be really close to my family. I put them as the main reason I got through college - they just supported me so well.

**Niamh** There was a guidance counsellor, but I didn’t really – I felt sometimes she’d be like, “Oh, there’s no point in you worrying about that,” because, you know, she’d kind of be directing you in the way that she’d think that what you were going to get, whereas I had my own views on – like, a lot of people felt they couldn’t really talk to her because she was saying, “I think you should do this,” whereas you actually wanted to do your own thing. So, I suppose my guidance counsellor was my dad.

**Niamh** So encouraging. He’s like, he’s just so level-headed about everything, do you know? In First Year in college when I was really sick and whatever, just really not – didn’t want to be there anymore – just because I was lonely and all that – I’d just be talking to him about it and he’d just say nothing was worth it. He just got me through so much, and I know I went back to college again

**Niamh** I just remember there was an issue – one of them had said when I was in college that I didn’t want to be around them any more because I was training to be a teacher and they were only doing Business in the IT or something. She was – I don’t know where that came from at all, because I would never have been like that. I think it was the fact that I was away in Dublin and they were still at home. I was able to talk to some of them about it, but not really – it was more my family, my sisters.

**Niamh** I just think it was an awful lot of learning and staying calm and talking to my dad. He’s so calm headed and was like, “Well, nothing’s worth your health or getting stressed over.” It’s so true – you have to listen to those things. I’ve seen, going into Third Year exams, some of my friends sick, up all night and all that – which I probably would have done in First Year, because I didn’t know where my head was – I was just all over the place.

**Niamh** And then my sister had just done her dip year the year before me. I think everything contributed to it. Plus my dad being – and my mum – you know “work is work” and I still needed a break.

**Niamh** My younger sister as well – I’m really close to her – she would probably be – I’m really close to her. So if there was something that was really bothering me or something that was really – I’d probably tell her first, because there’s only a year between the two of us, so we’re really close, and we share a room at home. Really close, and she’s not in teaching – she’s in nursing so she’s different. You know – she’d be telling me about nursing – she was really upset yesterday because one of the patients – she’s only in her final year – she was out on placement – and she was really upset about one of the patients who had to go into the surgery and he mightn’t make it. I don’t mind listening to that but sometimes when people are talking too much about school, I know how annoying that can be, sometimes, so I don’t like to talk about it too much either. But I would tell her about certain things.

**Susan** A first cousin of mine is a teacher but we actually wouldn’t know each other that well at all, so there wouldn’t be an influence there. It’s obviously in the family

somewhere. She's a principal in my local school at home now, but when I was living at home she wasn't at home so I'd never really have got to know her.

**Susan** At the time, my family wouldn't have known. One sister – and I'm from a family of nine, so I kept it from eight of them – mainly because I wanted to get away from it when I came down to T\_\_\_\_\_. I didn't want to be asked, "How are you getting on? Are you studying? Did you hear from your interview yet?" I actually wanted a break from it. A boyfriend at the time, who was a teacher, and he was fluent in Irish, would have been – we would have been living in C\_\_\_\_\_ at the time when I started applying, and it would have been him that would have pushed. He would constantly have had the attitude, "Of course you're able. Why wouldn't you be? You're fine." I suppose he eventually put the final push on it to actually apply and do it, and then once I'd applied, it was too late to pull out.

**Susan** I'd never pull out. If I start something I have to finish it, even if I finish it and don't succeed. I'll have to finish it and try. So, yeah – a boyfriend, a sister, and other than that – family – no they didn't. And it wasn't for any bad or negative reason. It was more for me, for space.

### **Positive Teacher Role Model**

**Shauna** In primary school, all the way up until Fifth Class, I only spoke if it was required of me to speak. If I was asked a question I'd answer it, but friendship-wise, I had one close friend, and other than that, socially I didn't interact very well and I never put myself forward to join anything that wasn't school work or academic. Until Sixth Class – I had my first male teacher, and there was just one day – we did work every single day – but one day we had kind of an enjoyable day, where I was 'on' in a game where we had to hide something in the classroom. Everyone became involved. There was literally just a moment in that game where I felt he gave me the confidence to speak in front of people, to laugh in front of people and for it to be okay. And to laugh at myself in front of people and I just felt a huge respect for him to be able to do that for me, because I felt I was hard work as a child – I was very contained within myself.

**Shauna** After that I came in and I felt – not confident in front of everybody else but in front of him and just within myself. And I asked him – he asked me how I was finding the class and I said I enjoyed when I was praised, but not in front of other people. So he made a point of taking me out if there was anything positive to be said, because I felt I was developing a complex of – you know, if I got ten out of ten in a spelling test, I'd be left standing up by myself, and I didn't like being pinpointed as that person. So I felt he made changes appropriate to me as a person, and I just finished primary school on a very positive note, whereas, throughout, the whole experience hadn't been a positive one for me. So I just kind of wanted to be a person like him, not necessarily a teacher, but a person like him. And then through secondary school, meeting similar people, I just thought I'd go in that direction. So that was pretty much where it started.

**Shauna** I looked at a lot of jobs that initially I'd rule out as not being able to influence people in the way that I hoped to. So obviously I went for anything that involved helping somebody, like teacher, nurse, jobs like that. Around Fifth and Sixth Year I began to concentrate on it more, and then when I asked for direction on it from the teachers who were involved in career guidance, they really, really inspired me, I suppose, just from their own experience, which always seemed to be positive. Anyone I've had seemed to like the job they were in, seemed to enjoy coming into the classroom.

**Shauna** It was always the job that was suggested to people – we were always suggested to go for engineering jobs, teachers, something concrete that they thought you'd get, you know, a good pension, and everything was done, more based on money, "You have a good pension. You have stability." That aspect was approached, but not necessarily what you'd personally get out of the job.

**Shauna** But when I sat down – we had a one- to-one meeting with our career guidance, and I kind of pushed it that direction, you know, "Do you enjoy being here? Do you stay late after school? Do you come early to school?" I always remember my dad telling me if you look forward and get up early to go to work, then it's always a good sign. If you stay back half an hour and don't resent it, it's a good sign. So I was asking those kind of questions, and again I received all the answers that I wanted to hear. He was someone who was happy in his job so I had the right answers that I wanted to hear for that purpose.

**Aoife** I had a secondary school teacher who I thought was particularly good and who I got to know well and I had spoke to her and she you know, you ask people, you know, "What do you really like? Do you get a lot out of your job?" And I remember speaking to her, my German teacher and I just thought she was excellent and she just influenced me a lot. When I started off she just had a very, she had a high expectation for us all and I just think, she, that's, I just thought she was such a good teacher, that I was like, I, yeah, I aspired to definitely be like that. Her expectations were very high, but they were always met because she, she put the work in as well and I think vice versa, the children, like we put the work in and she just came out tops and I genuinely feel, ok, like ability, but she really brought us on so much and she had a love for it definitely.

**Ciara** I suppose in secondary school, around 5th Year, 6th Year, we had quite a good career guidance and quite a lot of information available about possible careers and from day one, when I started the career meetings, the counsellor, who happened to be my favourite teacher, always said, "You should be a teacher". She said, "You have everything that a teacher needs - you enjoy most subjects, you'd really fit the job perfectly", and I kinda, it, it went to the back of my head.

**Ciara** it was probably based on her advice, based on the fact that she was right in the fact that I do like a lot of the subjects. I like PE, I like Art and I like all the other subjects that I do teach, but there is no one particular thing that I really wanted to do in college like Science or like, I don't know, English, or something really specific so I felt if I did something like teaching it would give me a good start to see where, where I'd go from there if I really did enjoy it.

**Ciara** Well she was my Irish teacher, from - I think I only actually had her for one year, and ehm, I loved Irish at the time. I had been to the Gaeltacht and I just had such a love of it and the "craic" and the songs and the dancing, every kind of part of the culture. I just loved learning it, and she was different. She was really, ehm, interactive I suppose with the pupils and although she was quite, she was an elderly teacher, she wasn't a young teacher as you sometimes might feel you'd connect better with - she really did reach out and was such, so human, kind of, she'd never, she never seemed like a teacher. She was always there for advice and for a chat. And I suppose that's why I liked her so much, and I, it wasn't even that everyone really liked her. I just seemed to click with her. You know when you click with people sometimes.

**Ciara** I'm a type of person that, I work off confidence thing. If somebody compliments me it's a real boost for me. It's just within my character. I'm the youngest in the family and praise would always go a long way with me. It, it, it might be a failing, I don't know, it might be a good thing, but if, her advice really stood to me. It was always in the back of my head even though I tried to push it aside and I thought well maybe I'll

do something else in college, it was always in there in the back of my head and even now to this day I'd love meeting her and, she's a principal now, and she's perfect for the job, you know.

**Ciara** Perhaps even more than teaching it, she's just such a people person. So I think it really suits her but then she has all the experience of being a teacher as well.

**Ciara** I did ask some of my mother's colleagues which college they thought would be suitable, and they were very encouraging of the fact that I do teaching. And, they were some of my own teachers, and so it would also help to know that they thought it would also suit my character, or they thought that it would, it would be a good career choice.

**Elaine** My biggest influence, right through from when I was young, was when I was in primary school. That was my biggest thing. I was in a two teacher school. I would have been in a small country school, and it would have been those two teachers that would have been the biggest influence for me. That would have been when I decided initially. You know when people asked what do you want to be when you grow up, I would have always said that I wanted to be a teacher.

**Elaine** Probably. I don't know what it was. They would have been my only influences. There's no teacher background in my family whatsoever, so it's not like, say, it would have been your parents and your grandparents or anything like that. They would have probably been the two role models to me. I consider, if anybody asked me, I would say that's when I first started thinking about it. And even at that, because it was such a small country school, it would have been a case of when you got older, it would be – you go in and supervise the small children for a while – obviously it doesn't happen in this day and age, but back then it did, and that's where I would have got it at the start.

**Elaine** I went back to my national school, and the teacher that would have been – I would have had her from Junior Infants to Second Class. I spoke to her about it. She would have been probably the one person that I wanted to talk to about it to see was I crazy, or to see what she thought, or whatever. So I went to speak to her before I even had my interview. I went to talk to her about it, and she is now the principal of the school. She just went on to say that it's changed so much since I was in school, with the new curriculum and everything like that. Because I wouldn't have even been aware of the new curriculum. So I just talked to her and she said "It is a big decision that you have to make and it has changed an awful lot since you were in school" and she said it's not something you should just think about and make a decision overnight, so I did. I thought long and hard about it, and I've gone back to her since.

**Elaine** I was expecting her to say "Oh great! Best of luck" and everything, but she wasn't. She was very much: "Think long and hard about it. It is hard". People have the perception of – I didn't – I wasn't going in thinking "You have so many weeks off a year". It's not- that wasn't the perception that I had, but she said "It's a lot tougher, things have changed in comparison to when you were in school. And, just, the challenges that you face now – I just want you to bear it in mind when you're doing it." That was it really, more than anything. She wasn't pushing me - definitely do it – she said I'd be great at it but just think long and hard about it. "It's not going to be as easy as you think" that it could have been when I was in school.

**Elaine** I probably wasn't going thinking "Oh, I'm going to sail through this" or even coming out now, having my own class, just even she was saying, like differentiation, she would have had from Junior Infants up to Second, and then from Third up to Sixth. Obviously my school is different from schools that you'd encounter in Dublin or wherever where you'd have one class. But she was like, just even differentiating within

the one class, it has changed. It was just all about the fact how it had changed so much from when I was in school.

**Elaine** But I suppose I was listening to her but I didn't really understand until I came out into the classroom and seen it myself. So, she planted the seed but it wasn't until I was actually out, even on teaching practice, that you really see the differences. They talk about it in college but until you actually see it in practice it's a whole different kettle of fish.

**Elaine** I just think it made me more aware. I wasn't aware – like I say, it was in there, but until I actually saw it I wasn't actually putting it into practice in my mind. I was just thinking about it, going, “Right, can it have changed that much?” But I'd seen it had changed a bit in her school. The numbers would be very low, but when I came to Dublin, that's when I saw it. It just planted the seed basically, more than anything.

**Elaine** I think even my initial vision, even though she was talking – the principal – the teacher that I was talking to before I started – she talked about changes and she talked about new curriculum, I just thought, “Cool! That sounds great, with all the different subjects”. I didn't realise what she meant when it came to the whole differentiation of, and how to deal with that in the classroom, and how to put it into practice.

**Fiona** I had such a good relationship with the teachers -

**Fiona** As I went into secondary school, I was excelling in Art. It was natural for me to go into Art rather than an academic subject in college when I left secondary school. And just financially, mam and dad would never have had the backing to give me money. So I was working when I was in Art college and unfortunately then in second year in NCAD I left, which was a huge thing for them, after putting all the time in. Now, of course, they knew it wasn't working out for me so they again supported me and I went to work.

**Maura** I loved primary school and secondary school and I'd really good teachers – I was lucky – I'd really good teachers in primary and secondary school.

**Maura** I was really lucky as well because I had really nice teachers, for my inspections. In my second year, for my home TP, I worked in the N\_\_\_\_ Road, and I'd a really nice vice principal as well. She vice principal – she was teaching as well – and I got on great with her and it was luck as well – the teachers I was in with, I got on very well with and I felt they were very good at what they did. They did their best to support me as well.

**Maura** I don't think there's been much of a change, because, like I said earlier on, I'd teachers in primary school that I would hope that I – you know, they influenced me an awful lot. You know, I wouldn't mind being the teacher that they were to me, if you know what I mean.

**Maura** So, is it true that those people still remain as models for you?

**Maura:** Very much so, yeah, hugely so – you know, Ms P\_\_\_\_, who is here now – I just thought they were amazing – I wouldn't have one bad word to say about them. They've really, really affected me hugely, and then in secondary school – I think part of the reason I love Maths so much – I would have been okay at Maths in primary school and then when I got into secondary school I had an amazing teacher for Maths, and she affected me so much with the subject, even, that my love of Maths, without a doubt, came from her.

**Maura** I've such fond memories of school

**Maura** the only thing I would have said would have been a negative maybe about secondary school was who've you got in your class, and you know, you've got the bullies or whatever – that kind of thing. There was a bit of bullying when I was in Second and Third Year from two girls in my class – but, although it did affect me – to a certain extent it didn't because the teachers were very much looking out for me and on my side, if you know what I mean.

**Niamh** There were a few teachers that I really looked up to in secondary school. One of them went away – in Third Year she went to Galway to teach, so that was upsetting. I didn't want her to go. Then, I looked up to another teacher. I think that's why I wanted to do science. I wanted to do biology teaching because I really looked up to my biology teacher, because I felt that she was such – she broke things down for you in simple terms and she was such a good teacher. She encouraged us a lot.

**Niamh** I suppose everyone used to say in her class I was the teacher's pet, because she used to ask me to do everything for her. That's why I developed a love for it, but I didn't really talk to her that much about wanting to do teaching. It was more – because the gang that I hung around with – we wouldn't have been – we weren't – we wouldn't have been up chatting to teachers that close.

**Susan** I can't actually remember. The only other interest – the only other influence – that's probably another one of the questions – but I've danced since I was about four. So, my dancing teacher would have had a huge impact – he still would be involved in my life today. He's have had a huge, huge influence on me and he would have had me teaching from when I was eight or nine years of age. I would have been teaching the smaller groups coming in. From then I suppose, I was comfortable with kids – I knew how to – I learnt on my feet as to how to talk to them – how to teach things, how to break material down, how to break steps down. I suppose I realised at a very young age that I was able to do that. That would have been right up until I was 22 or 23 I taught with him. And then whenever I'd come home – I was travelling – I was with a dance company, and whenever I'd come home I'd go back in and teach with him for my time off. So that definitely – him – I'll get into that more maybe as an influence, but he as a person and as a teacher would have had a huge influence. Maybe that, indirectly, encouraged me to go into teaching, but I couldn't say – I can't pinpoint exactly where I was going teaching.

**Susan** I was able to get the primary school at home to take me on to facilitate both. It wasn't that common to go to a primary school but I did. The principal that was there had taught me in Sixth Class, so he brought me into his room, and he'd pretty much let me teach from being there two separate Mondays and Tuesdays -

**Susan** My principal. I mentioned P\_\_ - that time in Third Year – he let me teach instantly. He would have had what I would have viewed at the time as a narrow minded view of Montessori and didn't agree with it at all – thought I was wasting my time, and told me, in very few words that I really should go back to primary school teaching. Not that he disagreed with what I was doing, but he said, “You're doing the same amount of work. You should really be in a primary school. You're quite happy in here. You have a Sixth Class primary class,” and he would have said that, probably once each day I was in there. That probably started my thinking.

**Susan** Oh, he would have been fantastic. He would have written – he's someone I went back to for my reference to get into St Pat's. I'd been in his classroom for Fifth and Sixth Class and he was the principal all the way up. So I suppose his words meant something because I knew he knew me. I can't think of specifics, but it was more along the lines of – I told him I didn't have Irish because I'd left secondary school at that stage and he was very positive – “It doesn't matter. You can go back and get it. All you

need is discipline and determination,” and he would constantly be along the route of, “If you want it badly enough, you can have it.”

**Susan** I suppose he just reopened – at the time I probably felt the door had closed – I had decided back in Leaving Cert that I wasn’t doing honours Irish because I didn’t need it, and Montessori was going to be quite narrow- minded on my behalf, as in, “That’s all I want to do. I don’t want to do anything else.” – and then I suppose he reopened my options and gave me the confidence in myself in the sense that, “If he thinks I can do it, then surely I can.” And then I travelled after that for five years. So I had plenty of time to mull it over in my head.

**Susan** I’m just thinking now if it was influences on my teaching – the one person I should mention would have been M\_\_\_\_, my dancing teacher, the crossiest man you could ever meet.

**Susan** a dancing teacher, a qualified Irish dance teacher. It’s his living. He’s now teaching in UL, actually, lecturing, but just personality-wise – firm but fair. The first thing I ever realised – it’s only about two years ago I realised it, or three, maybe – he would have motivated us all differently. Say for me – it makes him sound awful, but for me he would verbally almost abuse me before I’d go up on stage and tell me that I hadn’t worked enough, that I should have done this and I should have done that and I should have done the other. That would fire me up before I would go up on stage and then I would literally be wide awake and – I needed a really swift kind of motivation. But then you’d turn and see him motivate another child with, “Now, you’ve done your best. All you need to do is go and try,” and he’d have a totally different attitude to her than he would to me. And it’s only in later years I’ve realised that he was actually very smart in the sense that he’s taught me that you motivate different kids differently, and what works for you won’t work for me and vice- versa. He’d also be very, very firm. He doesn’t take any nonsense and he’s consistent. So what he accepts today he’ll accept tomorrow; what he doesn’t accept today he won’t accept tomorrow. They’d be things that I would be strong on in my classroom.

**Susan** I’ve had that since I was young, because we’ve been dancing in shows for him – for M\_\_\_\_ - and dare you make a mistake for that man. So you learned very young how to figure things out and how to figure them out quickly, and not to panic in bad situations because that made it worse. You just – if you’ve ten seconds to get on stage you don’t have time to waste five of them panicking. So whether any of that would have had an effect – I suppose it would. I’d never have panicked, I suppose.

**Susan** Even still, after having this interview, I’d still wonder if I was asked for five facts – five points – just one liners – I still don’t know how I’d shorten it down into, “It was this, it was that, it was this and it was this.” You know, it was my whole experience as a Montessori school teacher and I suppose being given experience, being given – what’s that word – responsibility early on, and feeling that sense of trust – and then my dancing teacher – but then you can’t – my dancing teacher could be somebody else’s football trainer, it could be somebody else’s swimming coach. I mean, it would be very hard to replicate that for other people.

## References

- Abma, T. and Schwandt, T.A. (2005) 'The Practice and Politics of Sponsored Evaluations' in B Somekh and C Lewin (eds) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 105-111.
- Aitken, R. and Harford, J. (2011) 'Induction needs of a group of teachers at different career stages in a school in the Republic of Ireland: Challenges and expectations' *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27, 350-356.
- Anderson, L.M. and Holt-Reynolds, D. (1992) 'Prospective Teachers' Beliefs And Teacher Education Pedagogy: Research Based On A Teacher Educator's Practical Theory'. [Online], Available: <http://ncrtl.msu.edu/http/rreports/html/pdf/rr956.pdf> [2 February 2010].
- Andrews, D. and Edwards, C. (2008) 'Consciousness in transition: the experience of doctoral study' in B Cunningham (ed) *Exploring Professionalism* London: Institute of Education.
- Aristotle (1996) *The Nicomachean Ethics* Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited.
- Aroni, R., Goeman, D., Stewart, K., Sawyer, S., Abramson, M., Thien, F. and Douglas, J. (1999, July). 'Concepts of rigour: When methodological, clinical and ethical interests interact'. Paper presented at the First AQR Conference, Melbourne, Australia. [Online], Available: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/aqr/offer/papers/RAroni.htm> [9 May 2005].
- Atkinson, P. and Delamont, S. (1985) 'Socialization into Teaching: The Research Which Lost Its Way' *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 6 (3), 307-322.
- Bateson, M.C. (1989) *Composing a Life* New York: Grove Press.
- Bathey, D. and Franke, M.L. (2008) 'Transforming Identities: Understanding Teachers across Professional Development and Classroom Practice' *Teacher Education Quarterly* Summer 127-149.
- Beck, J. (2009) 'Appropriating professionalism: restructuring the knowledge base of England's 'modernised' teaching profession' *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 30 (1) 3-14.
- Begley, A.M. (2006) 'Facilitating the development of moral insight in practice: teaching ethics and teaching virtue' *Nursing Philosophy* 7 257-265.
- Bennetts, C. (2002) 'Traditional mentor relationships, intimacy and emotional intelligence' *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 15 (2) 155-170.
- Bennetts, C. (2003) 'Mentoring youth: trend and tradition' *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* 31 (1) 63-76.

- Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T. (1971) *The Social Construction of Reality* Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin University Books [1966].
- Bernstein, R.J. (1982) 'From Hermeneutics to Praxis' *The Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (4) 823-845.
- Biesta, G. (1995) 'Pragmatism as a Pedagogy of Communicative Action' in J Garrison (ed) *The New Scholarship on Dewey* Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers 105-122.
- Biesta, G. (2007) 'Why "What Works" Won't Work: Evidence-Based Practice and the Democratic Deficit in Educational Research' *Educational Theory*, 57 (1) 1-22.
- Biesta, G. and Burbules, N. (2003) *Pragmatism and Educational Research* Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Biesta, G., James, D., Hodkinson, P., Gleeson, D. and Postlethwaite, K. (2007) 'Transforming learning cultures in Further Education' in D James and G Biesta (eds) *Improving Learning Cultures in Further Education* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge 143-160.
- Bliss, M. (2000) *Dreams Within a Dream: the Films of Peter Weir* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Bloomer, M. and James D. (2001) 'Educational Research in Educational Practice', paper presented at the Regional Conference of the South West of England Learning and Skills Research Network, Dartington Hall, Totnes, [Online], Available: [education.exeter.ac.uk/tlc/docs/publications/EX\\_JMB\\_PUB\\_05.12.01.rtf](http://education.exeter.ac.uk/tlc/docs/publications/EX_JMB_PUB_05.12.01.rtf) [5 August 2013].
- Bloomer, M. and James D. (2003) 'Educational Research in Educational Practice' *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 27(3) 247-256.
- Bolden, R., Gosling, J., Marturano, A. and Dennison, P. (2003) 'A Review of Leadership Theory and Competency Frameworks: Edited Version of a Report for Chase Consulting and the Management Standards Centre' University of Exeter: Centre for Leadership Studies.
- Boreen, J., Johnson, M.K., Niday, D. and Potts, J. (2009) *Mentoring Beginning Teachers: Guiding, Reflecting, Coaching* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Borg, M. (2004) 'The apprenticeship of observation' *ELT Journal* 58 (3) 274-276.
- Borko, H., Whitcomb, J.A. and Byrnes, K. (2008) 'Genres of research in teacher education' in M Cochran-Smith, S Feiman-Nemser, DJ McIntyre and KE Demers (eds) *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education: Enduring Questions in Changing Contexts* New York: Routledge.
- Brookfield, S. (1995) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. (2006) *The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust and Responsiveness in the Classroom*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Brown, J. and McGannon, J. (1998) 'What do I know about language learning? The story of the beginning teacher'. A paper presented at the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia Conference in Griffith University, Brisbane, [Online], Available: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/alaa/proceed/bro-mcgan.html> [1 February 2010].
- Brundrett, M. and Silcock, P. (2002) *Achieving Competence, Success and Excellence in Teaching* London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Burke, A. (2007) 'Crosscurrents In The Competencies/ Standards Debate in Teaching and Teacher Education' in R Dolan and J Gleeson (eds) *The Competences Approach to Teacher Professional Development: Current Practice and Future Prospects* Armagh: Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) 67-96.
- Burman, E. (1994) 'Interviewing' in P Banister et al *Qualitative Methods in Psychology: A Research Guide* Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Caelli, K., Ray, L. and Mill, J. (2003) "'Clear as Mud": Toward Greater Clarity in Generic Qualitative Research' *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2 (2) 1-13.
- Caires, S., Almeida, L., and Vieira, D. (2012) 'Becoming a teacher: student teachers' experiences and perceptions about teaching practice' *European Journal of Teacher Education* 35 (2) 163-178.
- Campbell, J., Kyriakides, L., Muijs, D. and Robinson, W. (2004) *Assessing Teacher Effectiveness: Developing a Differentiated Model* London: Routledge Falmer.
- Carpay, J. and Van Oers, B. (1999) 'Didactic models and the problem of intertextuality and polyphony' in Y Engestrom, R Miettinen and RL Punamaki (eds) *Perspectives on Activity Theory* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 298-313.
- Carr, D. and Skinner, D. (2009) 'The Cultural Roots of Professional Wisdom: Towards a broader view of teacher expertise' *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 41(2) 141-154.
- Carr, W. (1993) 'What is an educational practice?' in M Hammersley (ed) *Educational Research: Current Issues* Volume 1 London: Paul Chapman, 160-176.
- Carr, W. (1995) *For Education: Towards Critical Educational Inquiry* Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Casey, K. (1992) 'Why do Progressive Women Activists Leave Teaching: Theory, methodology and politics in life-history research' in IF Goodson (ed) *Studying Teachers' Lives* NY: Teachers College Press, 187-208.
- Clandinin, D.J., & Huber, J. (2010) 'Narrative inquiry' in B. McGaw, E. Baker, & P.P. Peterson (eds), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (3rd ed.) New York: Elsevier.

- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000) *Research Methods in Education (5<sup>th</sup> Edition)* London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Cohen, M.Z. and Omery, A. (1994) 'Schools of Phenomenology: Implications for Research' in J Morse (ed) *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Coolahan, J. (2007) 'The Operational Environment for Future Planning in Teacher Education: OECD and EU Initiatives' in R Dolan and J Gleeson (eds) *The Competences Approach to Teacher Professional Development: Current Practice and Future Prospects* Armagh: Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) 7-14.
- Connelly, F.M. and Clandinin, D.J., (1994). 'Telling teaching stories' *Teacher Education Quarterly* 21 (1) 145-158.
- Corden, A. and Sainsbury, R. (2006) 'Using verbatim quotations in reporting qualitative social research: researchers' views' University of York: Social Policy Research Unit, [Online], Available: [www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/verbquotresearch.pdf](http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/verbquotresearch.pdf) [28 March 2012].
- Creswell, J. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Crook, D. (2008) 'Some historical perspectives on professionalism', in B Cunningham (ed) *Exploring Professionalism* London: Institute of Education.
- Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* London: SAGE.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1997) *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools that Work* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2001) 'Standard Setting in Teaching: Changes in Licensing, Certification and Assessment' in V Richardson (ed) *Handbook of Research on Teaching (4<sup>th</sup> Edition)* Washington: American Educational Research Association.
- Darling-Hammond, L. and McLaughlin, M.W. (1999) 'Investing in Teaching as a Learning Profession' in L Darling-Hammond and G Sykes (eds) *Teaching as the Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 376-412.
- Day, C. (1993) 'Reflection: A Necessary but Not Sufficient Condition for Professional Development' *British Educational Research Journal* 19(1) 83-93.
- Day, C. and Gu, Q. (2010) *The New Lives of Teachers* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Denzin N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Department of Education and Science (2002) *Preparing Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* Dublin: Stationery Office.

- Department of Education and Science (2005a) *Guidelines for Probationary Teachers* Dublin: DES.
- Department of Education and Science (2005b) *Beginning to Teach: Newly Qualified Teachers in Irish Primary Schools* Dublin: DES.
- Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy and Education* New York: The Macmillan Company, republished by Dover Publications, Inc. New York [2004].
- Dewey, J. (1938) 'The Problem of Logical Subject-Matter', in JA Boydston (ed) *John Dewey, The Later Works, Volume 12: 1938, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press [1986]
- Dewey, J. (1941) 'Propositions, Warranted Assertibility and Truth' in JA Boydston (ed) *John Dewey, The Later Works, Volume 14: 1939-1941* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press [1988] 168-188.
- Dewey, J. (1948) *Reconstruction in Philosophy* The Beach Press, Boston, republished by Dover Publications, Inc. New York [2004].
- Dolan, R. and Gleeson, J. (2007) 'The Competences Debate and Teacher Professional Development: Introduction To Conference Proceedings' in R Dolan and J Gleeson (eds) *The Competences Approach to Teacher Professional Development: Current Practice and Future Prospects* Armagh: Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) 1-6.
- Draper, J., O'Brien, J. & Christie, F. (2004) 'First impressions: the new teacher induction arrangements in Scotland' *Journal of In-service Education* 30 (2) 210–224.
- du Gay, P. (1996) *Consumption and Identity at Work* London: SAGE.
- Dunne, J. (1988) 'Teaching and the Limits of Technique: An Analysis of the Behavioural-Objectives Model', *The Irish Journal of Education* 22 (2) 66-90.
- Dwivedi, Y.K., Lal, B., Williams, M.D., Schneberger, S.L. and Wade, M. (2009) *Handbook of Research on Contemporary Theoretical Models in Information Systems* London: Information Science Reference.
- Edwards, A., Gilroy, P. and Hartley, D. (2002) *Rethinking Teacher Education: Collaborative Responses to Uncertainty* London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Egan, E. (2007) 'The Evaluation of Teachers and Teaching in Primary and Post-Primary Schools by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science' in R Dolan and J Gleeson (eds) *The Competences Approach to Teacher Professional Development: Current Practice and Future Prospects* Armagh: Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) 37-48.
- Eisner, E. (2002) 'From episteme to phronesis to artistry in the study and improvement of teaching' *Teaching and Teacher Education* 18 375-385.
- Engestrom, Y. (2009) 'Expansive learning: toward an activity-theoretical reconceptualization' in K Illeris (ed) *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning theorists... in their own words* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

- Ernest, P. (1994) *An Introduction to Research Methodology and Paradigms* School of Education, University of Exeter.
- European Council (2008) '2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education and Training 2010" work programme — "Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation"', Official Journal of the European Union C86 1-31. [Online], Available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:086:0001:0031:EN:PDF> [12 July 2010].
- European Council (2008a) 'Summary: Progress under the "Education and Training 2010" Work Programme'. [Online], Available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:086:0001:0031:EN:PDF> [12 July 2010].
- Fairfield, P. (2008) *Why Democracy?* Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Feeney Jonson, K. (2008) *Being an Effective Mentor: How to Help Beginning Teachers Succeed* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Feerick, S. (2004) 'Education and Training 2010: Implications for Teacher Education', *Annual Report 2004*, Armagh: Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS).
- Fenstermacher, G. (1994) 'The knower and the known: The nature of knowledge in research on teaching' *Review of Research on Teaching* 20 3-56.
- Fereday, J. and Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006) 'Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach to Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development' *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5 (1) 80-92.
- Flores, M.A. (2003) 'Teacher Learning in the Workplace: Processes and Influencing Factors' Paper presented at the Hawaii International Conference on Education (Honolulu, HI, January 6-10, 2003) 1-25.
- Florio-Ruane, S. (2002) 'More Light: An Argument for Complexity in Issues of Teaching and Teacher Education' *Journal of Teacher Education* 53 (3) 205-215.
- Fontana, A. and Frey, J.H. (2005) 'The Interview: From Neutral Stance to Political Involvement' in NK Denzin and YS Lincoln (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 695-727.
- Freire, P. (1972) *Cultural action for freedom* Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gadamer, H.G. (1990) 'The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality' in GA Ormiston and AD Schrift (eds) *The Hermeneutic Tradition: from Ast to Ricoeur* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, pp 147-158.
- Gadamer, H.G. (2004) *Truth and Method* London: Continuum [1975].
- Gallagher, S. (1992) *Hermeneutics and Education* Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Garrick, J. (1999) 'Doubting the philosophical assumptions of interpretive research', *Qualitative Studies in Education* 12 (2) 147-156.
- Gergen, K.J. (1985) 'The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology', *American Psychologist* 40 (3) 266-275.
- Goodson, I.F. (1991) 'Sponsoring the Teacher's Voice: teachers' lives and professional development' *Cambridge Journal of Education* Spring 35-45.
- Goodson, I.F. (1992) 'Studying Teachers' Lives: An Emergent Field of Inquiry' in IF Goodson (ed) *Studying Teachers' Lives* NY: Teachers College Press, 1-17.
- Goodson, I.F. (2000) 'The Principled Professional' *Prospects: quarterly review of comparative education* 30 (2) 181-188.
- Grangeat, M. and Gray, P. (2008) 'Teaching as a collective work: analysis, current research and implications for teacher education' *Journal of Education for Teaching* 34 (3) August 177-189.
- Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1989) *Fourth Generation Evaluation* London: Sage Publications Inc.
- Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions and Emerging Confluences' in NK Denzin and YS Lincoln (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.* London: Sage Publications Ltd, 191-215.
- Habermas, J. (1968) *Knowledge and Human Interests* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, English translation published London: Heinemann Educational Books [1972].
- Habermas, J. (1990) 'The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality' in GA Ormiston and AD Schrift (eds) *The Hermeneutic Tradition: from Ast to Ricoeur* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 245-272.
- Haggarty, L., Postlethwaite, K., Dent, K. and Ellins, J. (2009) 'An examination of beginning teacher learning during the induction year', paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Manchester, 2-5 September 2009.
- Hagger, H., Burn, K., Mutton, T. and Brindley, S. (2008) 'Practice makes perfect? Learning to learn as a teacher' *Oxford Review of Education* 34(2) 159-178.
- Hammersley, M. (2001) 'Can and should educational research be educative?' Paper presented at the symposium on "Do we need a science of education?" at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, University of Leeds, England, September 13-15, 2001. [Online], Available: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001818.htm> [19 April 2012].
- Hammersley, M. and Scarth, J. (1993) 'Beware of Wise Men Bearing Gifts: a case study in the misuse of educational research' in R Gomm and P Woods (eds) *Educational Research in Action: Volume Two* London: Paul Chapman.
- Hansen, D. (2002) 'Dewey's Conception of an Environment', *Curriculum Inquiry* 32 (3) 267-280.

- Hargreaves, A. (1994) *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age* London: Continuum.
- Hargreaves, A. (1998) 'Emotions of Teaching and Educational Change' in A Hargreaves (ed) *International Handbook of Educational Change, Volume 1* Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 558-575.
- Hargreaves, A. (2000) 'Professionals and parents: personal adversaries or public allies' *Prospects* 30 (2) 201-213.
- Hargreaves, A. (2003) *Teaching in the Knowledge Society: Education in the Age of Insecurity* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A. (2010a) 'Presentism, Individualism and Conservatism: The Legacy of Dan Lortie's *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*', *Curriculum Inquiry* 40 (1) 143-154.
- Hargreaves, A. (2010b) 'Change from Without: Lessons from Other Systems, Countries and Sectors' in A Hargreaves, A Lieberman, M Fullan and D Hopkins (eds) *Second International Handbook of Educational Change: Part 1* London: Springer.
- Hargreaves, A. and Goodson, I. (1996) 'Teachers' Professional Lives: Aspirations and Actualities' in IF Goodson and A Hargreaves (eds) *Teachers' Professional Lives* Oxford: Routledge Falmer, 1-27.
- Hargreaves, A. and Lo, L.N.K. (2000) 'The Paradoxical Profession: Teaching at the Turn of the Century' *Prospects: quarterly review of comparative education* 30 (2) 1-16.
- Harré, R. and Secord, P.F. (1972) *The Explanation of Social Behaviour* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hayrynen, Y.P. (1999) 'Collapse, creation and continuity in Europe: How do people change?' in Y Engestrom, R Miettinen and RL Punamaki (eds) *Perspectives on Activity Theory* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 115-132.
- He, Y. and Cooper, J. (2011) 'Struggles and Strategies in Teaching: Voices of Five Novice Secondary Teachers' *Teacher Education Quarterly* Spring 2011 97-116.
- Heelan, P. and Schulkin, J. (1998) 'Hermeneutical Philosophy and Pragmatism: A Philosophy of Science', *Synthese* 115 (3) 269-302.
- Heidegger, M. (1927) *Being and Time* Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag. English Translation, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing [1962].
- Helsby, G. and McCulloch, G. (1996) 'Teacher Professionalism and Curriculum Control' in IF Goodson and A Hargreaves (eds) *Teachers' Professional Lives* Oxford: Routledge Falmer, 56-74.
- Heron, J. (1996) *Co-operative Inquiry: Research into the Human Condition* London: Sage.

- Heywood, D. and Stronach, I. (2005) 'Philosophy and Hermeneutics' in B Somekh and C Lewin (eds) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 114-120.
- Hinds, D. (2000) 'Research Instruments' in D Wilkinson (ed) *The Researcher's Toolkit: The Complete Guide to Practitioner Research* London: Routledge Falmer, 41-54.
- Hislop, H. (2011) Address at annual conference of Irish Primary Principals Network [Online], Available: [http://www.ippn.ie/index.php?option=com\\_mtree&task=att\\_download&link\\_id=2875&cf\\_id=24](http://www.ippn.ie/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=att_download&link_id=2875&cf_id=24) [3 June 2011].
- Hoban, G.J. (2002) *Teacher Learning for Educational Change (Professional Learning)* Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hobson, A.J., Ashby, P., Malderez, A. and Tomlinson, P.D. (2009) 'Mentoring beginning teachers: What we know and what we don't' *Teaching and Teacher Education* 25 207-216.
- Holstein, J.A. and Gubrium, J.F. (2008) *Handbook of Constructionist Research* New York: The Guilford Press.
- Holt-Reynolds, D. (1992) 'Personal History-Based Beliefs as Relevant Prior Knowledge in Course Work' *American Educational Research Journal* 29 (2) 325-349 (reprinted in JJ Loughran (ed) *International Handbook of Self-study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices, Part One* Dordrecht: Netherlands [2004] 345-368).
- Horton, M. and Freire, P. (1990) *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Howe, K. (2001) 'Qualitative educational research: The philosophical issues' in V. Richardson (ed), *Handbook of Research on Teaching* Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association 201-208.
- Howe, E. (2006) 'Exemplary Teacher Induction: An international review' *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 38 (3) 287-297.
- Huling-Austin, L. (1990) 'Teacher induction programs and internships' in WR Houston (ed) *Handbook of Research in Teacher Education* New York: Macmillan 535-548.
- Hurd, S., Jones, M., McNamara, O. and Craig, B. (2007) 'Initial teacher education as a driver for professional learning and school improvement in the primary phase' *The Curriculum Journal* 18 (3) 307-326.
- Ingersoll, R.M., Alsalam, N., Quinn, P. and Bobbitt, S. (1997) *Teacher Professionalization and Teacher Commitment: A Multilevel Analysis* Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- James, D., Biesta, G., Hodkinson, P., Postlethwaite, K. and Gleeson, D. (2007) 'Improving learning cultures in Further Education?' in D James and G Biesta (eds) *Improving Learning Cultures in Further Education* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Jonassen, D.H. (2000) 'Revisiting Activity Theory as a Framework for Designing Student-Centered Learning Environments' in DH Jonassen and SM Land (eds)

*Theoretical Foundations of Learning Environments* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 89-122.

Jordan, R. and Powell, S. (1995) 'Skills without understanding: a critique of a competency-based model of teacher education in relation to special needs', *British Journal of Special Education*, 22 (3) 120-124.

Kennedy, M. (2010) 'The Uncertain Relationship Between Teacher Assessment and Teacher Quality' in Kennedy, M (ed) *Teacher Assessment and the Quest for Teacher Quality* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Kinnucan-Welsch, K. (2007) 'Reconsidering Teacher Professional Development Through Constructivist Principles' in JA Kincheloe and RA Horn Jr *The Praeger Handbook of Education and Psychology, Vol. 2* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Knowles, J.G. (1992) 'Models for Understanding Pre-service and Beginning Teachers' Biographies: Illustrations from Case Studies' in IF Goodson (ed) *Studying Teachers' Lives* London: Routledge.

Koro-Ljungberg, M. (2008) 'A Social Constructionist Framing of the Research Interview' in JA Holstein and JF Gubrium (eds) *Handbook of Constructionist Research* New York: The Guildford Press, 429-444.

Kvale, S. (2006) 'Dominance Through Interviews and Dialogues', *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (3) 480-500.

Kvale, S. (2007) *Doing Interviews* London: Sage.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2009) *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Levin, B.B. (2001) 'Lives of Teachers: Update on a Longitudinal Case Study', *Teacher Education Quarterly* 28(3) 29-47.

Levin, B.B. (2003) *Case Studies of Teacher Development: An In-depth Look at How Thinking About Pedagogy Develops Over Time* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Canella, G.S. (2007) 'Qualitative Research, Power and the Radical Right', *Qualitative Inquiry* 10 (2) 175-201.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry* London: Sage.

Lacey, C. (1977) *The Socialization of Teachers (Contemporary Sociology of the School)* London: Methuen and Co.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (1993) 'The Lives of Teachers' in AM Huberman, MM Grounauer and J Marti (eds) *The Lives of Teachers (Yearbook in Early Childhood Education)* New York: Teachers College Press 241-260.

Lofland, J. and Lofland, L.H. (1984) *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

- Lortie, D.C. (1973) 'Observations on Teaching as Work' in RMW Travers (ed) *Second Handbook of Research on Teaching* Chicago: Rand McNally, 474-497.
- Lortie, D.C. (1975) *Schoolteacher: a sociological study* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lovey, J. (2000) 'Researching the Schools: case studies based on three research projects' in D Wilkinson (ed) *The Researcher's Toolkit: The Complete Guide to Practitioner Research* London: Routledge Falmer, 117-124.
- Macmillan, R.B. (2000) in N Bascia and A Hargreaves (eds) *The Sharp Edge of Educational Change: Teaching, leading and the realities of reform* London: RoutledgeFalmer, 52-71.
- Maguire, M. (2008) "End of term": teacher identities in a post-work context' *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 16 (1) 43-55.
- Martin, M. and Rippon, J. (2005) 'Everything is Fine: the experience of teacher induction' *Journal of Inservice Education* 31 (3) 527-544.
- Maxwell, J.A. (2002) 'Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research' in AM Huberman and MB Miles (eds) *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 37-64.
- Mayer, D. (1999) 'Building Teaching Identities: Implications for Preservice Teacher Education'. A paper presented at Australian Association for Research in Education and New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference Melbourne, Australia, 29 November - 2 December 1999, [Online], Available: <http://www.aare.edu.au/99pap/may99385.htm>. [15 February 2012].
- McKenzie, P. and Santiago, P. (2005) *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Measor, L. and Sikes, P. (1992) 'Visiting Lives: Ethics and methodology in life history' in IF Goodson (ed) *Studying Teachers' Lives* NY: Teachers College Press, 209-233.
- Mewborn, D.S. and Teminski, A.M. (2006) 'Lortie's apprenticeship of observation revisited' *For the Learning of Mathematics* 26 (3) 30-32.
- Miettinen, R. (1999) 'Transcending traditional school learning: Teachers' work and networks of learning' in Y Engestrom, R Miettinen and RL Punamaki (eds) *Perspectives on Activity Theory* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 325-346.
- Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Second Edition, London: Sage.
- Moran, S. (2007) 'An Alternative View: The Teacher as Phronimos' in R Dolan and J Gleeson (eds) *The Competences Approach to Teacher Professional Development: Current Practice and Future Prospects* Armagh: Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS) 60-66.

- Morse, J.M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., and Spiers, J. (2002) 'Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1(2), Article 2. [Online], Available: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~ijqm/> [22 August 2007].
- Muijs, D., Campbell, J., Kyriakides, L. and Robinson, W. (2005) 'Making the Case for Differentiated Teacher Effectiveness: An Overview of Research in Four Key Areas' *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 16 (1) 55-70.
- Nias, J (1985) 'Reference Groups in Primary Teaching' in Ball, SJ and Goodson, IF (eds) *Teachers' Lives and Careers* London: The Falmer Press, 105-119.
- Nias, J. (1989) *Primary Teachers Talking: A Study of Teaching as Work* London: Routledge.
- Nias, J. (1991) 'Primary Teachers Talking: A Reflexive Account of Longitudinal Research' in G Walford (ed) *Doing Educational Research* London: Routledge.
- Nias, J., Southworth, G. and Yeomans, R. (1989) *Staff Relationships in the Primary School* London: Cassell Educational Ltd.
- Nimmo, G. and Smith, D. (1995) 'The path to self-efficacy in teaching: a longitudinal study of beginning teaching', [Online], Available: <http://www.aare.edu.au/95pap/nimmg95097.txt> [4 February 2010].
- O'Brien, J. and Christie, F. (2005) 'Characteristics of support for beginning teachers: evidence from the new Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland', *Mentoring and Tutoring* 13 (2) 189–203.
- O'Doherty, T. (2009) 'Teacher Competences – A Core Challenge For Teacher Educators', *Oideas: Journal of the Department of Education and Science* 54, 68-81.
- Pajares, M.F. (1992) 'Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct', *Review of Educational Research*, 62 (3), 307-332.
- Palmer, P.J. (1998) *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Phillips, D.C. and Burbules, N.C. (2000) *Postpositivism and Educational Research* Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Pollard, A. (1987) 'Primary School Teachers and their Colleagues' in S Delamont (ed) *The Primary School Teacher* London: The Falmer Press 100-119.
- Pollard, A. (1997) *Reflective Teaching in the Primary School: A Handbook for the Classroom*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. London: Cassell.
- Pollard, A., Collins, J., Maddock, M., Simco, N., Swaffield, S., Warin, J. and Warwick, P. (2005) *Reflective Teaching* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Continuum.
- Popper, K. (2002) *Conjectures and Refutations* London: Routledge Classics [1963].

- Postlethwaite, K. and Haggarty, L. (2012) 'Student teachers' thinking about learning to teach: a study of student teachers of mathematics and science at the end of their initial training' *Research Papers in Education* 27(3) 263-284.
- Postman, N. (1996) *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Vintage Books.
- Preston, B. (1992) 'Teacher professionalism: implications for teachers, teacher educators and democratic schooling', [Online], Available: <http://www.aare.edu.au/92pap/presb92114.txt> [18 July 2010].
- Pring, R. (2000) *Philosophy of Educational Research* London: Continuum.
- Proefriedt, W.A. (1994) *How Teachers Learn: Toward a More Liberal Teacher Education* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Ravitch, D. (2010) *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education* New York: Basic Books.
- Razak, N.A., Darmawan, I.G.N. and Keeves, J.P. (2009) 'Teacher Commitment' in LJ Saha and G Dworkin (eds) *International Handbook of Research on Teachers and Teaching* NY: Springer 343-360.
- Rogers, C.R. (1989) 'The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change' in Kirschenbaum, H and Land Henderson, V (eds) *The Carl Rogers Reader* New York: Houghton Mifflin, 219-235.
- Rubin, H.J. and Rubin, I.S. (2005) *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2nd Ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saldana, J. (2009) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* London: Sage.
- Scanlon, M. (2000) 'Issues in Research' in D Wilkinson (ed) *The Researcher's Toolkit: The Complete Guide to Practitioner Research* London: Routledge Falmer, 1-14.
- Schön, D.A. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schön, D.A. (1991) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* Aldershot: Hants [1983].
- Sfard, A. and Prusak A. (2005) 'Telling Identities: In Search of an Analytic Tool for Investigating Learning as a Culturally Shaped Activity' *Educational Researcher* 34(4) 14-22.
- Shaker, P. and Heilman, E.E. (2008) *Reclaiming Education for Democracy: Thinking Beyond No Child Left Behind* New York: Routledge.
- Skinner, N. (2010) 'Developing a curriculum for initial teacher education using a situated learning perspective' *Teacher Development* 14 (3) 279-293.
- Smithers, A. and Robinson, P. (2003) 'Factors Affecting Teachers' Decisions to Leave the Profession', [Online], Available: <http://www.education.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/rr430.pdf> [12 July 2010].

- Southworth, G., Nias, J. and Campbell, P. (1992) 'Rethinking Collegiality: Teachers' Views' in A Pollard (ed.) *Readings for Reflective Teaching* [2002].
- Stenhouse, L. (1981) 'What counts as research?' *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 29, 2 (reprinted in J Rudduck and D Hopkins (Eds) *Research as a Basis for Teaching: readings from the work of Lawrence Stenhouse* London: Heinemann Educational Books [1985] 8-19).
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sugrue, C. (1997a) 'Student Teachers' Lay Theories and Teaching Identities: their implications for professional development', *European Journal of Teacher Education* 20 (3) 213-225.
- Sugrue, C. (1997b) 'Student Teachers' Lay Theories: Implications for Professional Development' in IF Goodson and A Hargreaves (eds) *Teachers' Professional Lives* Oxford: Routledge Falmer, 154-177.
- Sugrue, C. (1997c) *Complexities of Teaching: Child-Centred Perspectives* London: The Falmer Press.
- Sullivan, E. (1984) *A Critical Psychology* New York: Plenum Press.
- The Teaching Council (2012) *Career Entry Professional Programme (CEPP): Consultation Document* Kildare: The Teaching Council.
- Troman, G. and Raggl, A. (2007) 'Primary teacher commitment and the attractions of teaching' *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 16 (1) 85-99.
- Van Manen, M. (1997) *The Call to Teach* by Hansen, D, reviewed in *Canadian Journal of Education* 22 (2) 217-219.
- Van Manen, M. (1999) 'Knowledge, Reflection and Complexity in Teacher Practice' in *Changing Schools/ Changing Practices: Perspectives on Educational Reform and Teacher Professionalism* Louvain: Garant.
- Von Glasersfeld, E. (1995) *Radical Constructivism: A Way of Knowing and Learning* London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Walford, G. (1991) 'Reflexive Accounts of Doing Educational Research' in G Walford (ed) *Doing Educational Research* London: Routledge.
- Walker, R. (n.d.) 'Becoming an Academic in Times of Change', [Online], Available: [http://www.uea.ac.uk/care/people/RW\\_recent\\_writing/Estonia.html](http://www.uea.ac.uk/care/people/RW_recent_writing/Estonia.html) [27 April 2007].
- Warren, C.A.B. (2001) 'Qualitative Interviewing' in JF Gubrium and JA Holstein (eds) *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* London: Sage, 83-101.
- Wellington, J. (2000) *Educational Research: Contemporary Issues and Practical Approaches* London: Continuum.

- Wellington, J., Bathmaker, A.M., Hunt, C., McCulloch, G. and Sikes, P. (2005) *Succeeding With Your Doctorate* London: Sage.
- Wengraf, T. (2001) *Qualitative Research Interviewing* London: Sage.
- Wideen, M., Mayer-Smith, J. & Moon, B. (1998) 'A critical analysis of the research on learning to teach: Making a case for an ecological perspective on inquiry', *Review of Educational Research* 68(2), 130-178.
- Wood, K. (2000) 'The Experience of Learning to Teach: Changing Student Teachers' Ways of Understanding Teaching', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 23(1), 75-93.
- Woods, P. (1990) *Teacher Skills and Strategies* Basingstoke: The Falmer Press.
- Woods, P. (1999) 'Intensification and Stress in Teaching', in R Vandenberghe and AM Huberman (eds) *Understanding and Preventing Teacher Burnout: A Sourcebook of International Research and Practice* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 115-138.
- Woods, P. (2006) *Successful Writing for Qualitative Researchers* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Oxon: Routledge.
- Woods, P. and Jeffrey, B. (2002) 'The Reconstruction of Primary Teachers' Identities', *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 23(1), 89-106.
- Wragg, E.C. (1984a) 'Teaching Skills' in EC Wragg (ed) *Classroom Teaching Skills* Beckenham, Kent: Crook Helm, 1-20.
- Wragg, E.C. (1984b) 'Training Skilful Teachers: Some Implications for Practice' in EC Wragg (ed) *Classroom Teaching Skills* Beckenham, Kent: Crook Helm, 193-206.
- Wragg, E.C., Wikeley, F.J., Wragg, C.M. and Haynes, G.S. (1996) *Teacher Appraisal Observed* London: Routledge.
- Young, R.A. and Collin, A. (1988) 'Career Development and Hermeneutical Inquiry Part I: The Framework of a Hermeneutical Approach' *Canadian Journal of Counselling* 22(3) 153-161.
- Younger, M., Brindley, S., Pedder, D. and Hagger, H. (2004) 'Starting points: student teachers' reasons for becoming teachers and their preconceptions of what this will mean' *European Journal of Teacher Education* 27(3) 245-264.
- Youngman, M.B. (1984) 'The Nature of the New Teacher's Job' in EC Wragg (ed) *Classroom Teaching Skills* Beckenham, Kent: Crook Helm, 180-192.
- Zeichner, K. and Gore, J. (n.d.) 'Teacher Socialization', [Online], Available: [education.msu.edu/NCRTL/PDFs/NCRTL/IssuePapers/ip897.pdf](http://education.msu.edu/NCRTL/PDFs/NCRTL/IssuePapers/ip897.pdf) [28 April 2012].