

**“I don’t want to be a researcher.....
I just want to teach”**

**Exploring teacher as researcher
identity amongst graduates of an
Irish Teacher Education Programme**

Mary Kelly



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an Irish Teacher Education Programme

Mary Kelly B.Ed., M.Ed.,

Thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of Education (EdD)
Institute of Education

Dublin City University

Supervisor: Professor Joe O’Hara

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: Mary Kelly Mary Kelly

ID No. 14212932

Date: 29th June 2020

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Throughout the thesis the following abbreviations are used. Each time a term is used for the first time in a chapter, the abbreviation is placed in brackets. Thereafter, just the abbreviation is used.

BERA	British Educational Research Association
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EU	European Union
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
INTO	Irish National Teacher's Organisation
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PME	Professional Master of Education
PMEP	Professional Master of Education, Primary
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

ABSTRACT

Mary Kelly

“I don’t want to be a researcher.....I just want to teach”

Exploring teacher as researcher identity amongst graduates of an Irish Teacher Education Programme

This study presents an understanding of how a programme of study at master’s level has helped shape the identity of a group of primary school teachers as teacher researchers. A mixed methods design was employed comprising a questionnaire survey and focus groups interviews with graduates of the programme and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in the wider field of education. The research design was based on the epistemological position of social constructivism and drew on interpretive theoretical stances as necessary. Findings suggest that graduates value the research knowledge and skills they have acquired following their programme of study. The study also presents the research practices which many have adopted as they negotiate the identity of teacher researcher. The findings also highlight the difficulties of evolving identity sometimes conflicted with the wider school community. The findings will potentially stimulate reflection on, and dialogue around the professional development needs of all teachers in the area of research. The study has relevance for policymakers in planning and promoting professional development to embed a culture of research in schools.

Chapter One: Introduction to the Thesis

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the extent to which the identity of a group of teachers has been shaped by their programme of study at master's level. More specifically, this study explores their emerging identity as teacher researchers and examines their current research practices as they negotiate their early careers. This opening chapter details the research study and provides the underpinning rationale for its inception and development. Key concepts directly related to the study are introduced, in order to provide a clear understanding of the context of the research. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of the chapters contained within this thesis.

1.2 Rationale and Scope of the Research

The formation of teachers' identities has become a significant area of research in recent times and has been defined in many ways (Ball, 1997; Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004; Engels and Lamote, 2010; Lutovac and Kaasila, 2017). Sachs (2005, p. 15) claims that teachers' professional identity stands at the core of the teaching profession and provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of "how to be", "how to act" and "how to understand" their work. Others define teacher identity as the conceptualisation, conscious or not, teachers have of themselves (Murphey, 1998; Singh and Richards, 2006) or as "a certain kind of person in a given context" (Gee, 2000, p. 99). Moreover, it has been argued that teacher identity plays a key role in the decisions teachers make about their practices, the content they teach and the kind of relationships they maintain with their students (Beijaard et al., 2004). Furthermore, Hammerness et al. (2005, pp.383-384) suggest that teachers' sense of identity determines "where they place their effort, and whether and how they seek out professional development opportunities". Danielewicz (2001) argues that what makes a good teacher is not methodology, or ideology; instead, it requires engagement with the construct of identity and with the way in which individuals conceive of themselves. He argues that teaching is a state of being, not merely a way of acting or behaving. Hall (2000) characterises identity as something not already there; rather, it is a production, emergent, developing over time. Beijaard et al. (2004) conclude that the development of a teachers' identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of who one considers oneself to be and who one would like to become.

Although there are competing frameworks and discourses around the notion of identity (McNamara 1997), it is now widely considered that the field is generally informed by social interpretations of human functioning. Hoffman-Kipp (2008, p.153) believes that teacher identity is the “intersection of personal, pedagogical, and political participation and reflection within a larger socio-political context”. Individuals’ beliefs and experiences, as well as their perceptions of what is expected in a particular social context, are considered an important aspect of teacher identity and influence the choice of certain teaching practices by individuals (Horn et al., 2008; Katz et al., 2011). Most contemporary researchers agree that identity is constructed in a social context and that rather than being stable and fixed, it is shifting and dynamic (Rodgers and Scott, 2008). Some consider that teacher identity construction is a process that is not only individualistic but reliant on social interaction in a range of sociocultural groupings (Twiselton, 2004).

The study of teacher identity development is viewed as an important component in the process of learning to teach (Alsup, 2006; Britzman, 2003; Clarke, 2008; Danielewicz, 2001; Friesen and Besley, 2013; Izadinia, 2013). According to Britzman (2003, p. 31), learning to teach is “the process of becoming, a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become”. Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2001, p. 65) state that becoming a teacher involves more than just transposing teaching skills onto an established personal identity, it means including the identity “teacher” in one’s life. It is generally considered that this process of becoming a teacher develops from the student teacher’s understanding and construction of their personal knowledge, construction of self and identity development (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999). Research (Alsup, 2005 Brouwer and Korthagen, 2005) highlights that although student teachers’ professional identity formation can be considered quite personal, teacher preparation programmes can in fact make a difference. Flores and Day (2006) agree that teachers’ personal and professional histories and pre-service training, alongside issues of school culture and leadership, emerge as strong influences in determining the kinds of professional identities teachers develop in their early years of teaching. These, in turn, influence their effectiveness as teacher (Flores and Day, 2006). Thus, as a key component of the process of becoming a teacher, teacher identity is considered an integral aspect of teacher learning (Britzman, 2003; Tsui, 2011).

1.3 Research Context

In the field of teacher education, an ongoing intensive discussion focuses on how to best prepare professional teachers for the 21st century (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2014; Canrinus et al., 2017; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018). One particular strand emerging in terms of national and international debates of relevance to this study, is the way in which teaching itself is defined as an evidence-based or research-based profession. Teacher education today is considered a fundamental factor for relating teaching to research and meeting the requirements of policies, research and teacher practice (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Menter, 2015; Murray, Swenne and Kosnik, 2013). The underlying motive for the growing interest in teacher education, with emphasis on research, is that the approach seems to enhance teachers' professional development and enable them to meet future teaching requirements in an appropriate way (Afdal and Spernes, 2018; Cartrette and Melroe-Lehrman, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2017). A consequence of this focus on teacher research is the repositioning of teacher education nationally and internationally with much focus directed at the period of learning to teach.

The period of learning to teach in Ireland is referred to as Initial Teacher Education (ITE). In recent times, this period of teacher education has been subjected to an unforeseen and unprecedented amount of analysis, reappraisal, policy formulation, legislation and reform (Coolahan, 2004). The Teaching Council of Ireland, established in 2006, is the professional body responsible for the accreditation of ITE programmes. The Teaching Council Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education was published in 2011, with the guiding principle that teacher education should "be informed by the best available research and evidence and should foster reflective, critical and research-based learning" (Teaching Council, 2011, p. 10). Among the educational purposes of these changes is the strengthening of the integration of theory and practice, the development of an inquiry orientation, and an appreciation of the need to base professional decisions on evidence (Hall et al., 2018). The Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers (Teaching Council, 2011) of ITE mandate that all teacher education programmes accredited professionally in Ireland are obliged to qualify teachers as both reflective practitioners and researchers.

1.4 Research Question

Given the significance of identity formation during this phase of teacher education and the potential of ITE for steering change in the school curriculum and transforming teacher professionalism, this research study explores the extent to which an ITE programme at master's level has helped shape or influence graduate teachers' identity as teacher researchers. The aim of this research is to examine how these recent changes in ITE policy, specifically in relation to the policy focus on research, have impacted their identity and practice as teacher researchers. For the purposes of the study, a wide-ranging and inclusive definition of research has been adopted— one that embraces the notion of inquiry that involves the “systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work” (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993, pp. 23–24). This definition of teacher as researcher is underpinned by the notion that all teachers examine their own assumptions, pose questions, gather data and use inquiry to ensure educational opportunity, access and equity for all students (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009, p. 40). This definition will be further expanded on in Chapter 3.

This study uses a mixed-methodological approach — a discrete method of enquiry that uses both qualitative and quantitative tools, as the method of inquiry and analysis (Creswell, 2003; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2012). In considering the research question, two groups of participants were included — one group being the graduate teachers themselves and secondly, stakeholders in the wider field of education. The graduates provide personal insights into how their course of study helped shape their teacher researcher identities, through the completion of a questionnaire and through participation in focus groups interviews. The stakeholders, through participation in semi-structured interviews, provide knowledge from their interactions with the graduates and from policy dialogue and discourse in the wider education field. Combined, both provide a thick description of the case of study.

1.5 Guiding Questions for the Research

The study aims to answer the following primary research question:

How has the study of a Research Module, as a component of the Professional Master of Education in Primary Education (PMEP) programme, shaped the development of teacher identities as teacher researchers amongst beginning primary school teachers in an Irish school context?

The following guiding questions of the research were also developed, following a review of the literature, in order to address the main research question:

1. What are graduates' perceptions, attitudes and experiences of the Research Module completed as part of the PMEP programme?
2. What research practices have graduates adopted to date in their own teaching careers?
3. Has completing a research dissertation at master's level changed their perceptions of themselves as teacher researchers?
4. How are these graduates viewed by the wider education community?

1.6 The Personal Educational Philosophy of the Researcher

Creswell (2008) suggests that all researchers should present a professional biography as a means of adopting a reflexive approach, so that any potential biases, values and assumptions are made more transparent. Anfara and Mertz, (2006, p. 4) comment that:

Research is always carried out by an individual with a life and a lifeworld...a personality, a social context, and various personal and practical challenges and conflicts, all of which affect the research. (Anfara and Mertz, 2006, p. 4)

Argyris, Putnam and Smith (1985) argue that the researcher must be aware of the lens by which they observe the research problem and the research questions. It is critical therefore that I fully acknowledge and describe my own position as an 'insider researcher' situated within the context of this study (Creswell, 2008, p. 179).

In 2014, I was employed as Programme Director for the PMEP programme at Hibernia College. The PMEP programme is a required qualification for persons wishing to work as primary school teachers in the Republic of Ireland and a recognised teaching qualification within the European Union (EU). In 2014, the programme moved from a Higher Diploma in Arts in Primary Education at Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to a PMEP at Level 9 on the NQF. A substantial component of the new PMEP programme for students is the study of a research module and the

completion of a research project that requires the student to complete a 10,000-word dissertation. Students on the PMEP programme are post-graduate students, many of whom have completed undergraduate programmes of study in other disciplines that may not have required a research element or the completion of a dissertation.

As Director of the PMEP programme, I had lead responsibility for the management and enhancement of the programme of teaching and research and the implementation of the College's academic policy. The research problem that I first perceived was the impact of this component of study on students' progression through the programme. For some students, the research component proved challenging and some failed to see the relevance of research to their course of study and their ultimate role as primary school teachers. I found myself faced with a student who declared, "I don't want to be a researcher, I just want to teach." This is the basis for telling my story.

As a result of acknowledging and including my own experiential knowledge within this study, there are elements written in the first person as I discuss my role and acknowledge my perspectives. It is important to recognise that my values and beliefs have been shaped by my experiences, and they have had a bearing throughout this research process. I was mindful at all times of what Chavez (2008, p. 474) describes as "researcher bias"; when the researchers' personal values and experiences influence the research questions, design and data collection procedures. Throughout the study, I was reflexive and maintained criticality regarding my own work. I reflected on and questioned the conclusions I drew, the decisions I was making and considered factors that may have influenced them. These issues have been raised at this point as it is important to present these matters to the reader from the outset, so the reader has some sense of who I am in relation to the work (Bryman, 2012). Other more complex issues regarding my positionality will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

1.7 Expected Outcomes of the Study

Teacher education programmes are considered to be the first and perhaps most important stage in the development of student teachers' professional identity (Putnam and Borko, 1997; Wideen et al., 1998). As a teacher educator myself, I am eager to understand how a programme of study for student teachers shapes and develops their professional identity. Understanding how professional identity develops over the

duration of a teacher education programme will assist the preparation of student teachers for the rigours of teaching and will support students to engage in “a productive process of constructing their professional identities” (Izadinia, 2013, p. 695). Thus, gaining a better understanding of the process of identity formation will support a redesign of the PME curriculum that will help cultivate student teachers’ professional identity as teacher researchers.

Integrating research-based learning into teacher education courses at the undergraduate and master levels can be seen as part of an international effort to educate teachers for a fast-changing reality in schools, with continuous needs for development in the classroom (OECD, 2018). There have been increasing calls for teachers to engage in research as part of their ongoing professional development (European Commission, 2014; OECD, 2005; Smith and Sela, 2005). While some countries, such as Finland, have a long tradition of teacher education based on practitioner research (Hökkä and Eteläpelto, 2014), in Ireland, this is a relatively new phenomenon. As such, there is little empirical evidence as to whether the research engaged in by student teachers in the newly reconfigured ITE programmes makes any difference. The research findings from this study will help address this lack of empirical evidence highlighted by Sahlberg et al. (2018) in a review of ITE in Ireland.

Evident limitations of the study include the small scale of the research. This study involves graduates from one Higher Education Institution (HEI), Hibernia College, and the research findings do not claim to be representative of any population other than those involved. Despite these limitations, as a small-scale study, it is hoped that it will generate contextualised knowledge to develop a greater understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Yin, 2014). It may provide useful insights for teacher educators and policymakers about the wider process of ITE. For example, findings of this study may be useful for teacher educators in understanding the complexities that individual candidates face in the process of learning to teach. In a similar vein, policymakers may use findings from this study as a consideration in determining effective programmes for improving the quality of teachers.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This chapter is the first of six chapters and sets out the rationale of the research topic to the reader and the research focus and questions. The position of the writer as researcher is articulated and a broad policy context provides the backdrop to the research inquiry. This chapter concludes with an overview of the remaining chapters that make up this thesis.

Chapter 2 sets out the historical emergence and development of ITE policy at primary level in Ireland. Primary teacher education is discussed at length with a particular focus on the importance of the culture of research in education. The chapter concludes with a description of the site of study, Hibernia College.

Chapter 3 examines the literature in the field. This chapter offers a broad introduction to the general meaning of identity and then focuses specifically on the construct and understanding of teacher identity. This leads to an exploration of the literature on how teacher education programmes can influence and shape identity formation. The chapter concludes with an examination of how programmes of ITE have adopted a research-based approach and considers how reflection is a crucial cognitive practice in the research field.

Chapter 4 presents the appropriateness, choice and justification of the research methodology along with the researcher's positionality in relation to the research study. Epistemological assumptions are considered first, followed by a discussion of the study's research design. The data collection and analysis methods used in both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study are subsequently described, before discussing the integration of the methods. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the methodological limitations.

Chapter 5 presents both the research findings and discussion of these findings. The first section of this chapter provides the results of questionnaire, which was sent to graduates of the PMEP programme. Data analyses are presented in relation to the N=187 returned questionnaires (achieved rate of 37%). The second section of the chapter reports on the qualitative findings from the three focus groups (N= 3) with graduates of the PMEP programme and from the three semi-structured interviews (N=

3) with key stakeholders in the field of education. A discussion and analysis of the findings is presented and comparisons with results of other research studies are made within the context of literature already explored.

In the final chapter, Chapter 6, the findings of the thesis are discussed in relation to the research questions and previous literature presented. The strengths and limitations of the research are outlined. Finally, the thesis concludes with an outline of the practical implications of the findings and the implications for future research are considered.

Chapter Two: The Context of the Research

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the relevant historical context to the study, from the establishment of the first training institutions for primary school teachers through to today's all-graduate profession. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents the historical overview of ITE in Ireland at primary level. It examines the policy changes that have occurred in respect of the development of a research-informed profession, since the establishment of the Teaching Council in 2006. The second part of this chapter provides a detailed look at the specific site of study of the current research, namely Hibernia College. Student teachers on the ITE programme at Hibernia College are already graduates and undertake the programme fully cognisant of the ultimate outcome for the programme (i.e. to be fully qualified primary teachers recognised by the Teaching Council of Ireland). The programme of study undertaken by graduates of Hibernia College is outlined, with particular reference to the elements that pertain to their study of research.

2.2 Initial Teacher Education in Ireland

Despite a shifting economic climate (Clarke and Killeavy, 2012) and notable performativity pressures, teaching has remained an attractive profession in Ireland as reflected in the number of students applying for third-level degree courses in education (O'Donoghue and Harford, 2018). Education has always been regarded as a key element of national identity, and Ireland has prided itself both on the high quality of its education system and the widely acknowledged high calibre of its teachers (O'Donoghue and Harford, 2018).

Since the establishment of the Teaching Council in 2006, ITE has become a dominant policy focus with major changes in the policy, regulation and provision landscapes having occurred here over the last decade (O'Grady, 2017). Changes in ITE have resulted in the reconfiguration and reconceptualisation of ITE programmes at primary and post-primary levels. Both primary and post-primary ITE programmes, concurrent and consecutive were reconfigured in 2012 and 2014 respectively. The traditional three year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree for primary school teachers in Ireland was extended to four years, while the predominant model for post-primary teachers,

the consecutive model (Hyland, 2012) now consists of the completion of an undergraduate degree followed by the completion of the two-year full-time PME. This latter PME route is also available for primary school teachers. For the purposes of this study, the following section sets out the historical emergence and development of Ireland's ITE system at primary level. It further explores policy changes that have impacted ITE since the establishment of the Teaching Council in 2006, paying particular attention to changes related to policy development in the area of research.

Part 1: History of ITE in Ireland at Primary Level

2.3 Historical Background of Primary Teaching in Ireland (1831–1922)

In 1831, Lord Stanley, Chief Secretary for Ireland, set out the proposed structure and aims of what was to be 'a system of National Education in Ireland' (Stanley, 1831, p1). Prior to that, the Fourteenth Report from the Commissioners of the Board of Education in Ireland (1812) and two reports of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry in 1825 and 1826 were instrumental in framing a system of education in Ireland. The 1812 report made a series of recommendations for the establishment of a National Board to administer a non-denominational system of education and to establish teacher training institutions (Walsh, 2014). The National Board considered teachers to be significant agents of social control and political stability and, as such, they were to be trained to good habits, in line with the interests of the State, and therefore anxious to promote a spirit of obedience (Clarke, Farren, O'Doherty, 2019). Teachers were trained in Model schools and, subsequently, a national training college was established in Marlborough Street, Dublin in 1838. The Central Model School in Marlborough Street was the first of a series of Model Schools in Ireland set up as part of the state's teacher training programme; by 1867, there were 27 Model Schools in operation around the country. As set out by the Chief Secretary for Ireland Stanley in 1831, this was the first system of ITE in Ireland.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the Roman Catholic hierarchy made a number of efforts to convince the government to recognise that the majority of national schools were denominational and to change the national school rules to take account of this reality. The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education in Ireland, also known as the Powis Commission (1868–1870), found that teacher training in Ireland

was unsatisfactory. The Powis Commission recommended the phasing out of Model Schools, and a move towards state-supported denominational teacher training was proposed. From 1883, a two-year training programme was introduced, which was intensive in nature and prepared teachers to practise a structured and didactic pedagogy in classrooms, largely influenced by Joyce's *A Handbook of School Management and Methods of Teaching*. Payment by results was introduced at primary level following the 1870 Report from the Powis Commission.

From the mid-1890's, a new education movement emerged which focused on child-centred approaches to teaching. New training programmes for primary teachers were introduced in 1897. Student teachers were required to come to an understanding of contemporary progressive approaches to education as these were emphasised in the Revised Programme for National Schools, which was introduced in 1900 (O'Doherty, 2016). Later on a two-year course was made obligatory for all student teachers. The following section considers the preparation of primary school teachers in Ireland during the period 1922- 1980.

2.3.1 Initial Teacher Education at Primary Level (Post-1922)

Ireland became an independent state in 1922 and, by that time, there were five primary teacher training colleges in operation: St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin; Our Lady of Mercy College, Carysfort, Blackrock, Dublin; Church of Ireland College, Rathmines, Dublin; Mary Immaculate College, Limerick; De La Salle College, Waterford. Primary teaching colleges were providing a two-year course of training in single-sex, denominational institutions with a heavy emphasis on the socialisation of student teachers to fulfil well-defined tasks in schools (Irish National Teacher's Organisation (INTO, 2016). For a newly independent Irish state, the need to address the weakened cultural identity was considered a priority for education; hence, there was a dominance of trainee teachers from Irish-speaking backgrounds in teaching colleges (O'Donovan, 2017).

A noticeable change to this model of training occurred in 1933 when the teacher training colleges adopted a new structure for their programmes. This was divided into three components: (a) a professional course in educational studies; (b) a general education in academic subjects; and (c) an optional course. Education was

reorganised as Principles of Teaching (O'Donovan, 2013). Trainee teachers taught in schools near the various colleges for blocks of up to six weeks per year and were monitored by Department of Education inspectors. "Pious patriots" was the term Garvin (2005, p. 203) used to summarise the professional identity for primary teachers in the first few decades of post-independence Ireland, capturing the mix of cultural nationalism and religious commitment expected of them. As far as a culture of research was concerned, Coolahan (2004, p. 55) noted that:

There was very little time for personal reflection and little emphasis on extra reading by the students. The libraries were inadequately stocked and little used. The colleges had very little academic autonomy...Lecturers were neither expected nor facilitated to engage in educational research, other than lecture preparation. The retention of scholarly or research interests was a matter for themselves.

The next significant development to occur was the publishing of the Investment in Education Report (1965) by the OECD in conjunction with the Department of Education. The findings of this report succeeded in increasing economic provision for education. As Minister O'Malley asserted in 1967, Ireland was a small and poor country that could not afford to spend less on education (Walsh, 2016). It became clear that major reforms were required in tune with many other social, economic and cultural changes in society. The Commission on Higher Education Report (1967) recommended changes in the education departments of universities with a new emphasis on research and post-graduate courses in education. In 1974, the colleges became known as Colleges of Education rather than teacher training colleges and these new Colleges of Education quickly assumed a more active role in structuring courses to include theory and psychology (Coolahan, 1981). Education was now considered the key to providing a skilled workforce for a new and modern economy (O'Sullivan, 2006). For ITE, this resulted in student teachers experiencing a more theoretical underpinning to their studies. An awareness of the need for, and the importance of, research into education was emerging as the Educational Research Centre was established in 1966 to conduct research studies on the qualitative aspects of the education service (OECD, 2003).

2.3.2 The Introduction of the Bachelor of Education Degree (1974)

The 1970s continued as a time of investment and development in ITE in Ireland. During this time, university departments of education, where post-primary teachers were being educated, began expanding and appointing staff who were prominent in research. Staff in the Primary Colleges of Education and in the universities came to see research as an integral part of their professional responsibility (O'Donoghue, Harford and O'Doherty, 2017, p. 145). Perhaps the most significant move towards the professionalisation of primary teaching occurred in 1974, with the introduction of a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree for primary school teachers in Ireland. The B.Ed. was now a three-year degree that replaced the existing two-year National Teacher programme.

The introduction of the degree programme occurred in a time when the education sector was placing more focus on research and development. Within a short period of time, the primary teaching profession became an all-graduate one with a mixture of concurrent and consecutive ITE programmes on offer. This represented a change for primary school teachers, who were now encouraged to reflect on and discuss their practice. These changes and initiatives pointed to an acknowledgement of the importance of providing ongoing development and education for teachers. For the first time, research based on Irish education was becoming available (Coolahan, 2007). ITE was “enriched and deepened by a contemporaneous flowering of educational research, and of scholarly associations with an educational research interest” (Coolahan, 2007 p. 8). Degree status facilitated teachers in undertaking further postgraduate studies and the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (founded in 1976) provided an active forum for educational discussion (Walsh, 2016). The Reading Association of Ireland (RAI), was established in 1975 to support the development of reading, language and literacy, and to encourage reflection and dialogue among those involved in education. Primary school teachers were now encouraged to reflect on and discuss their practice; when viewed alongside the establishment in the 1970s of the new centres for the professional development of teachers, it demonstrates a significant step in encouraging and cultivating a culture of research in teaching. The teacher centres, now known as Education Centres, aimed to support teachers in their work; to provide leadership in education; and to promote educational research and innovation. These changes and initiatives point to an acknowledgement of the importance of

providing on-going development and education for teachers. For the first time, research based on Irish education was becoming available (Coolahan, 2007), another significant development of a research culture in teaching in Ireland.

2.3.3 Initial Teacher Education at Primary Level (1980–2000)

The 1980s in Ireland were economically difficult times, and this was mirrored in a slowdown in developments in education. Coolahan (2004, p. 9) describes this slowdown and a number of policy ‘wobbles’ as almost undoing the progress that had been made in education in Ireland in the previous decade. Colleges of Education were closed and attempts were also made to close a number of education faculties within the university sector. The 1990s were years of social and economic changes internationally; industries began to grow, migration became a feature of life in many countries and the new concept of a knowledge based society was emerging. For Ireland, these were also years of review and analysis of policies in education. If Ireland was to be a part of the new economic developments and opportunities that were presenting themselves, it was acknowledged that a quality education system was not only essential but a quality teaching profession was also required (Coolahan, 2007).

In June 1991, the OECD published its review of Irish education, with particular reference to the teaching profession. The report deemed the standard of teacher educators to be high and well placed to provide a foundation on which to build. Referring to the concept of a continuum of teacher education, the review stated that: “It is our basic contention that the education and training for this career ([teaching]) should be continuing and not seen simply as a preparation for and introduction to it” (OECD, 1991, p. 100). The report clearly viewed teaching as a career during which the education of the teachers themselves was structured and ongoing. The ‘3 I’s’ of ITE — Initial, Induction and In-service — were seen as complementary. ITE, which was the remit of the Colleges of Education, continued to develop as programmes adopted new approaches.

In 1999, a Working Group on Primary Pre-Service Teacher Education report, entitled *Preparing Teachers for the Twenty-first century*, recommended “a root and branch reform based on a re-conceptualisation of initial teacher education” (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2002, p. 19). Among the recommendations made were

the extension of ITE courses, the restructuring of course content to allow for more cross-curricular integration, greater emphasis on the development of reflective practitioners and closer links with school personnel on teaching practice. Specifically, the report proposed the extension of the B.Ed. course from three to four years. The report raised issues including the lack of integration within the B.Ed., an over-reliance on the transmission model, over-crowded programmes and the lack of time for student reflection (DES, 2002). The report advocated a reduction in the time spent at formal lectures in favour of smaller group work and personal study. However in 2002, ITE was not a political priority and Burke (2009, p. 15) argues that the colleges were constrained by the “piecemeal nature of the B.Ed. programme and the external examiner system, by the overloaded nature of programmes and by the brevity and artificiality of the teaching practice experience”. Dolan (2012) argues that the reforms may simply have been too radical for those responsible for teacher education at the time.

2.4 Establishment of the Teaching Council of Ireland (2006)

The responsibility for policy formation around ITE devolved to the Teaching Council of Ireland following its establishment in 2006, as the body charged with over-seeing teacher education policy. The Teaching Council remit included responsibility over entry standards, courses, in-service provision, research, professional codes of behaviour and the review and accreditation of teacher education programmes. The Teaching Council commissioned a report by Conway et al. (2009) to inform the debate on the continuum of ITE. The report entitled *Learning To Teach And Its Implications For The Continuum Of Teacher Education*, looked at teacher education across nine countries, including Ireland, and set out a series of recommendations and findings, which have informed Teaching Council policy documents.

In December 2010, the Teaching Council established an Advisory Group on ITE (Conway, 2012). The group was tasked with advising the Council on the criteria and guidelines to be used by providers in reconceptualising programmes of ITE at primary and post-primary level. Subsequent Teaching Council documents, *Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and guidelines for programme providers* (Teaching Council, 2011a) and the *Strategy for the review and professional accreditation of existing programmes* (Teaching Council, 2011b) identified prerequisites for accreditation. A number of

significant changes to all programmes were identified by this group. These included: (a) an increase in the time allocated for school placement that would allow for the development of a more reflective, inquiry-orientated approach to the school placement and facilitate the development of the teacher as reflective practitioner; (b) engagement in data gathering and critically analysing and evaluating relevant knowledge; and (c) reflecting critically on practice on an ongoing basis so as to inform that practice.

These changes resulted in the reconceptualising of all programmes, with university registrars agreeing that postgraduate teacher education programmes would be validated at master's level in 2014 and the extension of the three-year B.Ed. programme to four years. As already alluded to in Chapter One, the Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers, had as its guiding principle the notion that ITE should “be informed by the best available research and evidence and should foster reflective, critical and research-based learning” (Teaching Council, 2011b, p. 10). The Council’s Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers in effect made it mandatory that all ITE programmes accredited professionally were obliged to qualify teachers as both reflective practitioners and researchers. Towards this end, the Foundation Studies element of ITE would “provide research-informed insights into student teachers’ understanding of the practices of teaching, learning and assessment” (Teaching Council, 2011a, p. 13) and provide for “the development of student teachers as researchers and lifelong learners” (p. 14). These guidelines also stipulated that ITE staff “should be research active and take lead roles with regard to assimilating, conducting, publishing and supervising research with appropriate staff development support” (p. 19). Three of the Teaching Council’s expected learning outcomes for graduates of programmes of ITE make explicit reference to research. Graduates are expected to: (a) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of educational research and its contribution to teaching, learning and assessment (p. 25); (b) Engage in data gathering and critically analyse and evaluate relevant knowledge and research (p. 27); and (c) Conduct and apply relevant research as appropriate to his/her teaching context, identifying, critically analysing and integrating new knowledge regarding curriculum, pedagogy and assessment into his/her practice” (p. 28). This shift was clearly reflected in the Teaching Council’s ITE Guidelines as well as in its Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education where it states that the duration of the placement

should allow for the development of a “more reflective, enquiry oriented approach and facilitate the development of the teacher as reflective practitioner” (Teaching Council, 2011b, p. 16). The goal was to ensure that ITE would develop knowledge-of practice, knowledge-for practice and also student teachers’ capacity and skill for reflecting critically on their own practice and that of others (Teaching Council, 2011b).

By 2012, a range of new directions had been set in motion in ITE in Ireland, with the establishment in 2012 of a review panel tasked with examining the structure of ITE provision in Ireland. The panel, chaired by Professor Pasi Sahlberg proposed a vision for the restructuring of ITE provision so that, by 2030, ITEs would offer research-based teacher education. Following recommendations from the panel, state-funded ITE provision in Ireland was significantly re-structures, resulting in the consolidation of the previously 19 state-funded providers into 6 larger, university-based, centres (Sahlberg, Munn and Furlong, 2012). It was further decided in autumn 2017, that a second review should be carried out to report on the extent to which the recommendations of the initial report had been implemented. The purpose of the review was to assess the current state of ITE in Ireland with reference to the recommendations set out in the Sahlberg 1 report. The Structure of Teacher Education in Ireland: Review of Progress in Implementing Reform was carried out in May 2018. Following this review the panel noted that while student research was generally focused on pedagogy and other classroom issues and was of a rather high standard, the review team was not convinced that all students understood the value that a research approach would have in their future positions as teachers. The review team were of the view that all students prior to their graduation should have a consistent and mature understanding of how and why teaching should be a research-based profession. Furthermore, the report called for the culture of ITE to be streamlined so that students would experience a research-based profession rather than just learning about research methods. Joint research projects with teachers in their institutions and in placement schools were suggested as a way of ensuring this cultural change. Finally the report recommended that all ITE providers “should ensure that students understand not just how to read and conduct research but how to think as researchers” (Sahlberg et al, 2018, p.28).

This section has outlined the historical background of initial teacher education in Ireland at primary level through to today's all-graduate profession. The changes in ITE primary since the establishment of the first training colleges in 1831 are discussed with the new emphasis on research in education that emerged in the 1970s noted as significant. The establishment of the Bachelor of Education programme in 1974, seen as part of the move towards teaching becoming an all-graduate profession is highlighted. The section concludes with a discussion on the role of the Teaching Council and ITE, with some of the key points on the development of a research informed profession. The following section introduces the site of study, Hibernia College.

Part 2: Hibernia College

2.5 The Specific Site of the Research

As discussed in Section 2.3, ITE in Ireland is provided by a number of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), most of which are state supported. In 2003, the DES recognised the qualifications of a private College for the provision of ITE. The research study presented here examines a specific teacher education programme — the PMEP course offered by this provider — namely Hibernia College. The PMEP programme explored in this study is among a suite of courses offered by Hibernia College. The programme is validated at Level 9 and is accredited by both the Teaching Council of Ireland and Quality and Qualifications (QQI) Ireland. The College sets out in its validation document an overarching aim of the programme to:

...prepare, develop and support reflective and critical educators who are academically strong, pedagogically skilled, technology empowered and responsive to the needs of all citizens in a diverse global society. (Hibernia College Validation p.10)

Students on the programme at Hibernia College are already graduates and undertake the programme fully cognisant of the ultimate outcome for the programme — to be a fully qualified primary teacher. The programme outline satisfies the criteria and guidelines of the Teaching Council in ensuring that it provides appropriate, high-level preparation of teachers. It fulfils the specific programme content and structure

requirements for a primary consecutive programme of two years' duration comprising 120 credits of which 50% is allocated to Foundation Studies and Professional Studies, 40% is allocated to school placement and 10% is allocated as discretionary time as per the Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers (Teaching Council, 2011a).

The teaching and learning environment at Hibernia College is designed so that students engage with the programme content, with their tutors and with each other across virtual and physical learning spaces. The PMEP programme consists of a sequence of modules that reflect the contemporary issues faced by teachers today and the skills and knowledge required of them in order to be expert teachers who enable effective pupil learning. In particular, it recognises the importance of ensuring that student teachers consider that teaching itself is understood and practised as a form of self-critical learning by them — learning that is driven by inquiry, reflection and improvements based on evidence (Teaching Council, 2011).

2.5.1 PMEP Research Module Outline

The Research Module studied at Hibernia College is one of ten modules aimed at preparing and equipping graduates to become critical consumers of research as practitioners by providing them with the knowledge and understanding necessary to evaluate research appropriately. The PMEP programme modules are outlined in Figure 1. The Research Module is awarded 10 ECT credits out of 120 ECT credits.

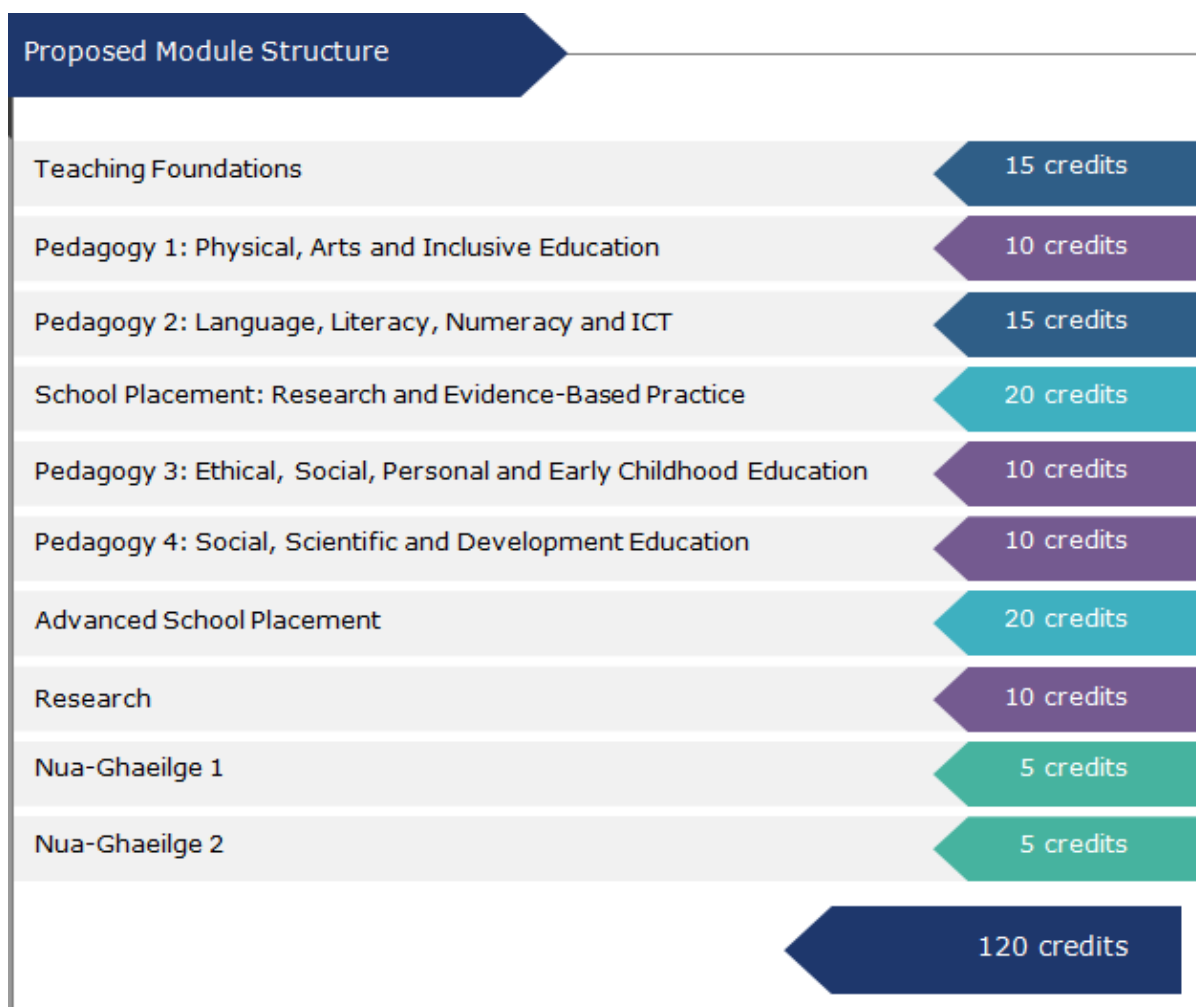


Fig. 1: Outline of PMEP Programme Modules

A stated aim of the Research module, is to provide the primary sector with holistic, highly competent, and research-active practitioners. It is intended that graduates will be both critically reflective and reflexive in their approach to teaching. As such, the research module on the programme seeks to offer learners the opportunity to consolidate and then capitalise on their learning in the context of research in teaching. Student teachers are expected to conduct a small-scale pedagogical dissertation, which aims to combine teaching and research under the supervision of College Supervisors. Student teachers attend face-to-face sessions and study online. These sessions are intended to introduce students to knowledge of research methodologies and support the development of their dissertation. The final dissertation, which is 10,000 words in length, is assessed and awarded marks.

The learning outcomes for this module state that on successful completion of the module, students should be able to:

1. Critically evaluate and assess the reliability and validity of a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods
2. Synthesise the salient principles of research methods and differentiate between a range of strategies for conducting educational research, including case studies, action research, experiments, documentary research, evaluation research and focus groups
3. Integrate the centrality of ethical practice into educational research
4. Write a small-scale professional investigation of a curriculum topic using a selection of appropriate research instruments to gather data and to draw research conclusions from the data presented in order to provide an evidence-based plan of work across a curriculum area for a range of classes (Hibernia College Validation Document, p.135)

Students on the PMEP programme study a range of areas throughout this module which are included in Table 1. The module provides an introduction to a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and approaches that involve mixing methods. The module outlines the different epistemological and ideological foundations of contrasting research paradigms and includes exposure to the techniques involved in analysing both qualitative and quantitative data, as well as considering ethical issues relating to research.

Table 1: PMEP Research Module Content

Session 1	Improving Educational Practice and the Role of Research in Teaching
Session 2	The Philosophy of Research Methodology
Session 3	Introduction to Self-Study Action Research
Session 4	Ethical Behaviour in Research
Session 5	The Literature Review
Session 6	Research Design and Data-Gathering Methods

Session 7	Strategies for Conducting Research in Education: Action Research and Case Study
Session 8	Examining Truth Claims and Bias: Objectivity, Validity and Reliability
Session 9	Quantitative Data Analysis
Session 10	Examining Truth Claims and Analysis of Qualitative Data
Session 11	Completing a Research Project and Critiquing Research

In addition to the study of research, students are required to independently investigate a research question(s) of their choice, producing a coherent review of the relevant literature, a logical discussion and a clearly communicated set of conclusions in the form of a dissertation. In choosing an area in which to conduct research, students are guided to align with one of the areas listed below in Figure 2. These include a) Teaching, Learning and Assessment; b) Learning technologies; c) Inclusion and Diversity and d) Psychological, Sociological, Philosophical. When choosing a research area, they are also asked to consider their practice and experiences to date in schools and their wider experience on the PMEP programme. The purpose of the dissertation is to enable students to work independently and demonstrate the ability to plan, implement and evaluate a small-scale empirical investigation that integrates concepts, theories, knowledge and skills central to the curriculum on their programme of study.



Fig. 2: PMEP Areas of Research

In March 2017, Hibernia College began publishing Hibernia College Primary Education Papers as a means of disseminating student teachers' research. The impetus of this publication was not only to showcase high-quality research of graduate teachers but to provide a platform for student teachers to disseminate their research. The Hibernia College Primary Education Papers presents a snapshot of the research activity undertaken by students on the programme and, for many students, is an opportunity to have their research published. To date, three volumes of the papers have been published.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the historical background of ITE at primary level in Ireland from the establishment of the first training institutions through to today's all-graduate profession. It highlighted some of the key points in the emergence of teaching as a research-informed profession. It explored how the recent policy context in Ireland has reframed the structure of ITE and the role of research in teacher education programmes. The chapter concluded with a description of the case, Hibernia College. The programme of study Hibernia College was presented with a specific focus on the research component of the PMEP programme. It is envisaged that an understanding of how the programme at Hibernia College is delivered may provide a deeper understanding of the responses and findings discussed in Chapter 5.

The findings and discussions from the research literature presented here are intended to address the research question; How has the study of a Research Module, as a component of the Professional Master of Education in Primary Education (PMEP) programme, shaped the development of teacher identities as teacher researchers amongst beginning primary school teachers in an Irish school context. It was clear from the literature that very little research has been carried out in an Irish context which addresses the impact of policy changes at ITE level on the practices of beginning teachers. This study will examine the emerging identity of a group of student teachers as teacher researchers and examine their current research practices as they negotiate their early careers. It is hoped that the current thesis will help provide new knowledge to this area.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature that has influenced and shaped the thesis and is set out in two parts. Part one begins by discussing the theoretical framework underpinning the construct of teachers' professional identities. This leads to a critical analysis of literature that explores how programmes of ITE can influence and shape identity formation for student teachers.

The second part of the chapter explores the understandings of educational research and its role in the potential transformation of practice. More specifically, attention is drawn to the way in which teaching itself is increasingly defined as an evidence-based or research-based profession. Part two concludes with an examination of how programmes of ITE internationally have adopted a research-based approach and considers crucial cognitive practices in the research field.

Part 1: Identity Formation

3.2 Identity Formation

Identity, regarded by many as a complex and multi-faceted construct, refers to a person's individuality, uniqueness or the personal characteristics that set her or him apart from others. While in its denotational form, identity refers to "our sense of self, or who we are" (Luk, 2008, p. 121), its meaning has changed over time. Sociologists claim that identity is formed as a result of external, social, political, and economic forces (Cote and Levine, 2002) while, psychologists argue that identity is concerned with the self both internally and individually. In the past, identity was viewed as something inside of us, fixed and unchanging, a stable entity possessed by an individual (Fairbanks et al., 2010). More recent social theory proposes the temporal quality of identity and the constant becoming in which identity is neither a fixed course nor a destination (Wenger, 1998). Instead, identity becomes a work in progress that is shaped by our efforts, our past, future and present, and is continuously negotiated.

A number of scholars have suggested frameworks for understanding how we construct and reconstruct our identities, highlighting different lines of inquiry and different

dimensions (Blackmore, 2004, 2011; Boler, 1999; Bradbury and Gunter, 2006; Day and Lee, 2011; Eacott, 2015; Gunter, 2001; Hargreaves, 1998,2005; Leithwood and Beatty, 2008; Lingard et al., 2003; Sugrue, 2005; Thomson, 2009, 2011). The concept of identity deployed in this thesis privileges the social perspective of the person. Borg (2017 p. 127) argues that identities are “socially, culturally, and politically constructed, indicating that identity construction is influenced by many factors in people’s lives”. It is consistent with Danielewicz’s (2001) statement that identity encompasses how we understand ourselves and how others understand us. The view of identity for the current thesis is further influenced by the notion that individuals can hold multiple identities and these may change over time as new identities are constructed and reconstructed in various contexts (Richardson and Alsup, 2015). This conceptual framework is grounded in Wenger’s (1998) concept of identity. Wenger’s (1998) seminal work shows that there is a profound connection between identity and practice. According to Wenger (1998), identity is negotiated experience within engagement in multiple communities of practice. Similarly, Wenger argues that an individual’s identities within different communities, whilst distinct, are not wholly separate:

An identity is thus more than just a single trajectory; instead, it should be viewed as a nexus of multi-membership. As such a nexus, identity is not a unity but neither is it simply fragmented...Considering a person as having multiple identities would miss all the subtle ways in which our various forms of participation, no matter how distinct, can interact, influence each other and require co-ordination (Wenger, 1998, p. 159).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a broad, comprehensive analysis of the literature in relation to identity; instead, this study will focus on the formation of both teacher and student teacher identity as it relates to the research study.

3.2.1 Teacher Identity

Just as the broader construct of identity proved problematic to define, the meaning of teacher identity has also been difficult to conceptualise because there are many different perspectives (Sachs, 2005; Gee, 2000; Lizarraga, 2010b; Wenger, 1998). Similar to the notion of identity itself, the term “teacher identity” is not uniformly defined (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004; Izadinia, 2013) as it too is complex in nature and

encompasses various elements. More recently, scholars in the fields of psychology, anthropology and sociology have challenged previous notions of a fixed identity and have preferred to define teacher identity using words like fluid, multiple and dynamic (Fairbanks et al., 2010; Holland et al., 1998). For many, teacher identity is defined as the way in which a teacher views themselves as a professional. Their understanding and construct of identity determines to a great extent how successful they are as teachers, how long they stay in the profession and how they feel about themselves as teachers within their classroom and school environments. Lasky (2005) suggests that it is how members of a profession define themselves to themselves and others or as suggested by Trede, Macklin and Bridges (2011, p. 11), “a way of being and a lens to evaluate, learn and make sense of practice”. Wenger (1998) describes teachers’ identities as rich and complex because they are produced in a rich and complex set of relations of practice.

Most contemporary research suggests that teacher identity is constructed in a social context and that rather than being stable and fixed, it is shifting and dynamic (Rodgers and Scott, 2008). Furthermore, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) agree that when one becomes emotionally attached to the teacher role, that role becomes part of who that person is; it becomes an organising element in teachers’ lives. Teacher identity is understood as a pedagogical tool for professional development (Olsen, 2008), a lived experience of participation within a community (Wenger, 1998) and “multifaceted, multidimensional and multi-layered” (Cooper and Olson, 1996 p. 80). For some, teacher identity is located at the intersection of both the personal and the professional lives of teachers (Brock, 2012). It is embedded in the discourse of values and principles (Urban, 2008; Greene, 2010; Brock, 2012); personal qualities, ideology and relationships (Dalli, 2008); professional knowledge and expertise (Dalli, 2008; Brock, 2012; Duignan, 2012); training and qualifications (Lyons, 2011; Moloney and Pope, 2013; Breen, 2014); status (Madden, 2012; Moloney and Pope, 2013) and rewards (Brock, 2012; Boyd, 2013). Others have developed more specific definitions of teacher identity, for example, as subject matter or pedagogical experts (Beijaard et al., 2000). In fact, there is a general view held that one person can enact many different teacher identities both across and within a variety of contexts (Moje and Luke, 2009) and so the term “identities” is now often preferred. This more recent work informs our understanding that teachers have multiple identities that are socially constructed and

reconstructed through the negotiation of their everyday interactions (Erickson, 2004; Freedman and Appleman, 2008; Moje and Luke, 2009).

While the development of teacher identity is sometimes presented as unproblematic, most researchers point to the struggle teachers face as they try to give meaning to different, sometimes conflicting, perspectives (Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, 2004). Literature suggests that teacher identity is not stable or predetermined (Beijaard et al., 2004; Maclean and White, 2007; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009); rather, it is dynamic and created and recreated during an active process of learning to teach (Trent, 2010). In other words, a range of internal factors like motivation and emotion (Akyeampong and Stephens, 2002; Olsen, 2008; Rodgers and Scott, 2008) and external variables such as context and prior experiences (Akyeampong and Stephens, 2002; Smagorinsky et al., 2004; Findlay, 2006) can influence and shape teacher identity formation and leave it in continual flux. Along these same lines, Pennington (2015, p. 17) conceptualises teacher identity as a construct or mental image of what "being a teacher" means that guides teachers' practices as they aim to enact "being a teacher" (p. 17). This theory of teacher identity relates more specifically to how teachers view themselves within classroom settings, as well as how they project their future identities. Pennington (2015) explains that the identity a teacher develops affects the teacher's choices in content and methods. Philipp (2007) claims that teachers know, believe, feel, participate and belong, thereby suggesting that the term teacher identity emerges as a sociocultural construct that includes all of these aspects of teachers' lives. Collopy defines teacher identity as "the constellation of interconnected beliefs and knowledge about subject matter, teaching, and learning as well as personal self-efficacy and orientation towards work and change" (Collopy, 2003, p. 289).

In summary, the literature reveals that teachers' identity is manifested in how teachers see themselves as teachers, how they think others see them as teachers and in how they experience their teaching at a personal, professional and social level. This is not a fixed property of a teacher but rather a process that evolves and changes as teachers gain experience, consolidate professional knowledge and adopt plans of personal and professional development (Tsui, 2003). This process is significantly influenced by the culture and the sociopolitical context in which teachers live and work. Section 3.2.2 examines the process of learning to teach, a time when teachers

construct personal images of being a teacher, which are fundamental notions in professional identity formation

3.2.2 Student Teacher Identity

The focus of this thesis is on the development of teacher identity amongst a group of teachers who have recently graduated from a master's programme of study. This section reviews some aspects of how identity is constructed and the role ITE programmes play in identity formation. Friesen and Besley (2013) contend that an important aspect of the process of learning to become a teacher is the development of identity. Research on teachers' professional identity formation is seen as relevant to teacher educators and mentors in schools in order to better understand and conceptualise the support student teachers need (Volkman and Anderson, 1998). From this perspective, Bullough wrote that:

Teacher identity—what beginning teachers believe about teaching and learning as self-as-teacher—is of vital concern to teacher education; it is the basis for meaning making and decision making. Teacher education must begin, then, by exploring the teaching self (Bullough, 1997, p. 21)

In his seminal work on the 'becoming teacher', Lortie (1975) suggests that student teachers bring a history that informs their beliefs about teaching and the work of teachers. The late 1980s and 1990s witnessed a burgeoning of research focused on student teacher identity, examining in the main how teacher identity is formed, its robust nature and how teacher identity influences classroom practices (Britzman, 1992; Calderhead and Robson, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Knowles, 1992; Knowles and Holt-Reynolds, 1991). This time of transition—from student to teacher—was explored and reported by Britzman in her seminal text, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach* (2003). Considered a "classic in teacher education" (Segall, 2006, p. 181), her research documents the journey of two pre-service teachers through their final practicum during the 1980s. As they negotiate the tensions that shape the transition from formal teacher education coursework into the final field experience, Britzman observes:

Learning to teach—like teaching itself—is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become (Britzman, 2003, p. 31).

In considering the identity of student teachers, it is important to understand that student teachers do not come to ITE programmes value free. As Bullough (1998) argues, life history has formed and shaped their belief system. Equally, student teachers do not arrive void of lay theories regarding teachers and teaching and learning (Sugrue, 1997). Although most student teachers have no teaching experience prior to commencement of their ITE programmes, all have been in the classroom as pupils. They bring with them an image of themselves as a teacher that is created by both their apprenticeship of observation and life histories as pupils (Knowles, 1992; Sugrue, 1997). These past experiences influence the creation of student teachers' identities and the associated attitudes, values and beliefs, which will in turn influence their thinking and their practice (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2010; Calderhead and Robson, 1991; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005; Knowles and Holt-Reynolds, 1991). Many have recognised that this reconciliation between the personal and professional identity is not without difficulties for the student teacher as they seek to construct an identity. Pillen, Beijaard and Den Brok (2013, p. 674) classified these tensions into three categories: (a) the first tension is the change in role the student experiences from novice to expert; (b) the second is the conflict between the desired and actual support given to the student; and (c) the third is the conflict over the conceptions of how the student teaches and the pupils learn. Some scholars believe that student teachers have not yet formed an essential professional identity but have instead formed a student teacher identity (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2006; Flores and Day, 2006; Levin and He, 2008). Moreover, the examination of student teachers' perceptions of their future selves may reveal doubts and unrealistic expectations, as well as provide a road map for developing the skills or dispositions required to become the teacher they aspire to be (Brand and Dolloff, 2002). Life history, the personal and those experiences of schools and teaching that the pre-service teachers bring with them to teacher preparation courses affect the way they manage the 'becoming' process.

3.2.3 Studies on ITE Programmes and Identity Development

ITE programmes are considered by some to be the first and perhaps the most important stage in the development of student teachers' professional identity (Putnam and Borko, 1997; Wideen et al., 1998). Gaining a better understanding of the process of identity formation can positively inform teacher education design (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). In numerous studies, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, 2010, 2011) demonstrate how ITE programmes are "the ideal starting point for instilling not only an awareness of the need to develop an identity, but also a strong sense of the ongoing shifts that will occur in that identity" (2009, p. 186). They argue that developing a strong sense of professional identity as a teacher is crucial to the well-being of new members of the profession. Following a study of graduates they observed that while student teachers are often able to describe the individual tasks and roles of a teacher, they appear to be unable to articulate a clear sense of what it is to be a teacher (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011). Others have identified the need for ITE programmes to acknowledge this period as a critical time for identity construction both in the coursework undertaken as part of degree completion and in the practical experiences in schools. However, some believe that fundamental change is less likely to occur (Korthagen, 2004). Korthagen (2004) suggests that the transition of identity is a difficult and slow process. He states further that when student teachers enter the ITE stage, their beliefs and cognition are stubborn, and they tend to use the knowledge and information ITE provides them with to confirm rather than confront and adjust their original beliefs and cognition. However Sachs (2005) observes that ITE and teacher educators have a central role in the development of new kinds of teacher identities.

3.2.4 Beginning Teachers' Identity Formation

Many studies have concluded that the effects of ITE programmes on the actual practices of teachers are in fact generally meagre (Brouwer and Korthagen, 2005). Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) argued that educational ideas developed during ITE are "washed out" during practice placement. Comparable findings were reported in a review by Veenman (1984), which pointed to the challenges teachers experienced once they had left ITE. Similar indications of a lack of transfer from ITE to practice have emerged in studies conducted by Feiman-Nemser (1990) and Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon (1998). These studies conclude that newly qualified teachers do not feel sufficiently prepared by ITE and come to see school-based colleagues as the ones

who know how to go about teaching (Brouwer and Korthagen, 2005). Flores and Day (2006) suggest that tensions exist in the first few years of teaching as professionals work to make a place for themselves in the education world. Some teachers feel isolated, and experience a disconnect between what they were doing in college and classroom expectations (Flores, 2001; Huberman, 1989). Flores and Day (2006) found that reflecting upon their experiences as student teachers at university, the majority of the NQT's spoke of the inadequate preparation provided to them in order to deal with the complex and demanding nature of their daily job in schools and in classrooms. They also found that teachers had experienced both inner and practical tensions between the awareness of the theories learned at university and the management of the complex and demanding reality of the classroom (Flores and Day, 2006). This resonates with findings from Sohlberg et al. (2007) who suggest that NQT's indicate that their actual learning happens on the job, in the practice of working with pupils (Sohlberg et al., 2007), rather than as a result of their experience of formal ITE.

In a further study, Flores and Day (2006) followed fourteen newly qualified teachers (NQT), mostly situated in an elementary setting for two years as their professional identities were shaped and reshaped. Their findings indicate that personally situated identities were strongly integrated at the beginning of the NQT's careers, but they seemed to destabilise as they progressed through the study. The study notes that the climate of each school structure caused the teachers to be less creative and more routine as time passed. The authors ascertained that workplace influence (positive or negative perceptions of school culture and leadership) played a key role in (re)shaping teachers' understanding of teaching, in facilitating or hindering their professional learning and development, and in (re)constructing their professional identities.

3.3 Part One Summary

In summary the literature reviewed here suggests that developing a professional teacher identity is complex as teachers engage with a process informed by their previous experiences of teachers and teaching. As teachers enter the school communities of their initial practice, they experience identity shifts that reflect their learning. Throughout teacher education, they have constructed an identity informed by their previous school experiences, the ideas and approaches promoted by their ITE programmes, and an ideal of the teachers they hope to become. The complex set of

influences at the boundary between their lives as student teachers and their lives as professionals causes them to confront their identities in new and sometimes disruptive ways (Flores and Day, 2006). New teaching situations introduce them to the thinking of experienced teachers and to the needs of their students, challenging the notions they have so far developed about who they are as teachers (Smagorinsky et al., 2004).

Part 2: Teacher as Researcher

Having considered the impact of programmes of ITE on identity formation, part two of this literature review focuses on how this relates to the formation of an identity as teacher researcher. This section begins with a definition of the term teacher researcher. It continues with an examination of international countries (Finland and Singapore) who have adopted a research approach to their ITE programmes. It explores the challenges student teachers face in adopting a research-based identity as they transition to their early years of teaching. Finally this section concludes with an examination of reflective practice as a cognitive research practice.

3.4 Teacher Quality

In recent years and in many countries around the world, there has been an unprecedented focus on the question of teacher quality and a vast amount of research, commentary and discourse that focuses on the quality of teaching has been produced (Cochran-Smith, 2012; Harford, Hudson, and Niemi 2012). One emerging trend across many international systems is the focus on evidence-informed approaches to educational policy and professional practice. This focus on teacher quality has resulted in high expectations of how teachers perform and has generated many questions regarding how teachers are recruited, prepared and supported throughout their careers (Cochran-Smith and Villegas, 2014; Darling-Hammond and Lieberman, 2012). A consequence of this focus on teacher quality is the repositioning of teacher education nationally and internationally with much focus directed at the redesign of ITE programmes. There is an expectation that ITE programmes become research driven, developing a research disposition as well as preparing consumers and producers of research (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Menter, 2015; Murray, Swenne and Kosnik, 2013; Tack and Vanderlinde, 2014). There is greater emphasis on developing the capacity of prospective teachers to “diagnose student problems swiftly and

accurately” and “draw from a wide repertoire of possible solutions those that are particularly appropriate to the diagnosis” (OECD, 2011, p. 237). There is also strong evidence suggesting that teachers need to be equipped to engage in inquiry-orientated practice. This requires having the capacity, motivation and opportunity to use research-related skills to investigate what is working well and what is not fully effective in their own practice (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002; Timperley and Parr, 2007).

3.5 Teacher as Researcher

Today’s teacher research movement has a long intellectual heritage beginning with John Dewey (1933), who envisioned teachers as reflective professionals who build theory from practice. Dewey believed that scientific recommendations could only be assessed by being applied in practice and saw the teacher as “a research worker testing out educational theory” (Hodgkinson, 1957, pp. 138–139). In the late 1950s, British researcher, Lawrence Stenhouse, a teacher educator, argued that teachers were “highly competent professionals who should be in charge of their own practice” (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 144). Stenhouse maintained that professional education required teachers to commit to the systematic questioning of their own practice as a basis for development and to test theory in practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). He was convinced that it was precisely teachers who could change classroom life by means of the deeper understanding obtained through teacher research.

This gives practitioners new perspectives on routine aspects of everyday life, enabling them to see common, well-known concerns from a different angle and to see things in the eyes of a stranger for a moment. (Stenhouse, 1975 p. 60)

Teacher as researcher as a subject of discussion continues to generate substantial attention and literature, and particularly so over the past 20 years, as teacher research moved out of the arena of relatively bounded academic concerns and into the realm of education policy (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993; Kompf et al., 1996). Traditionally, there has been a distinction between the wisdom of school-based teachers and the wisdom of university-based researchers. Generally, teachers’ wisdom was regarded as practical, action-orientated and experiential, while researchers’ wisdom was thought of as theoretical, analytic and empirical (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1989).

Whitty (2005) distinguishes between education research and educational research. He suggests that education research is the term that can be used to characterise the whole field of research activity in education and suggests that educational research is used for work that is “consciously geared towards improving policy and practice” (Whitty, 2006, p. 173). The following section focuses on providing a definition in order to contextualise the terms being used in the study.

3.5.1 Towards a Definition of Teacher as Researcher

After decades of research and theory development, numerous terms have been used in the field of education to address the actions of teachers as researchers. The widely cited work of Dewey (1929) on teachers as reflective practitioners dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. In the 1940s, the action research movement emerged (Adelman, 1993; Lewin, 1946; Masters, 1999) and in the 1990s, teacher research became a prominent framework in professional development and school reform (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, 2003; Reason and Bradbury, 2001). The teacher research movement developed (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993; Hollingsworth and Sockett, 1994; Lytle et al., 1994; Ray, 1993; Zeichner, 1994) with many studies reporting the positive effects of teacher research on teachers’ practice and on their students’ learning (Blumenreich and Falk, 2006; Levine and Marcus, 2007; Love, 2009; Somekh and Zeichner, 2009).

Newby (2010) identifies three purposes to teacher research: (a) to explore issues; (b) to shape policy; and (c) to improve practice. A shared broad understanding by many suggests that almost all forms of teacher research focus on issues of teaching practice — to know more about how students learn, to understand a particular aspect of one’s teaching practice, to improve a particular aspect of one’s teaching, to try out a new teaching approach, to become a more reflective practitioner and to document successful teaching approaches, (Fischer, 1996; Zeichner, 1993; Zeichner, Noffke, 2001). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, 1999) define teacher research in the broadest possible sense to encompass all forms of practitioner inquiry that involve “systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work” (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1993, pp. 23–24). Included in this definition are inquiries that are referred to as action research, practitioner inquiry, teacher inquiry and first person research. They describe two major categories of teacher research — conceptual and

empirical. Conceptual research is theoretical and philosophical and includes teachers' essays, conversations, stories and books that represent extended interpretations and analyses of various aspects of teaching. Empirical research involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. A key feature of what defines teacher research is the systematic approach taken by those involved. It requires a careful definition of the problem, the questions that needed to be addressed; the use of internal and external sources of knowledge; collection, analysis and interpretation of data from multiple sources before and after the design and finally the implementation of actions (Willegems et al., 2017).

An agreed assumption across the literature is that teacher researchers attempt to create new knowledge about teaching and learning to improve their practice. McKernan (1988, p. 154), states that teacher research involves "rigorous examination of one's own practice as a basis for professional development." He suggests that teacher research fundamentally stems from teachers' own questions about and reflections on their everyday classroom practice. He along with others extends the description of this type of teacher research to include written narratives of lived classroom experiences, case studies, journal accounts, teacher autobiography, data based on observation, interviews and document collection (Paley, 1986; Bissex and Bullock, 1987; Ayers, 1989; Hankins, 1998). Pine (2009) equally contends that teacher researchers embrace a variety of research methodologies, such as surveys, interviews, observations, quantitative studies including experimental, quasi-experimental and historical research. Bissex (1986) describes a teacher researcher as a questioner, observer and a learner. Fundamental to teacher as researcher inquiry is the generation of rich substantive descriptions about the classroom setting (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1990; Cruickshank, Bainer and Metcalf, 1995; Eisner, 1991; Hollingsworth, 1994; Patterson et al., 1993; Patterson, Stansell and Lee, 1990). Most teacher educators and researchers have reached agreement that teacher research is intentional and systematic inquiry performed by teachers with the goals of gaining insights into teaching and learning. Research into practice affords the opportunity of becoming more reflective, effecting changes in the classroom or school, and improving the lives of children (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1993, 1999). Although these questions and reflections are context-specific, they enable the teacher to relate particular issues to theories of teaching and learning by documentation and analysis of such issues;

hence, teacher research links theory with practice (Bullough and Gitlin, 2001). This is consistent with Stenhouse's (1975) earlier definition of research as systematic critical inquiry made public.

For the purposes of this study, I propose a wide-ranging and inclusive definition of research — one that embraces the kind of inquiry-based learning and reflective professional practice that many teachers will be familiar with in their own practices. The teacher as researcher paradigm is understood as inquiry accomplished through an act of reflection upon intentional observations. The definition of teacher research underpinning this study is one where research is a process in which teachers and other participants in school life evaluate in a managed, systematic, controlled and critical manner their own pedagogical work, effects and processes tied to teaching by means of the strategies, methods and techniques of pedagogical research.

3.5.2 Benefits of Teacher as Researcher

Having examined the various definitions of teacher research, this section seeks to illuminate the transformative potential of research on practice. There is broad agreement that the role of teacher researcher is now considered a critical factor in linking effective teaching practice and continuous professional growth to the processes of inquiry and reflection (Cross, 1987; Goodlad, 1999; Harris, 1998). The generative power of teachers as researchers of their own practice is described by Keyes (1999) as a data-driven learning process. When teachers do classroom research, they begin to view themselves as learners, their classrooms as places where they are learning, and the data collected as data to be understood (Keyes, 1999)

For many, teaching is about perceiving, interpreting and making meaning about circumstances in the classroom. Support for this idea of teacher as researcher is found throughout educational research (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1990; Patterson, Stansell and Lee, 1990; Patterson et al., 1993). There has been growing acknowledgement of the need for the empowerment of teachers through researching their own practice, for teachers to become more aware of the complexities of the school environment (Fueyo and Koorland, 1997; Henderson, Hunt and Wester, 1999; Kemmis, 2001; Keyes, 1999; Patterson et al., 2002; Rodgers, 2002). Teachers with the research skills to share and critique their practice are considered collaborative professionals in the change processes within school communities (Hargreaves, 2019). Teachers who engage in

research are considered to have an increased understanding of the complexities of the school community and learning environment (Caro-Bruce and Zeichner, 1998). The ongoing nature of inquiry allows teachers to make better use of insights gained from their pedagogical and curricular experiences throughout their careers (Rodgers, 2002).

While the benefits of teacher as researcher have been widely discussed, it has also been recognised that the role of teacher researcher is not only intellectually demanding but prompts serious and often difficult questions about classroom practice and learning outcomes (Keyes, 1999). The complexity of the school and classroom environment can act as a barrier to opportunities for teachers to play the double role of teacher and researcher. Within their daily workplace, teachers are faced with challenges concerned with time constraints, relationships within school communities, accountability, system pressure as well as lack of confidence and experience in the area of research (Potter, 2001).

3.5.3 Initial Teacher Education and Research Based Programmes

Integrating research-based learning into teacher education programmes at the undergraduate and master levels can now be seen as part of an international effort to educate teachers for a fast-changing reality in schools, with continuous needs for development in the classroom (OECD, 2005). Teacher research has also been proposed as a means to facilitate the professional growth of student teachers while promoting critical reflection, change and reform (Roulston et al., 2005; Rust, 2009; Rathgen, 2006). It is considered by many that teachers with the skills to engage from the start of their careers in action research or classroom inquiry have the skills to be both consumers and producers of knowledge and the tools to make sense of their practice and problems they face (Darling-Hammond and Snyder, 2000, p. 540).

As discussed in Chapter 2, high-performing education systems demonstrate that this type of inquiry-orientated practice requires clinical preparation, through carefully designed programmes of ITE, which allow trainee teachers to integrate knowledge from academic study and research with practical experience in the school and classroom. The next section examines countries (Finland and Singapore) who have adopted a research focus to their ITE programmes. These countries have been

chosen as examples of where theory and practice are combined to form a foundation for teaching that is on a par with other academic professionals.

3.5.4 International Overview of Research-Based Programmes

The case of Ireland has already been discussed in Chapter 2, however it is important to consider developments in other international settings. The Finnish approach to ITE, regarded as one of the best in the world (Darling-Hammond, 2017) has high expectations for teachers with a minimum requirement for a master's degree, selective entry and competitive pay. A special feature that differentiates the Finnish ITE from many other countries is the research element that features as a central component in ITE (Jyrhämä and Maaranen, 2012; Niemi and Jakku-Sihvonen, 2006). Research has, for many years, formed an important part of Finnish ITE with the concept of teachers as researchers central to their programmes. Student teachers undertake a research-based dissertation for their master's degrees and are encouraged to contribute to research on teaching throughout their careers (Toom et al., 2010). Hökkä and Eteläpelto (2014, p. 42) highlight the strong focus on a "research based curriculum" in ITE in Finland, which includes the study of research methods and the writing of a master's thesis aimed at training "autonomous and reflective teachers capable of adopting a research-oriented attitude toward their work". The leading principle has been that teachers require a thorough knowledge of the most recent research advances in the subjects they teach. The aim is for teachers to internalise a research disposition and positive attitude toward their work. This means that teachers learn to take an analytical approach to their work and develop teaching and learning environments in a systematic way. The focus in many programmes is on acquiring a set of research skills such as critical thinking, independent thinking, inquiring and scientific literacy.(Niemi and Nevgi, 2014). Student teachers are taught to regard research studies as valuable for the teaching profession and important for their future work. Jyrhämä and Maaranen (2012) have analysed both teachers' and student teachers' concepts of and feedback on research studies in Finland and found that through research studies, teachers learn alternative ways of working, reflecting, dialoguing and gaining feedback for their work.

In other ITE programmes around the world, it is also possible to identify a research orientation visible in courses and modules as well as the involvement of student

teachers in research projects (Flores, 2016). For instance, the introduction of research into the curriculum in France has been seen as a strong feature of teacher-education programmes (Lapostolle and Chevaillier, 2011). Additionally, in Brazil, in order to foster the development of partnerships between schools and universities and to enhance the research dimension of teacher education, the PIBID (Programa Institucional de Bolsa de Iniciação à Docência – Institutional Programme for grants to initiate teaching) was launched in 2007. The principles underpinning the PIBID included paying attention to the multiple dimensions of the daily work of school and to research aimed at solving practical situations and innovations in education.

Another such country that values research in the preparation of teachers is Singapore. Although the character and organisation of ITE in Singapore is quite different from countries such as Finland, notably in its more highly centralised model of governance and much greater use of summative assessment, there are nevertheless some striking similarities in the approach adopted (BERA, 2014). Singapore draws upon research to inform the design, structure and content of its ITE programme and is committed to ensuring that all teaching is based on evidence of effective practice and revised in light of new ideas. Preparatory activities are organised so that student teachers can practise interrogation of their own and others' practice, based on the evidence from self-evaluation, peer-review and external research (Tatto, 2013). The system in Singapore represents a carefully planned and systematic attempt to create a culture of enquiry and critical reflection.

3.5.5 Challenges for Student Teachers as Researchers

Educational theorists and researchers have written extensively over past decades about the important role student teachers play in their own development as they strive to become effective practitioners. Moore (2000, p. 146) suggests teachers should perceive themselves “as researchers and theorists as well as practitioners” and considers that action research provides a particularly valuable way for them to evaluate and critique their own current practice and to move in an informed and principled way towards more effective future practice. He argues that providing student teachers with opportunities to engage in contextually focused research activity should enable them progressively to become more effective in accurately assessing a situation, selecting an appropriate course of action, implementing the plan of action

and evaluating the outcome to inform future practice. While the outcomes of research can have significant impact on student teachers' future actions and personal development, arguably, it is the process that provides an essential tool for their ongoing professional development as teachers. It could be argued that student teachers who effectively internalise the process are well prepared to embrace numerous challenges, which working in 21st century schools might pose, in addition to making informed judgements when contributing toward the culture of professional learning communities.

More recent research shows that while in some programmes, student teachers are capable of investigating professional problems using research methods and academic literature and value the integration of research into their education (Niemi and Nevgi, 2014), others struggle with working in peer research projects (Dobber et al., 2012) or teacher-led research in which there is little student engagement (Munthe and Rogne, 2014). Supporting these findings, Puustinen et al. (2018) found that pre-service teachers appreciate research-based teacher education differently. They argue that there is an unclear idea of teachers as researchers and that prospective teachers struggle to connect the theory-orientated education in their studies with teaching practice in schools. A key finding of a number of studies is that in order to use the potentials of research-based learning, education students need to be actively involved in the research process and become socialised in research practice (Afdal and Spernes, 2018; Niemi and Nevgi, 2014). They need time to elaborate before making strategic research decisions as part of a collaborative peer group (Dobber et al., 2012).

Some argue that what needs to be supported is the transfer of improved reflection and inquiry skills gained through doing research into daily teaching practice (Willegems et al., 2017) as well as the integration of the research components with other elements of the teacher candidates' studies (Niemi and Nevgi, 2014). Consistent with these findings, recent studies indicate that many teachers, and particularly teachers at the early stage of their careers, do not feel that they can confidently engage in debates on issues within the classrooms (Kincheloe, 1991; Keyes, 1999). Findings highlight teachers' reluctance to admit to having carried out research, maintaining that it was not real research but rather just observation or keeping journals. Teachers' reluctance to acknowledge classroom inquiry as research may well stem from notions of research

gained in their degree programmes. Teachers would not easily develop a practical notion of classroom or school-based research if contexts and examples offered in ITE are limited to a formal style of research and projects that involved whole schools or districts (Keyes, 1999).

Other studies suggest that at the beginning of the research process, student teachers have a confused and divergent view of research-based teacher education (Eklund, 2012). Further studies by Eklund (2014) also confirm that student teachers' views change during their ITE programme into a more positive direction and their understanding of research orientation increases. Student teachers realise that research is an important tool for qualifying professional teachers although they find it hard to relate to a practical context. Student teachers find the education too theoretical and they need more practice, both teacher practice in the field and practical courses (Eklund, 2014). Research-based education, therefore, poses a dilemma for the students. They understand it and they see the point of it but, at the same time, they feel that it does not give them enough practical tools before entering the reality of teachers' work.

This is confirmed in a study by (Aspfors et al., 2012); the results from this study show that NQTs express a wide range of opinions, both positive and negative, concerning their gained education. Their experiences are related to knowledge based on three main perspectives: personal, teacher professional and research-orientated. The results are related to a similar study performed in Norway by Jakhelln, Bjørndal and Stølen (2016) in which NQTs views of research-based teacher education in relation to their experiences in school. This study was unique in its character since it was the first time students in Norway completed a master's degree within their teacher education. The two ITE programmes studied represented two very different traditions of research-based education; one represented a well-established ITE developed during more than 40 years in Finland while the other was regarded as a pioneer in its country, Norway. The NQTs were interviewed after they had finished their master's degrees and before they started their careers. The results revealed a weak connection between research-based knowledge gained from ITE and the teachers' professional work. The Finnish NQTs were highly research orientated while the Norwegian NQTs focused on teachers' development of their daily work.

3.6 Collaborative Research

Sachs (2016) highlights the need to create a discourse for a more collaborative or research-engaged teaching profession. She argues for a professional teacher identity that is informed and improved by systematic classroom research (see also Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999). Darling-Hammond (2006) also argues for an approach to teachers as classroom researchers and expert collaborators who can learn from one another as an essential part of encountering the ever-increasing demands of a deepened knowledge base for teaching diverse classrooms. One systematic review of the state of the art of collaborative teacher research (Willegems et al., 2017) yielded some important findings. Their analysis provides preliminary evidence of the benefit of collaborative teacher research (involving pre-service and in-service teachers) in relation to enhanced knowledge and attitudes towards: (i) collaboration, (ii) reflection, (iii) inquiry and (iv) student-centred learning. It emerged that student teachers learned more when the collaboration between both student and co-operating teacher was a shared inquiry in a more equal partnership. A more equitable partnership between the student teacher and the mentor provided more opportunities for joint ownership and also the student teacher appeared to learn more when there were several actors involved in the research activity. This outcome aligns with the work of Darling Hammond (2010) and Zeichner (2010), who talk about “hybrid spaces” where several people meet in a “non-hierarchical way”. This allows for the merging of theory and practice (Willegems et al., 2017). In those circumstances, it seems collaborative teacher research involving pre-service and in-service teachers “provides a perfect opportunity for the co-creation of knowledge for teaching” (Willegems et al., 2017, p. 242).

Similarly, evidence indicates that for student teachers to really value reflection and inquiry they need to have reflection and inquiry modelled for them by their mentors (Hall et al., 2017). Hall et al., (2017) suggests that where the supervising school-based mentor does not engage in an equal way in the reflection and inquiry process, the student teacher’s own “inquiry stance” is not maximised. The important argument emerging from this study’s findings is that the mentor teacher ideally is part of the research team. They went on to suggest that if the mentor teacher is not actively involved, the student teacher’s project can become an isolated endeavour with little transfer into practice. It is also noteworthy that a study conducted by Van Velzen and

Van der Klink (2014) describes “academic school-university partnerships” where the student teacher has to connect their research questions and focus to the agenda of the school. In such situations, students are encouraged to become members of a community of teacher researchers who share the same research interests. These teacher researchers along with the “school-based teacher educator” support the student teacher in carrying out their study. Teacher researchers who conduct research and guide student teachers in their research activities are a new and emerging phenomenon in Dutch education, and the launch of new academic school-university partnerships has promoted its emergence. It is recognised that working together in this way implies learning to understand each other’s language and involves a change of culture in schools towards the notion of inquiry as stance (Hall et al., 2018).

3.7 Reflective Practice

The literature on learning to teach is abundant with reference to reflective practice (Kaldi and Korthagen, 2010; Korthagen, 2012; OECD, 2005; Cochran-Smith and Power, 2010). MacRuaric and Harford (2008) suggest that reflective practice is the bedrock of most ITE programmes and is placed at the centre of student teacher learning. Many believe that reflection plays an integral role in teacher learning, both in ITE and professional development. It facilitates the examination of the personal and professional dimensions of teachers’ lives (among others, Bartlett, 1990; Brookfield, 1995; Clarke, 1994; Gaudart, 1991; Gibson, 1997; Kamhi-Stein and Galvan, 1997; Korthagen and Vasalos, 2005; Meijer, Korthagen and Vasalos, 2009; Richards, 1991; Wallace, 1991; Zeichner and Liston, 1996a, 1996b). It has become a feature of ITE programmes that encourage student teachers to rethink and reconstruct past perceptions regarding teaching. It affords the opportunity to engage in critical reflectivity upon action within field experiences (Adler, 1994; Knowles, Cole and Presswood, 1994; Schön, 1987). Observing and reflecting on the act of teaching promotes the questioning of previously drawn conclusions or generalisations (Knowles, Cole and Presswood, 1994). The opportunity to reflect allows student teachers to link current practices to past experiences and become aware of long-forgotten or previously unacknowledged events that have impacted on why and how they do what they do. Yeşilbursa (2011) suggests that reflection training must begin early in ITE programmes to help student teachers reach higher levels of reflectivity in order to empower them to understand the reasons underlying their actions and the

situations they encounter. Recommending the continual use of reflective activities throughout the professional preparation of student teachers, Rodman (2010) indicates that the repetitious uses of reflection contribute to student teachers' professional development enabling them to make better sense of new knowledge and their teaching-learning experiences.

Much of the thinking on reflective practice has emanated from the work of Dewey (1933) and later shaped by Schön (1983). Dewey (1933) identified reflection as a specialised form of thinking, and the fact that learning does not come with experience, rather with reflection on experience. Schön's seminal work (1983) identified two types of reflection — reflection on action (thinking that takes place after the event) and reflection-in-action (thinking while doing). For Schön, reflection-in-action is the core of "professional artistry". In the 1980s, Donald Schön (1983, p. 8), investigated what he called "reflection-in-action" (also called reflective practice) in the work of various professions, including teaching. Schön asked, "What is the kind of knowing in which competent practitioners engage? How is professional knowing like and unlike the kinds of knowledge presented in academic textbooks, scientific papers, and learned journals?" Schön (1987) pointed out that for professionals such as architects, lawyers, and teachers, real-world problems do not arise as "well-formed structures" but as messy, indeterminate situations:

A teacher of arithmetic, listening to a child's question, becomes aware of a kind of confusion and, at the same time, a kind of intuitive understanding, for which she has no readily available response. . . The case is not "in the book." If she is to deal with it competently, she must do so by a kind of improvisation, inventing and testing in the situation strategies of her own devising. (Schön, 1987, pp. 4–5)

He believed that as professionals became more adept at practice, their ability to monitor and adapt their actions and practice became intuitive. Schön (1987) argued that novice teachers need to be able to stand back from practice and take the time to examine it and think it through. There are many models to support engagement in reflective practice in the literature. Marzano and Boogren (2012) devote a whole volume to reflective teaching while Pollard et al. (2008) provide structures to help

beginning teachers to reflect on diverse aspects of their work. Finlay (2008) suggests that models are generally cyclical (for example, Gibbs and Kohl's models) and that common to all, are the three fundamental processes of retrospection, self-evaluation and reorientation. Korthagen proposes models of reflection (2010 and 2012) for use with his model of teacher education, termed "realistic teacher education" (Korthagen et al., 2001). Realistic teacher education places focus on examination and reflection on teachers' actions and behaviours.

If programmes of ITE are to successfully support the development of teachers who can act as inquirers, then the challenges facing student teachers must be addressed during this phase of identity formation. This can be achieved through systematic reflection as Farrell (2013) maintains "the systematic reflection of the alignment between beliefs and practices can help teachers develop an understanding of both what they want to do in their classrooms and the changes they want to implement to their approaches to teaching and learning" (p.14). For this purpose, ITE programmes need to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their beliefs and surface them. Many believe that when teachers carry out systematic inquiry into themselves, when teachers engage in reflective practice, they understand themselves, their practices and their learners — thus, bridging the gap that often exists. Clarke (1995) considers reflection as a kind of self-inquiry resulting in improvements in further actions, while Roberts (2016) regards reflection as a process that helps student teachers make links between theory and practice. Reflection is a crucial cognitive practice in the research field (Dahlberg, Drew and Nystrom, 2002; Steier, 1995) and is considered by many as an effective tool for student teachers to engage in to make sense of their learning. For some, it is considered central to the growth of teachers as inquirers who engage in collaborative research with others from inside and outside the school. Together, they generate knowledge of practice rather than finding themselves as objects whose role is to implement existing theory in practice (Peters, 1985).

3.7.1 Challenges of Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

While reflective practice is widely positioned at the centre of teacher education programmes as a means of negotiating an inquiry stance into practice, student teachers often find it difficult to see its application to their real-life teaching experience (Craig, 1994; Cruickshank, 1987). Furthermore, student teachers differ markedly in

their capacity to engage in reflection, many lacking the requisite propensity for “open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and responsibility” (Dewey, 1933, p. 107). For many student teachers, the range of complex issues they typically experience in classrooms and the demands placed upon them both by their teaching placement school and their academic programme are often overwhelming (MacRuairc, Harford and McCartan, 2009). As a result, many retreat to the more technical and immediate aspects of their practice, failing to see the connections between the theoretical and practical elements of teacher education programmes (Barone et al., 1996; Korthagen and Kessels, 1999; MacRuairc and Harford, 2008). However, Korthagen and Kessels (1999) suggest that reflection at a deep level can aid student teachers to make sense of their actions and beliefs and allow them to construct alternative courses of action.

Growing expectation for the professional role of teachers to incorporate the role of reflective practitioner and researcher is not easily accommodated by all practising classroom teachers. The role of teacher researcher is not only intellectually demanding but it also prompts serious and often difficult questions about classroom practice and learning outcomes (Keyes, 1999). The complexity of the school and classroom environment can act as a barrier to opportunities for teachers to play the double role of teacher and researcher. Within their daily workplace, teachers are faced with challenges concerned with time constraints, relationships within school communities, accountability and system pressure as well as lack of confidence and experience in the area of research (Potter, 2001). Zee (1998, p. 252) asserts:

...learning how to reflect upon one's practices is an essential component of learning to teach. I also believe that teachers possess unique knowledge that must be articulated and contributed to efforts to improve instruction in general. To know what happens during induction into teaching, we must create opportunities for new teachers to tell us—not as anonymous subjects in university researchers' studies—but in their own voices from their own perspectives. (Zee (1998, p. 252)).

However, early evaluation of the impact of such approaches to teacher reflection (Leitch, 1993) has indicated that they not only provide the individual with opportunities

for profound re-evaluation but have also led frequently to powerful changes within teachers' practices.

3.8 Chapter Conclusion

Broadly, the analysis of the literature in this chapter has considered some of the debates and bodies of literature that inform the context and understanding of the research study. Identifying what constitutes teacher identity has always been the subject of research and debate among scholars and educators. Though there is no clear cut definition of this concept, a common consensus has been generated regarding its holistic nature. It is widely acknowledged that the process of becoming a teacher is a multifaceted reality that involves the construction of multiple identities. The literature review highlights how identities are influenced by the social contexts in which teachers find themselves. The changing role of teachers, together with the increased demands and expectations placed upon them, has significantly influenced the types of knowledge teachers require in their ITE programmes. ITE lays the foundations of professional identity formation. Learning to teach and consequently constructing professional identity entails more than developing teaching skills. The development of an identity as teacher researcher requires developing teacher's experiential knowledge into critical theoretical knowledge. The chapter concludes with a discussion on reflective practice as a cognitive practice in the research field.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methods chosen to explore the research question. In section one the research questions guiding the study are briefly reiterated to situate the methodological discussion. This is followed by a brief discussion of the epistemological assumptions underlying the research and an introduction to mixed methods research.

Section two details the sampling strategies, data collection processes, and data analysis strategies for each of the phases of the study. This is followed by a brief discussion of the integration of the methods used. Lastly, sections 4.10 and 4.11 discuss the challenges in a mixed methods approach and the measures taken to ensure validity and rigour, respectively.

Section One: Research Overview

4.2 Research Questions

The research study aims to consider the extent to which beginning teachers who have graduated from a PMEP programme have developed their identities as teacher researchers as they transition to teaching. More specifically the study aims to answer the following primary research question:

How has the study of a Research Module, as a component of the Professional Master of Education in Primary Education (PMEP) programme, shaped the development of teacher identities as teacher researchers amongst beginning primary school teachers in an Irish school context?

The following guiding questions of the research were also developed in order to address the main research question:

1. What are graduates' perceptions, attitudes and experiences of the Research Module completed as part of the PMEP programme?
2. What research practices have graduates adopted to date in their own teaching careers?

3. Has completing a research dissertation at master's level changed their perceptions of themselves as teacher researchers?
4. How are these graduates viewed by the wider education community?

4.3. Understanding the Paradigm

Research design is ultimately shaped by purpose, context and resources and depends also on the researchers' paradigmatic stance. As Creswell (2013, p. 15) states "whether we are aware of it or not, we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research". The researcher must be guided by the assumptions, beliefs, norms and values of the chosen paradigm and justify this choice in relation to the research aims.

The term 'paradigm' comes from the Greek 'paradeigma' meaning a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them (The Oxford English Dictionary, 2002). Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107) take a more philosophical approach and define paradigm as:

.. a set of basic beliefs ... that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to the world and its parts ... The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107)

For Greene (2007, p15) paradigm refers to an integrated set of assumptions about the nature of the social world, about the character of the knowledge we can have about the social world, and about what is important to know (Greene, 2007). All research is influenced by the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher. These assumptions are inextricably linked, as one's ontological perspective informs one's epistemological position (Crotty, 2003).

4.3.1 Ontology

Ontology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the assumptions we make in order to believe that something makes sense or is real, or the very nature or essence of the

social phenomenon under investigation (Scotland, 2012). It helps the researcher conceptualise the form and nature of reality and determines what can be known about that reality. These assumptions, concepts or propositions help orientate our thinking about the research problem, its significance, and how best to approach it so as to contribute to its solution. Ontology is essential to a paradigm as it helps to provide an understanding of the things that constitute the world, as it is known (Scott and Usher, 2004).

4.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology has its aetiology in Greek where the word *episteme*, means knowledge or understanding. Epistemology is used to describe how we come to know something; how we know the truth or reality; or as Cooksey and McDonald (2011) state, what counts as knowledge within the world. Epistemology focuses on the nature of human knowledge and on the understandings that the researcher acquires to extend, broaden and deepen understanding in the field of research. Schwandt (1997) defines epistemology as the study of the nature of knowledge and justification.

4.3.3 A Constructivist-Interpretive Paradigm

Researchers must make explicit, describe, and if necessary, defend, their ontological and epistemological positions (Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Furlong and Marsh, 2002; Grix, 2002). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that a combination of personal beliefs, researcher's experience and an understanding of their philosophical perspectives underpin the formulation of a strategy and selection of a methodology for a study. My own conceptual framework is built on the idea that "human behaviours are fluid, dynamic, and change over time and place" (Johnson and Christensen, 2012, p. 35) and that reality is influenced by the society in which phenomena are created (Holden and Lynch 2004; Saunders et al., 2012). This viewpoint implies that individuals construct their own realities and perspectives, which in turn influence how they understand their worlds, what they see as important, and how they believe they should act. This implies an interpretative stance, which is based on a constructivist paradigm that sees truth as "relative and dependent on one's perspective" (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 545). Interpretivism adopts an approach that acquires knowledge by developing an understanding of phenomena through deep-level investigation and

analysis of those phenomena. It does not claim generalisability of outcomes, but rather provides results that are limited to a certain context.

As the research study here is concerned with the identity formation of graduate teachers in a particular educational context, it is suitably informed by a constructivist-interpretive paradigm and is therefore distinct from the objectivist position, whereby an objective truth awaits to be discovered. I have taken the epistemological view that meaning is not discovered but constructed, so consequently “there can be no meaning without a mind” (Crotty, 2003, p.9). Cohen and Mannion (1994, p. 273) identify the intention of the interpretive paradigm as “understanding the subjective world of human experience” and therefore makes it a suitable approach for this research, which is grounded in beginning teachers’ experience.

Interpretivism is sometimes referred to in the literature as anti-positivism (Bryman, 2008) and for many (Bryman, 2008; Morrison, 2007), it is placed in binary opposition to positivism. The nature of reality or ontology in interpretivism is not fixed. It is constantly evolving and changing and is experienced differently for all within the reality. According to Pring (2000), those working within the interpretivist paradigm ascribe to a subjective reality, a social construction of the mind. Unlike positivism, interpretivism does not claim a universal truth or fixed knowledge (Bassey, 1995), rather it embraces the notion of a subjective epistemology (Bryman, 2008) and strives to understand human experience (Cohen et al, 2011). The central endeavour of the interpretivist paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Emphasis is placed on understanding the individual and their interpretation of the world around them. Hence, the key tenet of the interpretivist paradigm is that reality is socially constructed (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998).

From my early investigation of this topic and from my engagement with the literature, I was aware that perceptions around identity formation can be considered from multiple perspectives. The social world is reflective of a subjective ontology. Knowledge about identity formation is also subjective and is individual to each person that inhabits that specific social reality. The ontological basis for the research questions is both subjective and constructionist and the questions acknowledge the epistemological subjectivity. These factors firmly place the study within the

interpretative paradigm aiming “to understand the subjective world of human experience” (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 22). This study proposes the viewpoint that knowledge is held personally and can be created and assimilated in many different ways, according to the individuals’ perceptions, circumstances, location, experience and context. The constructivist paradigm has the strength of capturing the uniqueness and individuality of individuals, circumstances and contexts which the field of education presented (Ernest, 1994).

4.4 Research Methodology: Case Study

Having decided to locate this research study in a particular paradigm, I considered the methodological implications of the paradigm choice. Guba and Lincoln (1988) pose the question; Do different inquiry paradigms imply different inquiry methodologies?. In general, the interpretivist approach emphasises the importance of language, culture and history (Crotty, 1998) in the shaping of our interpretations and experiences of organisational and social worlds. Description and, in particular, thick description (Geertz, 1973) rather than experimentation is important. This approach fits comfortably with my epistemological conviction that meaning is not discovered, but socially constructed. Cohen et al (2011) and Morrison (2002) suggest that modern interpretivism falls into three main traditions; phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic-interactionism, while Creswell (1998) identifies five traditions in qualitative enquiry; biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. This research was conducted as a case-study of one particular College and was constructed as a multiple participant research project, using questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews to capture data. The research questions determined the mixed methods approach used in this study. The knowledge to be generated in this research would be subjective as it involved beginning teachers expressing their opinions and beliefs in the context of their own experience as teachers.

4.4.1 Case Study Design

Previous studies have pointed out that the study of teacher identity is complicated (Tsui, 2007; Varghese et al., 2005). I wanted therefore, to employ a research methodology that would capture the nature of this complexity. One of the key purposes of this research is to provide a detailed, rich description of beginning teachers’ identity

development as teacher researchers within a specific context, namely Hibernia College. As such I considered a case study an ideal methodology. A case study research design, according to Creswell (2013), is an approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. For Stake (1995, p. 11) case study research is 'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances'. Case study allows investigators focus on a case and retain a holistic and real-world perspective (Yin, 2014), it also helps researchers focus on understanding a particular matter more thoroughly. Yin (2014) argues that a case study is the optimal approach for research that exhibits three particular characteristics: firstly, it is aimed at answering how and why questions; secondly, it relates to contemporary events and thirdly, the researcher has little or no control over participants' behaviour. Hegarty and Evans (1985) describe case study design as a research strategy that aims to identify and report the distinctive character of social and educational phenomena, primarily by description, and is then used to make generalisations. This is an approach to research which seeks to engage with, and report on the complexity of, social and educational activity, in order to represent the meanings that individuals bring to their settings. It assumes the view that social reality, created through social interaction, attempts to identify and describe, before trying to analyse and explain (Somekh and Lewin, 2011).

Yin (2009, p. 638) develops the potential use of case studies further and adds that while a case study can be an individual person, or "the primary unit of analysis", a case can also be "some event or entity other than a single individual". Good case study design involves providing empirical data for analysis and conclusion (Gummesson, 2007), but doing so in such a way that stands up to scrutiny. Swanbourne (2010) elaborates that case study may be employed as an intensive approach to study one specific instance of a phenomenon, or alternatively a handful of instances in order to study a phenomenon in-depth. Data may be collected using many sources of information but what is essential he notes, is that each instance of the case is studied in its own specific and natural context (2010).

4.4.2 Limitations of Case-Study Design

A criticism of case study design, highlighted by Somekh and Lewin (2011), is often the difficulty in generalising from a small number of cases studies to the population as a whole. However, a reader may often recognise aspects of their own experience in a case and can intuitively generalise from the case to their own practice. Gomm, Hammersley and Foster (2000) compared the case study approach to that of survey and experimental design. They note that case study investigation typically involves a small number of cases and often only one. They also note that case study design has the potential to gather and analyse information about a large number of features of each case. Ultimately case studies are concerned with understanding ‘the case studied in itself with no interest in theoretical inference or empirical generalisation’ (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000, p. 9).

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) address the problematic nature of the conventional view of case study by drawing on Gerring’s (2004) identification of the paradox of case study’s wide use, yet low regard in research endeavours. They suggest that case study’s reputation as a less scientific methodology has led to a misinformed and reductive view of a methodology that makes a significant contribution in wide-ranging research fields. Furthermore (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 303) note that while it is not the remit of case study to develop “epistemic theory... that is explanatory and predictive”, it can succeed in producing concrete, context-dependent, case knowledge, the kind of which enhance human learning and expertise (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 303).

4.5 Designing the Case Study

The research design chosen for this research is a bounded exploratory single case study. Yin (2014) stipulates the importance of binding the case:

to determine the scope of your data collection and, in particular, how you will distinguish data about the subject of your case study from data external to the case

(Yin, 2014, p. 34).

This philosophical orientation with a focus on subjectivity and interpretation is often associated with qualitative research methods. Traditionally, qualitative research focuses on hypothesis and theory generation, and the researcher is considered the primary instrument for data collection and qualitative analysis (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For the current study however, a mixed methods research design has been preferred. Two reasons for combining quantitative and qualitative research approaches are prevalent in the literature. The first is to achieve triangulation, which can be defined as seeking convergence and corroboration of findings from different methods that examine the same phenomenon (Molina-Azorin, 2012). The second is to achieve complementarity by using the strengths of one method to enhance the other (Morgan, 1998). Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) arrived at the following general definition of mixed methods research having synthesised definitions from 19 thought leaders in the area:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Onwuegbuzie, and Turner 2007, p. 123)

Plano Clark (2005) defines mixed methods research as “research that combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and data analysis within a single study” (Plano Clark, 2005, p. 96). The mixed-methods design in this study includes a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mixing methods is a tool used by researchers to maximise the best of both qualitative and quantitative worlds in answering the questions that drive their research (Maxcy, 2003). Corroborating evidence from multiple sources; questionnaire, focus groups and interviews, increases the strength and trustworthiness of the study (Anfara et al., 2002). Triangulation, which refers to the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1978), allow the researcher to improve the accuracy of conclusions by relying on data from more than one method (Rossman and Wilson, 1985). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 5) maintain that mixed methods research should incorporate many diverse viewpoints and “rely on a definition of core characteristics of mixed methods

research' which 'combine methods, philosophy, and a research design orientation" (2011, p. 5).

Section Two: Data Collection Methods

Section two addresses the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods chosen to address the research question and provides a rationale for their inclusion. Figure 3 presents a pictorial representation of the mixed methods research design. This includes the use of a questionnaire, focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews.



Fig. 3: Mixed Methods Research Design

4.6 Quantitative Data Collection: Questionnaire

As discussed in Section 4.5 this study employs a mixed methodological design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011), which involves the collection of quantitative data first, followed by a deeper explanation of the quantitative results with qualitative data. The current section outlines the approach taken to design the questionnaire which was distributed to graduates of the PMEP programme in summer 2019. In the development of the questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out to ensure the questionnaire was relevant to the case under investigation and accessible to the respondents. The first pilot study was carried out in the College with graduates (N = 10) of the PMEP programme.

4.6.1 Sampling and Procedure

This section outlines the sampling procedure for the questionnaire. One of the challenges in research can be selecting a sample that is sufficiently large to ensure the achievement of data saturation and sufficiently diverse to ensure that the widest feasible range of perspectives is represented. For this study, a purposive sampling was employed, in which I deliberately selected a particular group of prospective respondents to include in the sample. Cohen et al. (2011) note:

though they may not be representative and their comments may not be generalizable, this is not the primary concern in such sampling; rather the concern is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it (Cohen et al. 2011, p. 157).

Determining how many participants to include in a study can be challenging. According to Seidman (2006), there are two criteria for determining whether enough people have been recruited, namely sufficiency and the point of saturation. Sufficiency means there are enough participants to represent the population you wish to explore, saturation, is the point at which no new information is forthcoming from the participants. Guest, Bunce and Arwen (2006, p. 65) operationalise the concept as “the point in data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no change to the codebook”. According to Lincoln and Guba, the determination of when saturation is reached should be made in the course of the study, while the data is being both collected and analysed. Bryman (2012) suggests, however, that researchers often

claim to have reached saturation without any evidence that it has actually been considered as a factor in the decision to stop sampling. He warns against “making inappropriate inferences from the kind and size of sample you end up with” (Bryman, 2012, p19). Charmaz (2006, p. 114), points out that the appropriate sample size will be driven by the aspirations of the study – a relatively small sample size may be appropriate if the research makes only ‘modest claims’. As this study was concerned with eliciting the views of graduates who are now dispersed, there would be no guarantee of the numbers who might respond. As such, I decided to survey all of those who had graduated from the PMEP programme since 2016.

4.6.2 Quantitative Data: Survey Questionnaire

Quantitative data for this case study was collected in the form of the administration of a web-based questionnaire. There were a number of reasons for choosing to issue a questionnaire to graduates as a means of gathering information. The questionnaire made it possible to garner a significant amount of information in a concise format, albeit that this might need to be filtered to select the most relevant data. It gave the respondents an opportunity, in their own time, and in the privacy of their own place, to study the questions without the perception of pressure from an observer or interviewer. Cohen et al (2007, p. 344) believe that “having the researcher present may be threatening and exert a sense of compulsion”. Respondents may feel uncomfortable about completing the questionnaire, and may not want to complete it, or even start it. This was particularly important as participants would have been familiar with me in the role of Programme Director of the PMEP programme.

Where the use of questionnaires as a research instrument is concerned, Cohen et al. (2007, p. 318) help identify a “staged sequence for planning a questionnaire” which can be summarised as follows in Figure 4.

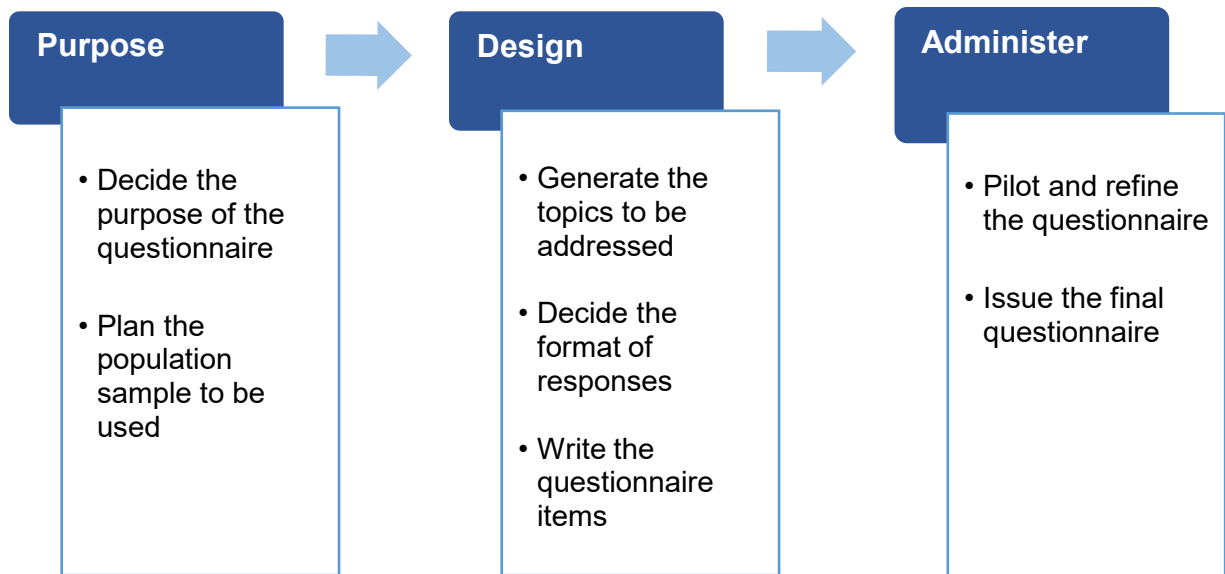


Fig. 4: Staged Sequence for Planning a Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to elicit information which spanned a wide range of areas aimed at determining the graduates perceptions of the research module they had studied and their experiences of completing a research dissertation. The full questionnaire can be found at Appendix A. For the reader's convenience the broad areas are summarised as follows, using the subsection headings:

- Background information of participants
- Views on taught modules of the PMEP programme
- Graduates perceptions, attitudes and experience of the Research Module completed as part of the PMEP programme
- Graduates current research practices
- Graduates opinions and perceptions of their own future research practices

The design of the questionnaire was intended to have a biographical trend. It was hoped that this would encourage respondents to share reflections on their programme of study, examine their current research practices and consider future practices. . This approach is reflected in the advice given by Cohen et al (2007):

Completing a questionnaire can be seen as a learning process in which respondents become more at home with the task as they proceed. Initial questions should therefore be simple, have high interest value and encourage participation. This will build up the confidence and motivation of the respondent. The middle section of the questionnaire should contain the difficult questions; the last few questions should be of high interest in order to encourage respondents to return the complete questionnaire

(Cohen et al., p. 337).

4.6.3 Piloting the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to yield both quantitative data from the responses and qualitative data from the open-ended questions. I was conscious that the completion of the questionnaire would depend on the simplicity of the design and the number and type of questions. Therefore, to facilitate respondents, a number of types of questions were offered and suggested responses to each question which could be rank ordered, selected or ignored, as appropriate were provided. To further ensure reliability, as advised by Bell (1987), a draft questionnaire was then trialled. The questionnaire was sent by email together with a covering letter. The pilot group were invited to give feedback on the following; length of time it took to complete the questionnaire; whether any questions presented the respondent with a difficulty and in what way; whether there were sections or questions omitted which they would have wished to see included and whether any technical difficulties were encountered in completing the questionnaire. The feedback from the pilot survey was positive and informative. Respondents found that it took approx. 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire and no one experienced technical difficulties. The feedback informed the amendments which were incorporated into the revised and finalised questionnaire.

Having completed the pilot study and finalised the questionnaire, Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman et al., 2014) as presented in Figure 5 was considered as a method of administering the survey to ensure the best possible return rate. For web-based surveys, this method consists of the initial survey invitation and follow-up contacts:

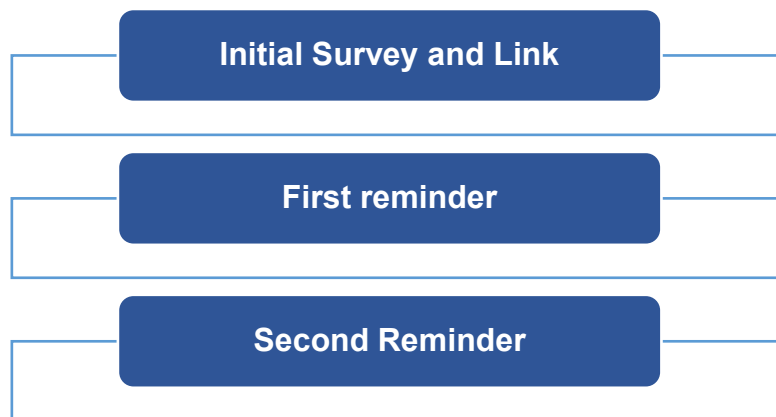


Fig. 5: Adaptation of Dillman's Tailored Design Method (2014)

4.6.4 Data Collection : Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire creator used produces aggregated reports for each question with diagrams and suitable key figures including arithmetic average, percentages and standard deviation. The collected quantitative responses were downloaded as an Excel file and then imported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for descriptive and inferential analysis. Variable names were inputted for each question, as well as variable labels and values. Missing values were labelled as "99". The characteristics of the data set were then sought, and descriptive statistics were performed to report on frequencies (number), relative frequencies (percentage) for categorical data (i.e. gender) and measures of central tendency and variation for numerical data. Analysis of qualitative data was also carried out using thematic analysis described later.

4.7 Qualitative Data Gathering

This section provides the rationale for the selection of the qualitative data collection methods used within the study; focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

4.7.1 Focus Group Interviews

Focus-group interviews, which originated in marketing research and have been widely adapted in social science research (Barbour, 2007; Marshall and Rossman, 2016) are often used to supplement other research methods (Hatch, 2002). Hatch, (2002) contends that focus groups are comprised of individuals with similar characteristics or shared experiences who sit down with a moderator to discuss a topic. Savin-Baden

and Howell Major (2013, p. 389) agree that focus group interviews ‘allow for in-depth discussion and for development of broad insights...(and) result in information being generated more quickly than from individual interviews...and have a high face validity’. Focus groups are defined as ‘group discussions exploring a set of specific issues that are focused because the process involves some collective activity’ (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 104). The key aspect of focus groups is the interactions between participants as a way of collecting qualitative data that would not emerge using other methods (Duggleby, 2005; Kitzinger, 1994; Peters, 1993). Focus groups are considered to yield large amounts of qualitative data and maximise face-to-face (F2F) participant–researcher contact compared to other qualitative methods (Parker and Tritter, 2006).

In order to gain a better understanding of the graduates collective experiences, I administered a number of focus groups (N=3). In order to ensure consistency across the various focus groups, a focus-group interview schedule was developed, questions which were put to focus group participants followed the pattern of the survey questionnaire. It was important that this was so as the responses would be used in triangulating and/or differentiating the data which would result from the research methods being used. The focus groups would also allow further exploration of the research questions.

4.7.2 Videoconferencing Technology

As discussed in Chapter Two, graduates of the PMEP programme are dispersed across the country. As such finding access to a group of people who were all geographically close by proved problematic. In response to these challenges, I decided to use videoconferencing technology as an alternative approach to conducting the focus groups. Videoconferencing has become an increasingly used communication and education modality (Daley, Spalla, Arndt, and Warnes, 2008; Harris, Smith, and Armfield, 2007; Winters and Winters, 2007) and would allow for a more flexible scheduling at the convenience of the graduates.

Advances in information and communication technologies offer new opportunities for interviewing research participants (Kenny, 2005), yet research into the use of digital technologies as data collection tools is still at an early stage. Key advantages of digital technologies for researchers include convenience and cost-effectiveness of online

methods compared to in-person interviews or focus groups, particularly when conducting research with participants over a large geographical spread; and the understanding that online methods can replicate, complement, and possibly improve upon traditional methods, including in-person interviews and focus groups (Braun et al., 2017; Cater, 2011; Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). Similarly, for research participants, online methods may be more attractive than in-person interviews due to features including convenience, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and flexibility (Hewson, 2008; Horrell et al., 2015). Within many research contexts, these considerations are especially pertinent given the need to engage multiple stakeholder groups and communicate with geographically dispersed individuals in contexts with limited resources. However, it can be challenging for researchers to maintain familiarity with rapidly changing communication technologies, meaning that the potential utility of these platforms as research tools may be under recognised and underutilised. Given the significant potential of online communication technologies to support qualitative data collection, further research into participant and researcher perceptions and experiences of using online methods and specific technologies is necessary.

Despite advantages this form of data collection qualitative researchers have discussed a number of ethical, practical, and interactional issues associated with the use of videoconferencing technologies (Seitz, 2016; Weller, 2015). Typical issues associated reported in previous studies include dropped calls and pauses, poor audio or video quality, and the inability to read nonverbal cues as a result of inconsistent and delayed connectivity (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Weller, 2015). For the purposes of this study, I conducted the qualitative focus groups using “Zoom” videoconferencing technology. Zoom provides a data collection mode for qualitative research that is in real time, is safe and confidential, and provides the technological support for scheduling and use. Zoom enables people to see, hear, and talk in a virtual environment. As already discussed there are some concerns that videoconferencing may not provide the same level of interaction between the participants and moderator as face to face focus groups, however, real-time videoconferencing enables verbal and nonverbal cues of expression to be collected, contributing to a greater in-depth analysis of the data (Glassmeyer and Dibbs, 2012).

As discussed previously, technical problems such as not seeing video at both locations and poor audio quality can be a potential drawback for online, audio-visual focus groups (Sullivan, 2012). To mitigate against any such challenges, I ensured that I had information technology employees from the College available to ensure that the technology worked and to resolve any potential issues. As recommended by Smith (2014), I carried out a trial run of the videoconferencing technology prior to each focus group and built in extra time to scheduling in case any technological issues arose. As recognised by Abrams et al. (2015, p. 83), participants “familiarity and self-efficacy with the audio-visual communication can impact data quality”. However as graduates of the PMEP programme had already completed 45% of their programme studying in the virtual online space and were familiar with online technology, online tutorials and videoconferencing, I was satisfied with the method chosen.

4.7.3 Focus Group Participants

This section outlines the sampling procedure for the focus groups. In selecting participants for qualitative research, Patton (2002) encourages purposive sampling as it allows researchers to select “information rich” cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely. To draw a purposive sample, participants are selected because they have characteristics that the researcher desires. Following the distribution of the questionnaire, a number of respondents contacted me confirming their willingness to participate in future research. I wanted to ensure that within this sample frame participants represented the following criteria; male/female, varying lengths of time teaching and a mixture of both part-time and full-time. I made contact with these graduates by email and ten graduates replied confirming their availability. Of the graduates who responded four were male and six female, six had been teaching for more than two years and four had been teaching for just one year. All were employed in various roles including class teachers and those working a special education setting.

4.7.4 Data Analysis (Focus Groups)

Thematic analysis (TA) was chosen as the data analysis tool for this study. TA is perceived to be the foundation method of qualitative data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and while there has been debate regarding whether it is considered a tool or a method for such analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan and Bernard, 2000), it has been recognised as a method in its own right (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The focus-group data was analysed in an inductive manner by means of conventional qualitative thematic analysis (Atkins, and Wallace, 2012; Boeije, 2010; Hsieh, and Shannon, 2018; Schreier, 2012). TA was conducted in a manner which was consistent with the six guideline phases described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Following similar steps, I became familiar with data, reading, and re- reading it, and taking note of any ideas or themes that emerged. Initial codes were generated using colours to code interesting features that emerged in the data (first code, yellow; second code, green third code, orange). The next stage involved looking at the codes, identifying potential themes (overarching themes, main themes, and sub-themes) and grouping codes within the themes. The themes identified were reviewed. Several themes relating to the same issue were identified and grouped together under one theme. As a result, themes began to emerge through first, second, and third order coding (Langdridge, 2004). The themes were then reviewed by ensuring that they were appropriate with respect to the coded extracts and the entire data set, leading to a thematic map of the analysis. Themes were eliminated in the case of repetition of data at all-time points. The data in each theme was examined to check that they formed a pattern. Following this, the themes were examined in relation to the entire data. TA involves going back and forth between the data and the themes and recoding until a satisfactory set of themes is arrived at (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes were then defined and named in order to refine the specific aspects of each theme. The themes were considered complete when all the relevant data had been represented and the overarching themes, main themes, and sub-themes provided were meaningful.

4.8. Semi-structured Interviews with Stakeholders

In case study research, interviews are an essential source of evidence (Yin, 2009)). Interviews are particularly suitable “where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomenon developed” (Robson, 2002, p. 271). In research, an interview is essentially a conversation between people in which one person has the role of research (Gray, 2004). King and Horocks (2012) classify the various interview types used in qualitative research into three groups; structured, semi structured and unstructured. The essential differences are based on where the control of the interview lies. Structured interviews are focused interviews that are guided by specific interview questions (Bryman, 2004, p. 113). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that in structured interviews, similar aligned questions are asked of all participants in the

research. However they are not as rigid and the interviewer is not as tied to these questions and can deviate or expand on questions further in response to the interviewee (Bryman, 2004, p. 113). They can allow for deeper probing into particular areas as the interview develops and as the interviewee engages with the interview (Deanscobe, 2003; Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al, 2011). They can provide the interviewer with a shopping list of questions and provide greater freedom (Robson, 2002) and flexibility (Gillham, 2000) in the sequencing and wording of questions.

According to Bryman (2004) semi-structured interviews align with the interpretative researcher stance adopted earlier. They allow the interviewer to respond to the interviewee's perspective and can be directed by the interviewee. Gillham (2000, p. 61) states that a semi-structured interview "is the most important form of interviewing in case study research. Furthermore it is considered to work well in case study, particularly if one is working with a small number of people who are accessible and if the questions are open and allow for extended responses (Gillham, 2000). Cohen et al (2011, p. 421) stress that the interview is not just a data collection exercise but also a "social, interpersonal encounter", the interviewer is responsible for the maintenance of a good dynamic. King and Horocks (2012) refer to maintenance of rapport and recommend an open style of communication where the interviewer is aware of both the verbal and non-verbal communication.

An interview guide was designed which listed the topics that I would explore in the course of the interview, along with probing questions which may be used to elicit further details from the interview participants (King, 2004). The development of an interview guide allowed not only for easier manageability of the data collection process but also emphasised two important aspects: internal validity (by getting a comparably measured response from different people) and generalisability (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Each interview schedule commenced with understanding the context. As the interview style was semi-structured, it was important that the schedule was not a rigid structure for the interview but rather a guide. For some questions, alternative questions and prompts were put in place to allow flexibility and to allow questions that would help to steer the interview and provide probing and prompting as required (Cohen et al, 2011).

4.8.1 Semi-structured Interview Participants

Interviews were chosen as a research method to elicit the views of key stakeholders in education. Once again purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. I identified the key people I wanted to interview; one being in a senior position in ITE policy formation and secondly school principals whom I knew had facilitated Hibernia College student teachers on school placement. Once selected, the potential interviewees were contacted by email. I was fortunate that I had no refusal to my request

Preparing interview participants in advance addresses both pragmatic and ethical dimensions (Gillham, 2005). Participants were reminded of the following points in the interview invitation email:

1. The purpose of the study.
2. The main topic areas of the interview.
3. Practical aspects of the interview process, including the estimated duration of the interview.

All three participants were interviewed online using Zoom. Audio recordings were saved to the cloud. Zoom allows for the audio recordings to be transcribed. Prior to analysis each transcript was reviewed to check for quality and to correct mistakes. There were occasions where re-listening to the recordings enabled me to fill incomplete sections where the transcription had been poor.

The focus-group data was analysed in an inductive manner by means of conventional qualitative thematic analysis (Atkins, and Wallace, 2012; Boeije, 2010; Hsieh, and Shannon, 2018; Schreier, 2012). TA was conducted in a manner which was consistent with the six guideline phases described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Following similar steps, I became familiar with data, reading, and re- reading it, and taking note of any ideas or themes that emerged. Initial codes were generated by hand using colours to code interesting features that emerged in the data (first code, yellow; second code, green third code, orange). The next stage involved looking at the codes, identifying potential themes (overarching themes, main themes, and sub-themes) and grouping codes within the themes. The themes identified were reviewed and recorded on an

excel sheet. Several themes relating to the same issue were identified and grouped together under one theme. As a result, themes began to emerge through first, second, and third order coding (Langdridge, 2004). The themes were then reviewed by ensuring that they were appropriate with respect to the coded extracts and the entire data set, leading to a thematic map of the analysis. Themes were eliminated in the case of repetition of data at all-time points. The data in each theme was examined to check that they formed a pattern. Following this, the themes were examined in relation to the entire data. TA involves going back and forth between the data and the themes and recoding until a satisfactory set of themes is arrived at (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes were then defined and named in order to refine the specific aspects of each theme. The themes were considered complete when all the relevant data had been represented and the overarching themes, main themes, and sub-themes provided were meaningful.

4.8.2 Data Analysis (Semi- structured Interviews)

The data was analysed as described previously for the focus group interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 159) state that data analysis “involved working with the data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesising them, and search for patterns”. Following similar steps, I became familiar with data, reading, and re- reading it, and taking note of any ideas or themes that emerged. Initial codes were generated by hand using colours to code interesting features that emerged in the data (first code, yellow; second code, green third code, orange). The next stage involved looking at the codes, identifying potential themes (overarching themes, main themes, and sub-themes) and grouping codes within the themes. The themes identified were reviewed and recorded on an excel sheet. In essence, the goal of data analysis was to make sense of the data and to draw out distinct and generalisable features from it.

4.9 Integration of Methods

For a mixed methods study design to be successful, careful attention to the integration of methods is required throughout the study. The complementary use of a questionnaire, focus groups and interviews enabled this research project to pose related but different research questions. The first instance of integration of the methods took place when the survey results were used to identify a purposeful and

embedded sample for the focus groups. This approach allowed me to gather explanations for the survey results through an in-depth inquiry with a sub-sample of participants. The preliminary analysis of the survey findings framed the development of the focus group and interview guide. The main instance of integration occurred following the analysis of the first, quantitative phase and the second, qualitative phase, in order to discuss to what extent the qualitative data helped explain the quantitative results. The interview findings were used to interpret, contextualise, and expand the understanding of the survey results. This approach allowed some findings to be corroborated whereas others provided related but separate explanations.

4.9.1 Challenges in Mixed Methods Research

While a mixed methods approach was considered appropriate for this study, it should be noted that there are a number of challenges to mixed methods research that need to be recognised by the researcher. Firstly, a mixed methods approach comes with a need for extensive data collection which may be time-consuming and resource-intensive. Secondly, the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data is more time-intensive than the analysis of just one type of data on its own. And thirdly, choosing a mixed methods approach requires the researcher to be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010, p. 16) refer to the notion of the researcher as a “connoisseur of methods”. Not only do they need strong grounding in their chosen quantitative and qualitative methodologies and associated paradigms but they also need to be cognisant, knowledgeable and fluent in the theoretical foundations of mixed methods, the specific mixed method methodological issues (research designs and typologies, mixed methods sampling, data priority, implementation and integration) and the quality frameworks that have been developed for mixed methods. This deep knowledge of the differing research approaches is considered necessary because mixed method research designs can be very complex.

4.10 Quality Considerations

In research of any kind, the issue of quality is paramount. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) underscore the importance rigour in the conduct of academic research, if it is to have an impact on theory or practice. Researchers “need to present insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, practitioners, and other researchers” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, p. 238). However, the issue of what constitutes quality in research

is far from straight forward and the criteria for quality may differ depending on the methodology chosen. For example, Creswell (2013) points out that while quality in a narrative study might require the telling of an engaging study, this would not necessarily be the case in phenomenological or grounded theory research. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) distinguish between two levels of rigour - methodological, which is concerned with how the methods are applied, and interpretive, which relates to the extent to which the findings can be shown to be credible and worthwhile. Firestone (1987) contends that a good study should provide the reader with sufficient detail to show that the conclusions drawn make sense.

4.11 Reliability and Validity

According to Mason (1996, p. 24), validity in research is concerned with the extent to which there is alignment between what you claim to be “observing, identifying, or measuring” and what you actually are. Hammersley (1987, p. 69) concurs: “An account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise”. Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2011) discuss validity in terms of the research being defensible and well-grounded. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) contend that validity is a function of the rigour of the researcher’s analytical procedures. Consequently, transparency of process is key to demonstrating the validity of findings and interpretations (Miles and Huberman, 1994). According to Hammersley (1992) validity means that an empirical account must be plausible and credible and should take into account the amount and kind of evidence used. Hammersley stresses the importance of relevance, in terms of “the importance of a topic within its substantive field or the contribution it makes to the literature in that field” (Bryman, 2012, p. 396).

LeCompte and Goetz (1981), distinguish between internal and external validity and reliability. Internal validity relates to whether there is sufficient alignment between what the researcher has observed and the resulting theories that emerge. External validity relates to whether the findings can be generalised to other contexts. This issue of generalisability tends to be problematic for qualitative research due to its typically small sample sizes. External reliability relates to the extent to which the research can be replicated. This too is quite a problematic notion in qualitative research, where there is often a focus on dynamic social situations. Nonetheless, LeCompte and Goetz

(1981) suggest strategies that can be followed in order to enhance the external reliability of research.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) have sought to provide alternatives to validity and reliability as guiding concepts for qualitative research. They propose in their place authenticity and trustworthiness. Authenticity in this context relates to the “wider political impact of research” (Bryman, 2012, p. 393) and aligns with Hammersley’s concern with relevance. Trustworthiness comprises four elements – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility requires that research is conducted in accordance with the demands of good practice and that the subjects of the research affirm that their social world has been accurately represented. Transferability is the extent to which research can be applied to other contexts or situations. While this is generally problematic given the small sample sizes that tend to be employed in qualitative research, transferability can be enhanced by the generation of ‘thick’ descriptions – “rich accounts of the details of a culture” – that provide a basis for determining applicability to other contexts (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). Dependability can be equated to the notion of reliability or consistency of measurement in quantitative research. It is concerned with the robustness of the record-keeping associated with the research, so that there is a clear and accessible audit trail that could enable peers to review the research and assess “the degree to which theoretical inferences can be justified” (Bryman, 2012, p392). Confirmability relates to the extent to which the researcher has sought to be objective, while recognising that complete objectivity is not possible.

4.12 Reflexivity

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) identify five strategies for increasing the credibility of qualitative research. The first is triangulation of the data from multiple sources. The second is collecting feedback from the research participants on early or initial findings. A third strategy is to adopt a comprehensive approach to data collection. This includes continuing data gathering to saturation point but also seeking out “data that support alternative explanations” (Patton, 2015, p653). A fourth strategy is researcher reflexivity, which involves an interrogation of the researcher’s position within the research. This involves laying bare any underlying beliefs and biases that may impact the research. Being explicit about such things enables the reader to see how the

researcher may have made their particular interpretations and the assumptions that are underlying those interpretations. The researcher needs to be able to show convincingly how they got there, and how they built confidence that this was the best account possible (Richards, 2014).

As discussed, reflexivity is key when conducting 'insider research'. How we think about the world and our perspectives on knowledge will guide how we design and conduct social research (Matthews and Ross, 2010). It is therefore, important that I interrogate my own position in relation to the research and my relationship with the participants. I also need to recognise that I have my own perspectives on research and need to be mindful that these beliefs will have an impact on the type of questions I ask. I need to take steps to ensure that I do not let these perspectives colour my interpretations of the participants' comments. I need to ensure that the voices that emerge from the research are the participant's own and are not distorted by my perspectives. Steps were taken throughout the study to address such issues.

4.13 Ethical Considerations for the Current Research

This section explores the ethical considerations that were put in place for all data collection methods in the current research. The academic community and the public at large need to have confidence that research has been designed and conducted with integrity and that the researcher has adopted an ethical position (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). When conducting research, the relationship between the researcher and the research participants needs to be supported by a robust ethical framework. Ethical issues may arise in relation to the collection of data and the dissemination of the findings. For example, the researcher needs to consider how much information they give the participants about the purpose of the research and how much privacy they afford them (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). One of the most basic principles of ethical research is that the participants should not be caused harm and should be made aware of any risks that may be associated with their participation (Diener and Crandall, 1978). It is important for researchers to consider the implications seriously and always act ethically to minimise the potential for harm. Clear guidelines and statements of principle created in advance of the research process can provide participants with reassurance that they will be treated with dignity and respect. These act to protect both participants and researchers, as well as ensuring the integrity of the research and

that organisational and professional obligations are met (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). Ethical approval was granted from the Institute of Education, Dublin City University and separately from Hibernia College. The ethics application included information relating to the research design and participants. Every effort was sought to safeguard the respect and ethical integrity of all the participants throughout the research process.

In case studies, the richness of data generated comes from prolonged interactions with practitioners and required a strong degree of trust to be achieved between myself, the researcher, and those being researched. Identifying myself as a researcher was the first ethical issue to be addressed according to Gillham (2005). In doing so, there was the possibility of changing the perception of the interviewee; this could have made them either more cautious or more helpful. I needed to accept these are unavoidable consequences for the purpose of honesty and taking the ethically safest stance of being overt about my role as a researcher. It was essential and helpful to have clear guidelines and processes in place to ensure that a sound ethical relationship was developed (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013). Trust was a fundamental feature in allowing freedom of discussion, as well as decisions to be made on what and how the information provided would be used. The Ethics form was completed and information about the research, purpose and aims, were shared with all of the participants, including information about what was expected from their involvement and who the research would be shared with. Permission was granted through the completion of consent forms in advance of the research. The right to withdraw and the right of refusal made clear at outset and at the start of each interview. Privacy, confidentiality was outlined throughout along with the right to anonymity.

In undertaking this research, I undertook to comply with the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) guidelines (2011). These guidelines state that "educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons involved in the research they are undertaking" (2011, p. 5). In addition to the aspects covered above, BERA guidelines recommend that the informed consent include an explanation of why the subjects' participation is required and details about where the research will be reported. "Researchers must ensure that data is kept securely and that the form of any publication, including publication on the Internet, does not directly

or indirectly lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity” (BERA, 2011, p. 8).

As an insider researcher, it is important to discuss the ethical challenges I faced relating to privacy and confidentiality. Even if the researcher does not specifically identify their organisation, through publication of the authors details it is often easy to make the connection to where the research was undertaken (Floyd and Arthur, 2012; Smyth and Holian, 2008). In addition, there may be issues related to maintaining institutional anonymity when citing information from an organisation’s reports or including the full reference for such documents (Trowler, 2011). Additionally if the organisation can be identified through the author, caution is needed to ensure that demographics and descriptions of the context of the study do not reveal the identity of the participants (Floyd and Arthur, 2012; Trowler, 2011). Mindful of these challenges, I discussed these concerns from the outset with the College’s Ethics Committee and Executive Management Team and received permission to continue with my study.

A further ethical challenge of being an insider researcher is the potential for implicit or perceived coercion during the recruitment of participants for my research. Gaining access to participants became an ethical dilemma that needed to be addressed. To minimise the impact the questionnaire was distributed through the Alumni Office not from my personal email address. As an insider researcher, I was mindful of all times of my positionality within the study.

4.14 Chapter Summary

The present chapter addresses the methodological approach in which the research programme was conducted. Section One presented the methodological issues, the rationale for the selection of the mixed method approach, and the philosophical underpinnings of the research. Section two addressed issues pertaining to: (a) the development of the questionnaire (b) focus group interviews (c) interviews with stakeholders. The rationale for the selection of particular methods, instruments, and techniques was presented. Reasons pertaining to the selection process of each individual method were delineated, providing clear and resolute reasoning for their selection and use. A detailed exploration of the form of analyses during each methodological stage was provided. The chapter also addressed the importance of

the ethical considerations, which were paramount to the research programme. Measures taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the studies were also addressed.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the results obtained from the mixed methodological research design outlined below in Figure 6. The data collection involved gathering, both quantitative information (questionnaire) as well as qualitative information (focus groups and semi-structured interviews), so that the final database represents both. The first section provides the results and analysis of the questionnaire which was sent to graduates of the PMEP programme. Statistics show that n=509 respondents opened the questionnaire, with N=187 completing it, thus achieving a return rate of 37%. The second section provides the results of the focus groups carried out with graduates of the PMEP programme. In total three focus group interviews (N=3) were conducted. Common and recurring themes that emerged across all three focus groups are highlighted and discussed. The third section provides the results of the semi-structured interviews and reports on the findings of three interviews (N=3) with key stakeholders who have a remit within the wider field of education.

For the purposes of illuminating the findings, I have taken the decision to provide comparisons with results of other research studies within the context of literature already explored. A descriptive, narrative approach has been taken to facilitate an exploration of patterns and themes.

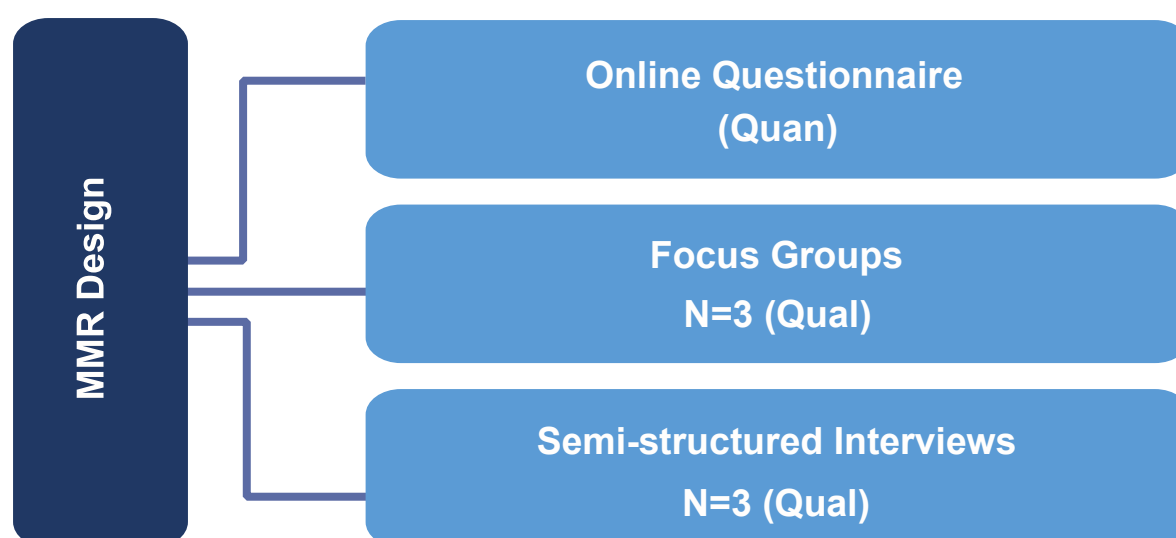


Fig. 6: Mixed Method Research Design

Study's Findings and Discussion

5.2 Quantitative Study

In a classic single-case study, Yin (2009) suggests that the format for writing the case study report may involve the use of a single narrative that describes and analyses the case and presents the findings with the support of empirical evidence. The following section presents the findings from the online questionnaire. The narrative is supplemented with tabular as well as graphic and pictorial displays.

5.2.1 Questionnaire Participants

This section details the respondents who took part in the questionnaire. 1,200 graduates of the PMEP programme, qualified since 2016, were sent a copy of the online questionnaire in July 2019. To maximise the potential to locate the graduates, the email address registered by graduating students at the Alumni Office was used. However, as many graduates may have been on holidays or may have changed their email address since graduating, the potential to contact the cohort was compromised. Statistics showed that respondents (n=509) who opened the questionnaire and those who completed (N=187) thus achieving a return rate of 37%.

5.2.2 Instrument

The study employed a questionnaire instrument which contained both open and closed-ended items (See Appendix A). Combining open-ended and closed items has the potential to capture the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Erickson and Kaplan, 2000). The questionnaire consisted of items within five broad areas:

- Background information of participants
- Views on taught modules of the PMEP programme
- Graduates perceptions, attitudes and experiences of the Research Module completed as part of the PMEP programme
- Graduates current research practices
- Graduates opinions and perceptions of their own future research practices

Descriptive Statistics

5.2.3 Profile of the Respondents

Analysis of the respondents who completed the questionnaire, (N=187) indicated that 85% (n=157) were female and 15% (n=30) were males. Table 2 shows the sample description regarding the level of years' teaching experience; 40% (n=74) had been teaching for one year, 38% (n=72) had been teaching for two years and 22% (n=41) for three years.

Table 2: Responses Indicating Years of Teaching Experience

Years teaching	Frequencies	% Split
3 years	41	21.93%
2 years	72	38.50%
1 year	74	39.57%
Total	187	100.00%

Respondents were asked to indicate the status of their current employment. Table 3 indicates that of those who responded, 27% (n=50) had full-time positions, 37% (n=70) had fixed-term contracts, 6% (n=11) had part-time contracts and 15% (n=28) of respondents were not employed in teaching. Those who identified with the other category (n=28) were generally on maternity contracts or engaged in substitution work.

Table 3: Current Employment Status

Q4 What is your current employment status?

Employment Status	# of Responses	% Split
Full-time	50	26.74%
Part-time	11	5.88%
Fixed-term contract	70	37.43%
Not employed	28	14.97%
Other (please specify)	28	14.97%
Total	187	100.00%

Table 4 below illustrates the roles in which respondents were employed. 76% (n=138) were working as Classroom Teachers and 14% (n=26) were working as Special Education Teachers (SET). Those who identified in the other category were carrying out substitution work.

Table 4: Current Role Description

In what capacity are you employed?

Employment Type	# of Responses	% Split
Classroom Teacher	138	76.24%
Principal Teacher	0	0.00%
Deputy Principal Teacher	0	0.00%
Special Education Teacher	26	14.36%
Other (please specify)	17	9.39%
Total	181	100.00%

5.3 Questionnaire Findings and Discussion

The following sets of data represent graduates views on a range of categories;

5.3.1 Views on Taught Modules of the PMEP Programme

The respondents were asked a number of questions aimed at eliciting their views on the modules studied as components of the PMEP programme. To begin, respondents were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 10 the modules they felt had most prepared them for their teaching career, (1 = most useful, 10= least useful). Table 5 provides a detailed view of the data.

Table 5: Ranking of Modules

Q7 Which modules of the PMEP programme do you think most prepared you for teaching?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Foundations of Education: History, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy	2.75%	1.65%	6.04%	6.59%	3.85%	10.99%	13.19%	10.99%	13.19%	30.77%
Pedagogy 1: Physical, Arts and Inclusive Education	1.68%	6.15%	13.41%	22.91%	18.44%	15.08%	7.26%	6.15%	5.59%	3.35%
Pedagogy 2: Language, Literacy, Numeracy and ICT	5.49%	12.64%	46.15%	15.93%	4.40%	7.14%	3.85%	2.75%	1.10%	0.55%
Pedagogy 3: Ethical, Social, Personal and Early Childhood Education	1.70%	2.27%	9.66%	21.59%	23.86%	15.91%	15.91%	4.55%	3.41%	1.14%
Pedagogy 4: Social, Scientific and Development Education	0.00%	2.20%	4.40%	14.29%	26.37%	23.08%	12.09%	10.99%	4.40%	2.20%

The most frequent responses when analysed suggest that respondents valued the placement experience as a 'practical' opportunity to gain 'real-life experience' and as an opportunity to 'learn from more experienced teachers'. One of the respondents commented:

Placement is the most useful because hands on experience on the ground is priceless invaluable experience. Learning from teachers and being in the school setting means you have to hit the ground running and get on with it!

In contrast, the Research Module of the programme was ranked by only 1% (n=2) of all respondents as the most useful, with 28% (n=51) of respondents ranking it as the least useful module and 75% of respondents ranking it in the bottom three. By inviting respondents to elaborate on their choice, certain issues were highlighted including; lack of relevancy to teaching, stress of completing a dissertation and timing of the module on the programme. The qualitative data gathered suggests that the majority of respondents who ranked the module as low, found a weak relation between research and its 'relevance' in preparing them for the teaching profession. Respondents comments included:

The research is not relevant in the day to day teaching

I have not used it since I left and it has not enhanced my teaching.

No relevance to my teaching

Some respondents viewed the research module as an unnecessary distraction from the core responsibilities of a teacher. This is reflected in the comment below:

Research, while I enjoyed it, was ultimately an unnecessary process which I don't rely upon in my current teaching.

It would have been better to complete lesson plans/essay/small project in a subject area of your choice. It did not support or help my learning.

Comments from others stated that they found the experience of completing a dissertation 'stressful'. This is reflected in comments below:

Completing a dissertation wasted valuable time and was very stressful throughout the course.

I think it took up a lot of my time and while it was valuable it was a stressful module.

Further negative comments in the commentary relate to the scheduling of the module within the programme structure. Some respondents felt it was too close to their Advanced School Placement Module and that it should have been spread over the two-year programme.

The research element could have started earlier in the 2 year programme. It was a lot to take on during Advanced School Placement

It was useful but again the research project should be at the start and should be progressive over the 24 months not rushed

While the research project was very interesting, we were under a lot of time pressure to do it so I felt it was rushed

Further examination of the qualitative responses suggest that although some respondents ranked the module low in respect of its usefulness for teaching, they did attribute certain benefits to completing the module. Respondents surveyed indicated that completing research had given them an opportunity to achieve what might be considered personal goals, such as studying in order to improve one's qualifications. One respondent commented:

It was useful and it helped me obtain level 9 status when graduating but in relation to teaching I feel it was least useful.

Others saw it as an opportunity to acquire greater subject knowledge in a specific area:

Research for dissertation was useful in an academic sense and has certainly added to my knowledge and understanding of that specific area, however I feel that the on the job part of the course is more beneficial and gives the trainee teacher a real sense of the daily challenges of the job

I chose to do my research on childhood bereavement and how a child copes with the death of a parent and unfortunately I have come across this's number of times in my 2 years teaching.

Others expressed the view that the completion of the research had been a positive experience which they had enjoyed, even though they hadn't found it useful. Respondents commented:

I enjoyed the research project very much but the subject did not benefit my teaching.

Thoroughly enjoyed the research element of the course but as regards practical teaching experience I found it the least useful module for the actual profession of teaching

Research, while I enjoyed it, was ultimately an unnecessary process which I don't rely upon in my current teaching.

While I found the Research Module excellent and really found the information support the most professional and helpful out of all of the modules, I could not say it prepared me for my life in teaching as it was so specific

Independent t-tests were carried out to examine the statistical relationships between the ranking of modules and length of time teaching and between those who had full-time vs part-time jobs. However, there were no notable statistical differences and the emerging trends were common to all respondents.

In line with other studies these findings suggest that graduates of the PMEP programme regard highly the placement experience during their programme of study (Segall, 2002; Schulz and Mandzuk, 2005). The findings presented show that the majority of respondents found the research module least useful in preparing them for teaching. The qualitative commentary suggests that for this cohort of respondents, the value of research is judged on its capacity to be directly relevant to teacher's work and classroom activities. Drennan and Clarke, (2009) note that the thesis model has often been criticised for not being relevant to the concerns of professional formation and the pedagogic dimensions of practice (Reis-Jorge, 2007). This resonates with other findings which suggest that student teachers are often critical about research in their programmes and find a weak relation between the master's thesis and the teaching profession (Eklund, 2018; Niemi, 2011). Researchers state that student-teachers are often of the mistaken opinion that research is frightening and burdensome, that theory is irrelevant to practice and that research is something academics do (Ponte, Beijard, and Ax 2004). Furthermore in common with other research in this area (Deemer, 2009), some respondents viewed the research module as an unnecessary distraction from the core responsibilities of a teacher. Indeed, responses concur with findings from studies which suggest that many teachers starting out in their career are primarily concerned with classroom issues such as planning and classroom management (Beycioglu, Ozer, and Ugurlu, 2010)

However, it is important to note that while many ranked the module low in respect of its usefulness for teaching, they did nonetheless express positive views towards studying research and noted the benefits that had accrued such as subject knowledge, acquiring a master's qualification and enjoyment.

5.3.2 Graduates Beliefs, Perceptions and Attitudes of the Research Module

A number of attitudinal scales were created to explore respondents' beliefs and attitudes towards their programme of study. As a key element in teacher learning (Borg, 2011), beliefs and attitudes are considered the clearest measure of teachers' professional growth (Kagan, 1992). A Likert scale was created to measure the views of respondents on a series of statements. The items were ranked using a Likert-type scale that included: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree (scoring 1–4)

Table 6: Research Skills and Knowledge

How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
The Research module taught me the skills to reflect critically on my own practice in the classroom.	8.56%	27.27%	52.41%	11.76%	
	16	51	98	22	187
The Research module taught me about qualitative, quantitative and mixed research methods that would be useful in future research.	2.69%	9.68%	70.43%	17.20%	
	5	18	131	32	186
The Research module has increased my motivation to carry out future research.	17.30%	42.70%	31.35%	8.65%	
	32	79	58	16	185
The Research module helped develop my written communication.	6.99%	27.96%	54.84%	10.22%	
	13	52	102	19	186
The research module helped develop my critical thinking skills.	3.74%	22.99%	56.68%	16.58%	
	7	43	106	31	187

The findings will be presented under a number of themes;

(i) Reflective Practice

The findings show that 74% of respondents (n=120) agreed or strongly agreed that the Research Module had taught them skills to reflect critically on their own practice in the classroom.

(ii) Research Skills and Knowledge

Respondents were invited to indicate if they felt they had acquired research related knowledge and skills often associated with the study of research methods and the completion of a dissertation. 88% (n=162) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Research Module taught them about qualitative, quantitative and mixed research methods that would be useful in future research. 65% (n= 121) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Research Module helped develop their written communication and a further 73% (n=137) agreed or strongly agreed that the Research Module had helped develop their critical thinking skills. Stemming from the data gathered, an important finding appears to be that the majority of respondents felt they had acquired a broad range of knowledge and skills following the study of this module.

(iii) Motivation to carry out future research

It is surprising however, that although respondents were positively disposed towards the knowledge and skills they had gained from their study of research, only 40% agreed or strongly agreed that it had increased their motivation to carry out future research.

(iv) Views on future content of the Research Module

A second scale was created to measure respondents views on the elements of research they felt should be included in any future PMEP programmes. Table presents the data:

Table 7 : Views on future content of Research Module

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
All students teachers should learn about educational research methodologies as part of their PME course	5.38% 10	23.12% 43	58.60% 109	12.90% 24	186
All student teachers should have to complete a small scale research dissertation as part of their PME course.	8.65% 16	24.86% 46	52.43% 97	14.05% 26	185
All student teachers should be taught about reflective practice as part of their PME course.	0.53% 1	1.60% 3	53.48% 100	44.39% 83	187

72% (n=133) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all student teachers should learn about educational research methodologies, 65% (n=123) agreed or strongly agreed that all students teachers should complete a small-scale research dissertation as part of their course. Once again the theme of reflective practice emerged strongly with an overwhelming 97% (n=183) agreeing that students should be taught about reflective practice. This finding may suggest that respondents regarded these as important components of ITE preparation.

In summary the data presented here suggests that respondents were generally positive regarding the research knowledge and skills they had acquired from their programme. Reflective practice emerged as a valued skill which graduates reported acquiring. Reflective practice is a dominant concept in teacher education and is now widely applied in ITE programmes across the globe (Liou 2001; Harford and MacRuaric 2008). Poom-Valickis and Mathews (2013) argue that having a disposition to engage in reflection and a willingness to learn from those reflections is integral to

becoming an effective classroom teacher. Korthagen and Kessels (1999) suggest that reflection at a deep level can aid teachers to make sense of their actions and beliefs and allow them construct alternative courses of action. The reported benefits of reflective practice range from its potential to challenge and broaden the teacher's perspectives to assisting teachers solve problems in their practice (Bartelheim and Evans, 1993; Bolton, 2005; Loughran 2002). Learning the practice of reflection is fundamental because it allows people to engage into a thoughtful relationship with the world-life and thus gain an awake stance about one's lived experience (Mortari, 2015)

Respondents in the study also valued highly the knowledge and skills they had acquired from the Research module. This resonates with other studies which suggest that by participating actively in the process of research, student teachers improve their skills in questioning, critical thinking, reflection and problem solving (Rock, and Levin, 2002). Similarly findings from Beisser (2000) and Price (2001) suggest that student teachers who actively participate in the research process improve their critical thinking and problem solving skills (Beisser, 2000; Price, 2001). Essentially, critical thinking is learning to think independently, developing one's own opinions supported by existing evidence. Respondents in this study also expressed a positive view towards including a Research Module on future PMEP programmes, which may also suggest that they were positively disposed towards acquiring these skills.

However, more concerning in the results presented here is the view expressed by respondents that the course of study had not motivated them to continue researching. This may be attributed to the possibility that graduates have not yet at this stage of their career associated research methods with professional development, personal growth or successful classroom practice (Gitlin et al., 1999; Kotsopoulos et al., 2012; Reis-Jorge, 2005; Waite and Davis, 2006). However the lack of motivation is of concern and calls for further evaluation.

5.3.3 Graduates Philosophical Stance

The manner in which beginning teachers conceptualise the role of a teacher and evaluate educational research is likely to be shaped by their epistemological beliefs about teaching and learning, often referred to as their teaching philosophy (Magnusson, Krajcik, and Borko, 1999). Having a teaching philosophy is regarded as

a fundamental component in teaching that directly or indirectly influences the teacher's actions in the classroom. For the purposes of this study, I wanted to investigate if graduates of the programme, felt that the study of research and the completion of a dissertation had in any way helped shape their teaching philosophy.

Figure 8 provides a pictorial representation of the findings.

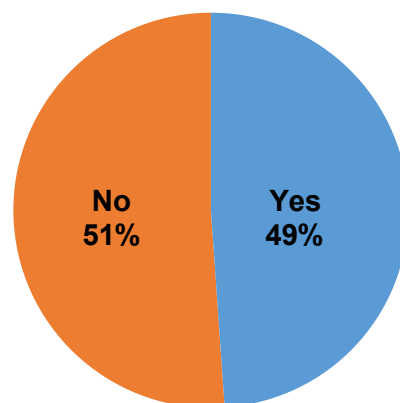


Fig. 8: Did the Research Module help you to develop your own philosophical stance on teaching and education?

A slim majority of respondents 51% (n=94), felt that the study of research had not contributed to the development of their philosophical stance. Respondents were invited to elaborate on this question.

One respondent commented:

It did allow me to delve deeper into one specific area... However I don't think it necessarily helped me develop my own philosophical stance on teaching and education.

In all honesty it was a tick box exercise for me. Something I had to do to complete the degree

Once again as in the previous questions the negative commentary regarding the stress of completing a dissertation and its place on the programme emerged in the commentary:

Another respondent commented:

The views of those who felt it had contributed are reflected in the word cloud below in Fig 9:

[illegible]

Fig. 9: Word Cloud on Teaching Philosophy

For those who felt research had supported the development of a teaching philosophy a number of areas emerged; one respondent commented on the contribution to education they felt they might be able to make in future research, another expressed the view that it had helped developed a child-centred stance to teaching and education, while another spoke about deepening their critical reflection of their work:

I feel it opened my eyes to the opportunity any teacher had to research a given topic of interest in the education system in Ireland etc. It made me think that down the line as I become a more experienced teacher, I could personally shed light in areas with further research and work in a given area.....Doing the research project made me feel like someday I could contribute further in the education system in Ireland when I have done further experience under my belt. The Research Module assisted me to strengthen my child-centred stance in relation to teaching and education.

It made me critically think about how and why I was teaching the subjects that I Was

Once again a strong emphasis on reflection and reflective practice emerged in the qualitative commentary. Comments included:

I found that it really highlighted the importance of being a reflective practitioner. It made me think in depth about a lot of topics before settling on my final choice for dissertation. During this reflection I feel I thought more about some subjects/ curricular areas/philosophies more than ever before.

In summary, the findings here reveal the contribution that the study of research and the completion of a dissertation can make towards the development of a teaching philosophy. A teaching philosophy is considered a set of fundamental core beliefs for teaching, that are shaped from an accumulation of personal experiences, as well the interpretations of the teacher's experiences including their programme of study (Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt, 2000; Sun, 2012; Zanting, Verloop, and Vermunt, 2003). Given that the development of a teaching philosophy statement involves a complex process of gathering, assimilating, analysing, reflecting upon, and evaluating

and adapting thoughts on effective teaching and learning, it is positive to see these skills reflected in some of the respondents comments. According to Brookfield (1990), a teaching philosophy statement provides the “stability and direction during the storms of ambiguity” most teachers face in their teaching careers. Without a clear sense of purpose, the teacher is often left to the direction of others as to his or her roles, aims, and functions within the institution. Developing a teaching philosophy takes time and effort. For most it is a life-long process. Having skills to inform that philosophy is essential as the teaching philosophy must be revisited throughout one’s career (Chism, 1998). For those who were not influenced by the research module, it is interesting to note that the recurring themes of the timing of the module, stress of completing the dissertation and its lack of relevance to teaching continue to emerge as negative commentary.

5.3.4 Graduates Experience of Completing a Research Dissertation

Respondents were asked a series of questions related to the completion of the research dissertation. As discussed in Chapter Two, students on the PMEP programme are directed to choose a research project which aligns to one of four pillars; Teaching, Learning and Assessment, ICT, Psychological and Sociological and Inclusion and Differentiation. Figure 10 shows that N=88 of respondents chose to complete research closely aligned to the area of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, N= 49 completed research in the area of Inclusion and Differentiation, N=39 chose the theme of Psychological and Sociological and N=12 chose ICT.

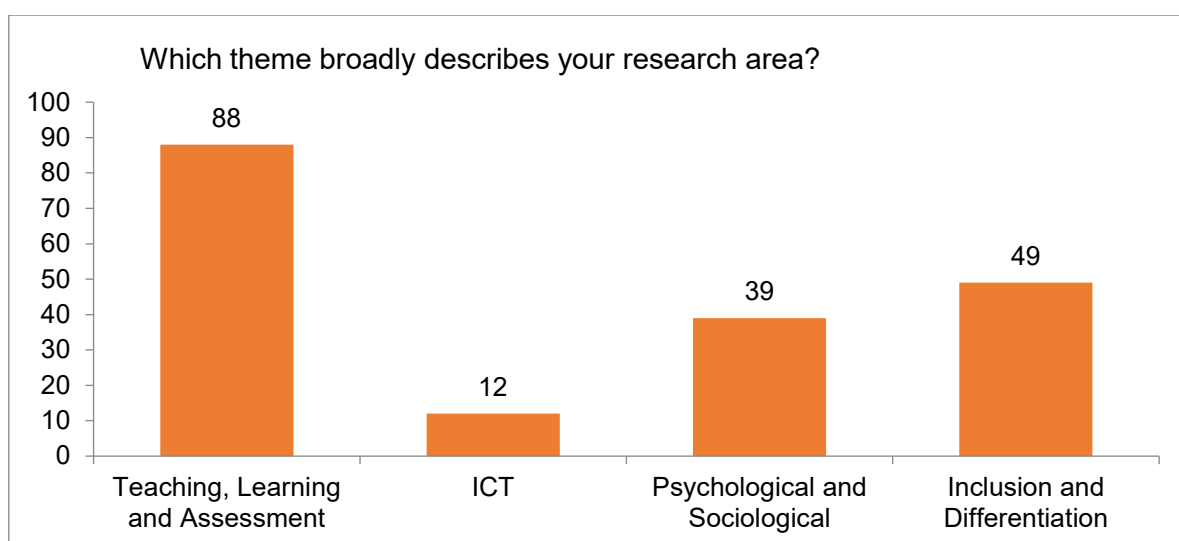


Fig. 10: Research Themes

The participants were asked to indicate to what extent the research area chosen was related to their practice as a student teacher. Figure 11 highlights that 64% of all respondents indicated that their research topic selection had been influenced by their practice as student teachers. This close to practice choice of subject for the dissertation is not surprising given the perceived link between research and practice, alluded to in an earlier question.

Was the research area chosen influenced by your practice as a student-teacher?

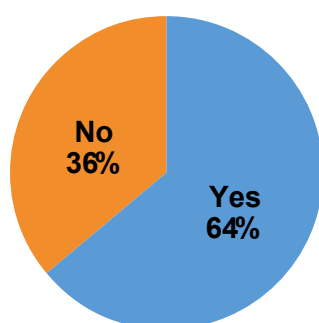


Fig. 11: Research Influences

Two additional questionnaire items were asked regarding continued research activity in their chosen area and willingness to disseminate the research results from their dissertations in the future.

Table 11 shows that only 11% of graduates were still researching in the area. Further analysis reveals that a higher proportion of those still researching had chosen to research in the area of Psychological and Sociological. However, as the number was small, no statistical significance can be inferred here.

Table 8: Respondents who are Actively Researching

Q22 Are you still actively researching in this area?

Response	# of Responses	% Split
Yes	20	10.64%
No	161	85.64%
Total	181	100.00%

Respondents were also asked to indicate if they would consider disseminating their research. They were presented with a menu of different options indicating where they might share their research. Table 9 presents the findings. The majority of respondents n=88 indicated that presenting to colleagues on their staff would be their preferred choice. A significant majority indicated that they would be prepared to publish in a magazine such as Education Matters or InTouch. Both publications are widely circulated and accessible magazines within primary teaching communities, the latter is a free publication distributed to all members of the Irish National Teacher's Organisation Union (INTO), on a monthly basis. Presenting at a national level for example at a conference or seminar was the least popular choice, with only n=14 indicating that they would be open to this.

Table 9: Preferred ways to Disseminate Research

Response	# of Responses
An academic journal	53
A book chapter (contribution to an edited book)	44
Within the print / ePrint media (e.g. Education Matters, Education Magazine InTouch)	55
Other media correspondence (e.g. newspaper journal, media blog)	42
Presentation at an appropriate national and/or international conference (e.g. ESAI, BJES, IJS)	24
To colleagues on the staff	87
At a national level (e.g. conference , seminar)	14

In summary the findings here suggest that the majority of students are not currently conducting research in the area of their dissertation. The dissemination of knowledge beyond the immediate group of the practitioner is also noteworthy. This is in common

with other studies that suggest that many practitioners are uneasy with the discourse of the current traditional academic literature and lack the time to write up their findings for others in the wider educational community. Whether it is realistic to expect teachers in their early careers focused on their own purposes to write up their research in conventional ways, in academic journals for example, has also been debated.

5.3.5 Graduates Current Research Practices

One of the guiding research questions of the research sought to explore what research practices graduates have adopted in their teaching careers. The following section examines the respondents' current engagement with research practices.

Table 10: Formal Research Practices

	NEVER	ONCE	ONCE PER YEAR	3-4 TIMES PER YEAR	MONTHLY	WEEKLY	TOTAL
Attendance at education course/ workshop	10.16% 19	10.16% 19	19.79% 37	47.59% 89	12.30% 23	0.00% 0	187
Attendance at education conference or seminar	55.91% 104	17.74% 33	17.20% 32	8.60% 16	0.54% 1	0.00% 0	186
Completion of face to-face or online Summer CPD course	0.53% 1	14.05% 26	43.24% 80	30.27% 56	0.54% 1	0.00% 0	185

	NEVER	ONCE	ONCE PER YEAR	3-4 TIMES PER YEAR	MONTHLY	WEEKLY	TOTAL
Participation in an educational online webinar (e.g. hosted by the Teaching Council)	11.89% 22	21.51% 40	5.91% 11	3.23% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	186
Continued reading professional literature in education	25.54% 47	14.13% 26	9.24% 17	28.80% 53	17.93% 33	4.35% 8	184

Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they engage with a set of activities often associated with research. 48% (n=89) of respondents attended at an education course or workshop 3-4 times a year, with 43% (n=80) completing a CPD course once per year. For most primary school teachers, CPD takes place in the form of week-long summer courses for which they are granted 3 days Extra Personal Leave (EPV) during the following school year. %6% of respondents indicated the reading of professional literature in education was amongst one of the most common practice, with 18% of respondents reporting that they read on a monthly basis and 29% reading professional literature 3-4 times per year.

Respondents were then asked to identify how frequently they engaged with a set of more informal research practices.

Table 11: Informal research practices

Since you graduated from the PME programme, have you participated in any of the following kinds of activities?

	NEVER	ONCE	ONCE PER YEAR	3-4 TIMES PER YEAR	MONTHLY	WEEKLY	TOTAL
Engaging in reflective practice on your own teaching	4.32% 8	2.16% 4	1.08% 2	13.51% 25	22.16% 41	56.76% 105	185
Informal conversation with colleagues to improve your own teaching	1.08% 2	0.54% 1	0.00% 0	10.81% 20	20.00% 37	67.57% 125	185

Once again the theme of reflection emerged strongly with 79% of respondents indicating that they frequently engage in reflective practice on their own teaching. 66% of respondents indicated that they engaged in informal conversation with colleagues to improve their practice on a weekly basis.

Respondents were also asked if they had carried out any research in their own classroom or had engaged in research with colleagues.

Table 12: Engagement in Research

	NEVER	ONCE	ONCE PER YEAR	3-4 TIMES PER YEAR	MONTHLY	WEEKLY	TOTAL
Carried out research in your own classroom	72.04% 134	10.22% 19	5.91% 11	8.06% 15	2.15% 4	1.61% 3	186
Carried out research with other colleagues in your own school	77.96% 145	10.75% 20	6.45% 12	1.08% 2	2.69% 5	1.08% 2	186

In summary the findings in this section suggest that attendance at workshops the completion of F2F or online summer courses are the most common forms of professional development activities. The importance of teachers engaging with professional development activities cannot be underestimated. The connection between teacher identity and professional development is emphasised by Beijaard et al (2000, p. 750) who found that “Teachers’ perceptions of their own professional identity affect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice” (p.750). Darling-Hammond (2017) argues that professional development should provide opportunities for teachers’ critical reflection which deepen teachers’ understanding of the processes of teaching and learning and of the students they teach.

The findings here also suggest that graduates valued the reflective practice and informal conversations with colleagues to improve practice. The power of professional conversations has been widely discussed in the literature. Nieto (2003) argues that

many teachers receive their greatest inspiration from other teachers, rather than from outside experts, as they work on day-to-day problems together. Engestrom (2001) posits the notion of situated understanding at the workplace as mediated by conversation, collaboration, and identification of problems in current practices.

A noteworthy finding here is that overwhelmingly graduates indicated that had not carried out research either individually or with colleagues. The possible explanation for this is the lack of skill in transferring and using research in their practice, evidenced in several studies (Ion and Iucu, 2014; Reis-Jorge, 2007). However engagement in research at the early stage of one's teaching career could set the foundation for teachers' lifelong engagement in research.

5.3.6 Future Intentions to Study

Finally respondents were asked if they had progressed to any further programme of study since graduating. Figure 12 indicates that the majority had not.

Q28 Are you currently or have you progressed onto a further programme of study since graduating from the PME programme?

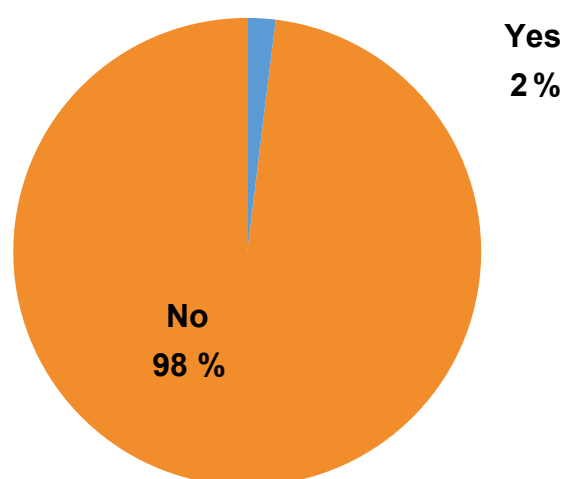


Fig. 12: Future Intentions to Study

The findings here indicate that the majority of respondents were not or had not engaged in any further study since graduating.

5.4 Summary and Discussion of Questionnaire Findings

This section presents the results of the questionnaire, which was administered to examine respondents' perceptions, beliefs and experiences of their programme of study and their current research practices. The results indicate that while respondents ranked the Research Module of the programme as the least useful in preparing them for teaching, they rank more highly the skills they have acquired as a result of studying this module. Results also indicate that a high proportion of respondents were engaged in reflective practice on a regular basis and were engaged with informal professional conversations with colleagues to improve their own practice. Furthermore 65% of respondents agreed that the most effective teachers were those who reflected on their practice through research. This is a promising finding as Goodson (1997, p. 19–20) suggests that 'great teachers' constantly reflect upon and refine their practice, try new things, work at what is not working well and think through the problems that face them'.

However, it is concerning that although the respondents in this study reported that they had developed key research skills, they were less confident about the use of research in their workplaces, with a significant majority of respondents indicating they carried out no research in the classroom. Reis-Jorge (2007) suggests that post-graduates students who have enrolled on a programme generally have a specific career path in mind and may not be interested in activities that appear impractical or irrelevant to the practice of teaching. This may be relevant in the context of this study where graduates of the PMEP are postgraduates intent on becoming primary school teachers. As expected, the findings in this section are important in setting up the focus group meetings to gain further knowledge and insight.

5.5 Focus Group Interviews Findings and Discussion

5.5.1 Introduction

This section provides a descriptive analysis of data derived from a series of follow-up on-line focus groups with small sub-samples from the on-line questionnaire population. The aim of this section is to provide a synthesis of their accounts in order to complement and/or extend insight into a number of the patterns and trends that have been identified through the on-line questionnaire findings. In exploring the research question, the notion of examining a teacher researcher identity was approached in a

three-dimensional way to include influences from the past, engagement with the present and orientations towards the future (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). As such the broad areas for discussion included; (a) Prior Experience of Research, (b) Identity as Teacher Researcher (c) Perceptions of Research and its Importance in the Wider School Community (d) Current Research Practices and (e) Future directions

5.5.2 Focus Group Data Collection

The semi-structured focus group interviews, with open-ended questions, were designed and guided by a review of the literature concerning teachers as researchers and an analysis of data from the questionnaire. The focus group discussions centred around the following questions;

- Had you previously carried out any research in your undergraduate degree?
- What views did you hold about research before you started the programme?
- Do you identify with the identity of teacher as researcher?
- Do you see teaching as a process that involves inquiry and experimentation?
- What research practices do you engage with?
- Would you consider conducting further research?
- Would you consider further study?

5.5.3 Profile of Focus Group Participants

Following the distribution of the questionnaire, six of the respondents emailed expressing their willingness to taking part in any further research. A further four graduates were recruited through my contacts as Programme Director. A total of n=3 semi-structured focus group interviews with open questions were conducted. Each group participant is represented by the group code followed by a specific number, e.g. A/1, as outlined below in Table 13. These codes will be used when referring to a particular focus group and/or to individual participants.

Table 13: Profile of Focus Group Participants

Focus group	Teaching Experience	Teaching Role
A1	2 years	Class Teacher
A2	2 years	Class Teacher
A3	2 years	Class Teacher
B1	3 years	Class Teacher
B2	3 years	Class Teacher
B3	3 years	Class Teacher
C1	1 year	Class Teacher
C2	1 year	Class Teacher
C3	1 year	Class Teacher
C4	1 year	Class Teacher

4Data from the each of the three focus groups N=3 was analysed individually using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Each transcript was read diligently several times and an underlying structure was identified which was informed by the research questions. The steps followed have been outlined in detail in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 4). Themes were then defined and named in order to refine the specific aspects of each theme. This current section explores the seven central themes that emerged from the focus group interviews. The experiences and responses of the participants have been presented in an authentic manner; tone has not been changed, nor were quotes taken out of context. Comparisons with literature in the field will inform the discussion.

5.6 Focus Group Findings and Discussion

5.6.1 Prior Experiences of Research

Student teachers often arrive at ITE programmes with a clear set of beliefs about teaching (Feiman-Nemser and Remillard, 1996). As discussed in Chapter Three of

this study, the ideas, concepts and beliefs that many bring to their programme of study may be difficult to change during their period of study. For the purposes of this study, I wanted to examine the opinions participants held about research prior to entering the programme with a view to understanding if these views had changed as a result of their studies. Van der Linden (2012) cautions:

“it is essential to take student teachers’ potential preconceptions of research into consideration when they are introduced to research, because their preconceptions might influence the development of their attitude towards research and eventually their behaviour regarding conducting and using research practice” (Van der Linden (2012), p.18).

The prior experience of research varied across the three focus groups. The majority of participants stated that they had no previous experience of research with the exception of one, C2, who had completed two masters prior to beginning the programme. The majority of the participants indicated that they had felt some degree of ‘anxiety’ at the beginning of the programme, reportedly feeling ‘insecure’ and ‘nervous’. Participant A1 and C1 expressed the view that they were ‘daunted’ and ‘anxious’ when faced with having to complete the research dissertation. C1 commented ‘I was so nervous to actually undertake the thesis. From the get-go. I was a so nervous about it’. Another participant, A1, commented, ‘I was kind of dreading it at the start.’ Participant A3 stated ‘I suppose literally just anxious that it was something new, wasn’t really sure how to tackle it’.

Despite the initial nervousness referred to at the beginning of the programme, participants in this study expressed an increase in confidence following completion of the programme as they were ‘happy’ to have completed it . C2 commented:

I didn’t know where to start but then once I got going with it, I found it to be quite enjoyable and I definitely found it beneficial once I was finished. I’m very happy that I did.

B2 commented:

Going in, I probably would've preferred not going, not doing research, do you know? But in the end I thoroughly enjoyed the research element of it more than anything.

This view is consistent with other studies (Smith and Sela, 2005), which found student teachers' confusion about research subsides as they engage in research tasks. Becoming more confident at the end of the programme may point to an escalation in optimism with regard to research methods, and might be ascribed to the students' opinion that they have satisfactorily mastered the course. Participant A2 described the constant search for inspiration on new teaching methods

Like that, constantly looking for new ways to teach maths and looking for new inspiration on new teaching methods, and new things, just to track the classroom.

The participants comments underscore earlier research findings which suggest that student anxiety towards research methods is a common theme (Onwuegbuzie, 2000; Onwuegbuzie and Wilson, 2003; Papanastasiou and Zembylas, 2008). The idea of research can often be quite overwhelming to someone approaching it for the first time. Furthermore, the concept of research is often closely associated by many with the domain of the university and can be seen as academic and elite (Wall, 2018). Additionally, studies have reported that postgraduate students show anxiety when learning research methods (Bauman et al. 2002; Kahn 2001; Papanastasiou 2005; Williams et al. 2008). They often find research challenging because they come with diverse backgrounds and may not have the required prerequisite skills such as statistics and critical thinking (Lehti and Lehtinen 2005; Potter, Caffrey, and Plante 2003; Winn 1995). These findings were similarly reflected in a comment by C1 who stated 'I think I would have been worried about maybe the academic grading in English'.

There is a need to take students' potential preconceptions of research into consideration when they are introduced to teacher research, because these preconceptions might influence the development of their attitude towards research and eventually their behaviour regarding carrying out and using research in practice

(Wubbels 1992). The data presented here may point to a finding that identities can be shifted and reformed through teacher preparation programmes.

5.6.2 Identity as Teacher Researcher

“Teacher identity—what beginning teachers believe about teaching and learning and self-as-a teacher—is of vital concern to teacher education; it is the basis for meaning making and decision making... Teacher education must begin, then, by exploring the teaching self” (Bullough, 1997 p. 21).

The participants' beliefs, understandings and perceptions of the notion of the teacher researcher identity were explored in the focus group discussions. Participants were asked if they viewed themselves as teacher researchers. Some of the participants identified positively with this view of themselves. Participant B1 stated very strongly that having carried out research he did consider himself a researcher:

Yeah, yeah, I do, yeah. I feel like actually having done the research kind of, I see it as a... I see teaching now differently to how I did before I did the research, because I see it as more of a kind of evolving profession. I'm always trying to look for new, try out new methodologies or new resources to see how they work, see how the class respond. So I kinda see the class as somewhere where you're... I mean, I think everybody is continuously doing research whether they realise it or not, but it definitely has left me kind of more open to trying new things. (B1)

Participant B2 also responded strongly to this question stating that he would look to research journals and research papers if he identified a problem that he couldn't solve. In this instance the view of research presented is aligned to the research skills he had acquired.

I'd identify myself as a teacher-researcher because certainly, when I come across an issue that I think that I can't resolve myself, ...I would look to research papers to help me overcome a particular challenge, and I do it more so than I'd read something like, you know, the In Touch Magazine or

something like that. I'd be more inclined to go towards research papers quicker.....(B2)

This positive view of the research skills acquired was also stated by Participant A1 who commented:

I suppose that I would've gained confidence with knowing how to actually find articles and where to go about it. So for me, having done the research in the master's, I find that has been extremely helpful.

Many participants commented that completing the research module had given them an opportunity to look at their teaching in a more analytical, focused and in depth way, habits they claim to have internalised. This is reflected in the comment below:

I see teaching now differently to how I did before I did the research, because I see it as more of a kind of evolving profession. I'm always trying to look for new, try out new methodologies or new resources to see how they work, see how the class respond. So I kinda see the class as somewhere where you're... I mean, I think everybody is continuously doing research whether they realise it or not, but it definitely has left me kind of more open to trying new things.

However, a very different view was expressed amongst the participants in Focus Group C. It is important to note that participants in this group had only been teaching for one year. Almost all of the members of Group C expressed the view that they never 'thought of themselves' in those terms.

I hadn't thought of that before and... No I haven't thought about myself like this before or in that terminology. (C1)

Yeah. I don't know if I could consider research a part of my teacher identity. I'm a teacher who's capable of conducting research, but I don't know if I'd be... It seems a bit stronger to consider a researcher as part of your identity. Do you know what I mean? (C2)

Further discussions on this theme revealed that the participants in Group C felt challenged by issues of classroom management and lesson planning.

The views expressed by those who had only recently graduated consistent with research studies from the literature which confirms the over-riding survival mindset of beginning teachers in their first year of teaching. Tsui (2003, p. 79) claimed that typically beginning teachers are concerned with 'maintaining classroom discipline, establishing and appropriate relationship with students, playing the role of a teacher, and having and adequate mastery of knowledge as well as instructional methods'. Participant C2 commented:

I think as well, when you're newly qualified, you're kind of more worried about, I don't know, maybe getting your foot in the door.....just applying what you've done in college to real life. And trying to get your head around planning and all those things and managing a class and you have your own (C2)

This finding resonates with a study were by Schulz and Mandzuk (2005) as students had similar doubts; they had concerns about 'inquiry being a messy, risky business... and they wondered whether adopting an inquiry stance in the first year of teaching was realistic

5.6.3 Current Research Practices

If a programme of study is to be successful, it is important to examine what practices the graduates had adopted, if any, in their own teaching following completion of the course. The responses from the focus group reflected strongly the data from the questionnaire. The following emerged as common practices across all three groups.

(i) Research skills

The participants commented that they considered their researching and/or academic writing skills to be a part of their professional development. The ability to write academic text as well as being aware of a scientific research process was viewed as important. One participant emphasised the critical thinking skills they had gained.

I guess it kind of allowed me to look at the, our whole... The whole job with a more critical eye.....(B2)

The ability to read scientific and professional literature was also mentioned by the teachers.

I'm a lot more comfortable skimming and scanning so that I don't have to have every single word read in the article, that I can just focus in and say, "Look no, this is so good for me," or just move onto the next part, and just focus in on the appropriate chapter or the appropriate section of some research. I suppose that I would've gained confidence with knowing how to actually find articles and where to go about it. (A1)

Many participants mentioned that in completing the dissertation they had gained subject knowledge, which helped them gain a deeper understanding of their pupils needs. Many felt that their opinions and views of teaching had been strengthened by reading the literature or by their research findings. Their self-confidence was strengthened either by the fact that they had been able to conduct the dissertation or by the fact that they felt they now possessed certain subject expertise;

But definitely I felt the whole year in SEN, I was researching one thing or another and trying to draw, I suppose, kind of similarities between, maybe even, "Am I using the right assessment for this child based on their learning difficulty? What other supports can I use?" And so on. So yes, I do feel that I am still researching. (A2)

(ii) Improving practice

Overwhelmingly the focus group participants indicated that the knowledge and skills they had acquired from the study of research had helped improve and inform their practice. Once again the notion of research as inquiry arose with an view to improving practice emerged in the discussions.

if you're going to give a child-centered approach to your teaching, to reach that child and to serve those individual needs, you have to be constantly

researching for the most up-to-date and I suppose, and you want exciting methods, and you have to cater for all learning styles in the classroom, in my opinion...(A1)

I've actually spent a lot of time myself, researching how to teach literacy and the phonological skills, and I actually bought Tara Concannon-Gibney's book. (A1)

(ii) Self-Confidence in Researching

Many of the participants discussed the confidence they had gained and spoke of the research skills a positive way: Participant A1 commented:

I suppose that I would've gained confidence with knowing how to actually find articles and where to go about it. So for me, having done the research in the Masters, I find that has been extremely

And I brought it even forward to this year, where I'm informing my planning because of the research that I carried out last year for SEN.

Participant A2 stated:

I know that having done it and having the experience. I know that if there was an area that I wanted to research, starting now, I'd be a lot more confident, just having an understanding of what's involved. I feel like it'd be more effective as well, having gone through with the previous experience.

On the whole, the findings indicate that the participants had positive perceptions towards the impact of their research practice on their professional teaching practice. The participants thought that their engagement both with and in research had contributed to their professional knowledge.

(iii) Professional Conversations as Researcher

The questionnaire data indicated that 67% of respondents engaged in weekly informal conversations with colleagues to improve their own practice.

For the purposes of the study, I wanted to further explore the value that participants placed on these conversations as a form of research. The participants spoke about having access to informal networks of colleagues who could offer advice, and effective communication between staff was seen as important to creating a supportive ethos.

If you just take it as a conversation and you know some of it then know it's not research, but if you engage with the information that's given to you and then you go and they say okay, it might be this or this try this. And then you apply it to your knowledge of the child. And then you can see if there's anything else that can be done. You can do your own research and support it. It's the combination of a few different things would make it research work in isolation... I really value professional conversations. I'm lucky enough that I have a lot of friends or teachers very because I'm in a small school it's really easy to speak to other teachers. (C1)

.....I definitely see it as research as well. I suppose it's the most practical type of research as well, where you can bounce ideas off people and suppose other people's experiences with a certain class or a certain child use that as the basis for you're always trying to see what works for yourself and always try to build on that as well. (C4)

... There'd be a lot of research in there, even the dialogue with colleagues, I think, that's huge. You learn from other people's experience (C3)

(iv) Reflective Practice

Reflective practice emerged as a very strong theme across all three focus groups. All participants believed that formal exposure to modes of research developed their critical thinking skills, and helped them to connect theory learned in lectures to the practice they see in classrooms or schools.

I'd have to say Mary, there, I had an interview for permanency last month in a school, and what came off actually by the interviewer was about being a reflective practitioner and what that means for teachers and how were you

reflective. So from that, I could talk a little bit about my research and what I was doing there (A1)

One graduate felt that teaching practice is the natural antecedent to understanding research in that student teachers 'primarily need experience from which they can form [research] questions'. In other words, students' intellectual curiosity had to be engaged from seeing practice first-hand, and asking research-based questions should follow naturally from that, leading on to considerations of how to design systematic research.

I think it's probably because they take a really reflective approach to their work, and they kinda seem to engage in that a lot. It's not like they're constantly talking about it in the staffroom or anything, but you can see that they do reflect on what's working, what's not working, and I think that actually, it's being a reflective practitioner that has actually sustained them throughout their career, rather than them having to sustain the interest. It's the other way around. (B2)

Yeah, I'm similar to B... in that sense. I suppose as a teacher, you're constantly reflecting anyways, because when you've had the disaster of a lesson or something, you're trying to pinpoint where it went wrong 'cause in your head, it should've been amazing. But I suppose with regards to critical, or d'you know, reflection with writing it and stuff like that, as Barry said, it'd be more anecdotal than anything. (C3)

The teachers commented that through carrying out research, they reflect more about their actions in the class, and this can develop their professional teaching practice. For example, a B2 reported that:

...I think more about what I am going to teach and how I should teach before the class time, I focus more on my actions while I am teaching, and even after the class time I reflect more on what and how I taught. (B1)

The teachers reported that being engaged in research makes them think critically about different issues in their teaching process. They reported that while they are doing a research study to deal with an issue in their teaching and/or students' learning,

they think more critically about different ways, so that they could come to the best conclusions.

In summary the findings here suggest that the graduates had adopted a wide range of research practices as a result of their study of research. The views expressed here relate strongly to the view of practitioner research reflected in the literature. Practitioner research is both about changing practice as a result of study and about changing practice to understand it. It is through this change, the teachers become 'producers' as well as 'mediators and consumers' of knowledge (Zeichner and Noffke 2001, p. 306). Castle (2006) states that teacher research gives teachers the knowledge and confidence to act as responsible professionals and this in turn is linked to autonomy in teaching. Many of the respondents commented favourably on how their practice was improved as a result of their acquired skills.

The participants spoke highly of the professional conversations they had with other member of staff in schools. When professionals engage in a process of collaborative knowledge construction as part of their work they bring a background of perspectives and beliefs about the nature of professional knowledge to the process. Feldman (1999, p.137) conceives of 'serious conversations' as dialogic and dialectic processes whereby participants bring forward, share, and seek new knowledge that can lead to new understandings. Such everyday reflection moves into what Hall et al., (2018) call programmatic reflection, where a critical colleague can be used formally for regular, ongoing, reflection and evaluation of practice with a view to improving practice. Reflection used in this way is clearly illuminating (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001). This type of authentic professional learning it happens continuously through practice and experience and occurs daily as teachers engage with each other in inquiry and enact immediate changes in the classroom. It takes place in both formal and informal settings (Lieberman and Mace, 2008). This findings also resonates with other studies which suggest that learning among early career teachers is enabled by a supportive school culture (McCormack, Gore, and Thomas, 2006).

An important finding noted by the participants was the confidence they expressed as a result of conducting research. Findings suggest that in considering identity formation as teacher researchers, there is a need to address the development of the students'

confidence in conducting and using research (Jarvis and Rennie 1998; Mulholland and Wallace 2001). Self-efficacy is a construct which indicates an individual's belief in their own capacities (Bandura 1986), which, in this study, refers to their being able to conduct and use teacher research (Dyson 1997). Many consider that the development of a positive attitude towards carrying out and using research is an important prerequisite for students to actually use research results and conduct research activities themselves as teachers (Hall, 2009; Ponte, 2002)

This was also noteworthy in the positive view expressed by some of the participants when aif they considered themselves as teacher researchers. Kelchtermans (1993) has identified aspects through which teachers' professional identity can be grasped. First, the vision of oneself as a teacher, self-image, reveals how one describes oneself as a teacher. Self-descriptive statements may be expressed in terms of general principles that govern the teachers' professional behaviour or may refer to the way they might be perceived by others. Second, a vision of oneself is closely connected to valuing and evaluating oneself as a teacher. This is referred to as self-esteem, which is connected to and driven by comparisons with others and can thus be defined as the result of balancing the self-image and professional norms. The findings would suggest that many of the participants in the focus group had developed positive images of themselves as teacher researchers. While those in their first year of teaching had not considered themselves in this way, they were positive in evaluating themselves as the skills they had acquired.

5.6.4 Research and its Importance in the Wider School Community

As discussed in Chapter Two, considerable emphasis is now placed on viewing teaching as an evidence-based profession (Hargreaves, 1996). For this to come about, there might be an expectation that schools would be expected to develop an established or even an embedded educational research culture. Participants were asked to share their views on whether they felt was a culture of research in schools. This included a discussion on interest in their dissertation and any opportunities they had to conduct research. The findings suggest that the participant did believe that there was a culture of research in schools. One participant commented:

I suppose I'd definitely can see a culture of research, maybe not from everyone but definitely from... It definitely is there. I'm just thinking now of our vice principal who retired recently, and she was just... She really was passionate about her job, and as a result, she spent time researching and she was just, I suppose, a fountain of knowledge really (A3)

I think it's happening anyway. A lot of the schools I've been to, it does seem to be happening anyway, where people are trying to bring in new ideas to the classroom constantly. So whether it's sharing ideas, or obviously somebody is researching it and then sharing it, but there does seem to be a lot of researching going on in the classroom. (B2)

It was evident from the discussion that the participants felt that teachers were researching. Participant A1 commented:

I suppose I'd definitely can see a culture of research, maybe not from everyone but definitely from... It definitely is there. I'm just thinking now of our vice principal who retired recently, and she was just... She really was passionate about her job, and as a result, she spent time researching and she was just, I suppose, a fountain of knowledge really

(i) Interest in their research

Participants were then asked if they had received much interest in their research from other members of staff. The respondents commented that they received very little interest from the school community in respect of their dissertation.

I had an interview for permanency last month in a school, and what came off actually by the interviewer was about being a reflective practitioner and what that means for teachers and how were you reflective. So from that, I could talk a little bit about my research and what I was doing there and then with the seniors and the illiteracy, as I mentioned. I didn't actually bring into it the Master', so, X, I'm going to take your lead and bring in my thesis with me in future, for any future interviews that may not be going good.

No, it wouldn't have been a question that was asked in any way, in any of the interviews I've done. (A3)

I have to say it came up in my first interview in the school, but it wasn't something that they... They didn't really give me a chance to elaborate on it. (B1)

No, I'm the same as D, I can't recall it ever coming up in any of the interviews (B2)

This resonates with other findings which suggest that there can be a disconnect between what beginning teachers experience as part of the teacher education programmes and the school based reality.

(ii) Collaborative Versus Individual Research

Respondents also indicated that they were not involved in any form of collaborative research with colleagues. They expressed the view that facilitating opportunities to engage in collaborative research was very much dependent on school management:

I think that would come down from I suppose, from the management of the school. And I know that where I am, if you were to mention such a thing, it'd be shot down fairly fast because the value of it wouldn't be seen. And again I can only say that from experience of where I am. (B2)

Yeah, the school I'm in, the principal is very ambitious and more is more as far as she's concerned. So if I went to her and said that I wanted to carry out a piece of research, and I needed to... We'll say I needed three different classes to work with, I know that she would absolutely give me the support to do it. But I just don't know if it would be something that, if it involved collaboration with other teachers, I'm not sure if they would be as amenable to it as she is. (B3)

In summary the findings here suggest that while participants expressed the view that there was a culture of research in schools, they had not had any direct experience of

engaging in collaborative research. Increasing demands for teaching to become an evidence-based profession have led to calls for practising teachers to engage with research evidence and to participate in research studies related to their classroom practice (Cooper and Cowie, 2009). This often assumes the form of action research—with teachers working collaboratively. This collaborative work also resonates with the idea of professional learning communities (Wenger, 1998; Wood, 2009), where the objective is to have teachers in schools working together, sharing ideas, experiences and problems in order to create or develop new knowledge. A supportive school culture enables the new teacher to meet these challenges better as they learn to find a professional place within the school (McCormack, Gore, and Thomas 2006). MacGilchrist et al (2004) observe that the culture of a school is manifested in its daily life through the professional relationships among the teachers at school and other members of staff working with one another and their pupils and the school management (MacGilchrist et al., 1995). In this study, it was found that teachers perceived support from other teachers, as essential elements which contribute to an environment that promotes teacher research.

5.6.5 Further Study

Participants were asked to identify if they had considered or would consider further study the future. While some were positively disposed towards the idea, others reflected on possible barriers. There were some inhibitors identified by the participants. The main concerns emerging were time pressures associated with heavy teaching workloads, and the lack of sufficient resources/funding to support the development of enhanced research.

It's one of those, like I suppose when you achieve the masters you're just like, "Oh, like I could..." I was fairly tempted to do it, I was looking it up last year even, but realistically, just financially, commitment-wise, time, and all that, I suppose, I just, I couldn't do it at the moment. I'm just probably settling into the role of a teacher still. I'm three years at it, but still... So hopefully down the line, it is something, even though everybody to do with me thinks that I'm mad for even thinking it. (B1)

This is similarly, reflected in a study exploring university EFL teachers' research practice (Xu, 2014). Xu noted that the teachers' research practice is limited by some constraints such as teaching overload, a shortage of resources, and a lack of support from mentors, as well as self-efficacy beliefs. The comments below reflect similar concerns:

I think as well, when you're newly qualified, you're kind of more worried about, I don't know, maybe getting your foot in the door and skill and the practical, just applying and what you've done in college to real life. And trying to get your head around planning and all those things and managing a class and you have your own... Doesn't stop after 10 weeks or whatever you just But I think maybe down the road, it might crop up again and or... But I don't, at the moment. No, I wouldn't...(C3)

You can deal with parent-teacher meetings and reports and stuff. It's just all so overwhelming, so it's kind of hard for us because we're only new. But maybe in a couple of years, you might actually consider it like engaging in for the research down the line (C4)

B2: Yeah, similar. It's one of those, like I suppose when you achieve the masters you're just like, "Oh, like I could... " I was fairly tempted to do it, I was looking it up last year even, but realistically, just financially, commitment-wise, time, and all that, I suppose, I just, I couldn't do it at the moment. I'm just probably settling into the role of a teacher still. I'm three years at it, but still... So hopefully down the line, it is something, even though everybody to do with me thinks that I'm mad for even thinking it. But like it was an interest to me. So... Yeah, a PhD is definitely something I have on the long finger, but just not right now.

5.7 Summary and Discussion of Focus Group Findings

The focus group discussions aimed to explore graduates beliefs, knowledge and attitudes on their programme of study. The participants expressed positive views, they commented that their knowledge was strengthened and they were more confident in knowing how to research. Many commented on how they had used the findings of the

research project in their own teaching practice. The participants commented on general professional development, the usefulness of the skills and the knowledge learnt. Participants were able to distinguish areas of professional development, such as adjusting teaching or ways of working as a teacher, interaction skills and cooperation, the gaining of knowledge, or reflection on theory and/or practice. They also mentioned their views or their self-confidence as a teacher being strengthened by completing research. Researching or academic writing skills and criticality towards information were also stated as well as the ability and/or willingness to read scientific and professional literature. The participants gained useful skills and knowledge during the process and moreover, they viewed themselves to have benefited from the process itself. They valued the fact of being able to understand research reports and being able to judge how relevant and valid the reports are. The most often-mentioned effect was sharing knowledge, which can lead to critical reflection in communities of practice.

5.8 Interviews with Stakeholders: Findings and Discussion

5.8.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, changes brought about by the Teaching Council through policy, regulation and its accreditation powers, have arguably led to changes in the wider education community. Educational policy reform can often be seen as a process that takes time (Fullan 2016). According to Fullan (2016), the implementation of reform is influenced by factors that can be organised into three categories: characteristics of the change (need, clarity, complexity, and quality), local context (school level factors), and external factors (government and other agencies). For the purposes of this study, I felt it would be important to hear the voices of key stakeholders faced with policy implementation.

5.8.2 Interviews with Key Stakeholders

This section reports on the findings of the data that emerged from the interviews with key stakeholders (N = 3). The chosen interviewees were representative of the primary sector and included: the Director of the Teaching Council and two Primary Principal Teachers. While the interviews followed a set pattern of questioning, they were structured to allow for flexibility to pursue particular lines of thinking that evolved from

individual responses. The themes which emerged will be presented alongside verbatim participant commentary in order to provide a coherent narrative.

5.8.3 Profile of Interview Participants

This section describes the process in which participants were recruited for the semi-structured interviews. Of the three participants who took part in the interviews; one was responsible for initial teacher education policy and two were primary school principals, one of whom had also worked with the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT). Participant details and length of interviews can be viewed in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Profile of Interviewees

Pseudonym	Role	Length of Interview
Participant A	Senior Member of Teaching Council	50 mins
Participant B	Primary School Principal/ NIPT Regional Officer	50 mins
Participant C	Primary School Principal	35 mins

5.9 Semi-structured Interview Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussion from the three interviews.

5.9.1 Stakeholder Views on Teacher Research

The interviewees were reminded of the changes in ITE and how Teaching Council policy has resulted in the reconceptualisation of the PMEP, with a particular focus on teacher as researcher. The interviewees were asked to articulate their views on the notion of teacher as researcher. A number of sub-themes emerged from the discussions including a) research as the systematic inquiry to improve practice, b) critical reflection of practice and c) research as a shared collective endeavour. Both Participant B and C spoke positively about teaching and research and considered them as ‘naturally complementary’. They talked about the need for teachers to be able

to use data to inform their practice in order to make changes to that practice. Participant B commented that teacher as a researcher was fundamental because 'ultimately, you want best quality learning outcomes for pupils'. This was further elaborated on:

So I really feel it's a great thing, and as I said, just at the outset, teaching and researching are, I feel, naturally complementary, because as soon as you discover something, then you have the opportunity, if you wish, to kind of put it automatically into place. (Participant C)

This view was also shared by Participant A who commented that the purpose of research was to answer a question and share those answers:

So research is seen very much as a process that spans the full spectrum, from the moment you have a question you want an answer to, or that you want to explore up to and including the sharing of the fruits of that process

A further theme to emerge in the discussion on teacher research was the notion of the 'critical reflection'. This was considered by all three participants as a key element of teacher research. Participant B commented:

When you introduce the element of research, it gives them that pause, and they're compelled almost to engage a critical reflective aspect when they look at their own practice.

The idea of research as a shared collective endeavour also featured strongly in the interview with Participant A commenting:

.....that research would be understood as much as possible, a collective endeavour at the very least in terms of its impact. But it's shared widely. And it's interrogation, and it's adapted practice adaptation then forms the research further. So ideally that, at the very least, and then further obviously teachers collaborate with research processes.....

In summary the views of research expressed here are closely aligned to early concepts of research expressed by Stenhouse (1985) and more recently by Cochran (2014). Both describe the concept of teacher research, as inquiry carried out by teachers in a systematic and intentional manner to improve practice and ultimately student learning.

5.9.2 Views on Graduates of the PMEP

The following section sought the views of participants on changes to ITE, particularly in respect of changes to the PMEP programme and the emphasis on research. The reconceptualisation of ITE programmes appears to have positively regarded by the participants in the study. There was great enthusiasm amongst the interviewees for new teachers graduating with research skills. Participant

B commented:

So, I suppose, in short, as principal, I'm delighted to see that the new teachers coming along are in a system now, where teacher as researcher has been fostered and where the term "teacher as researcher" mightn't be bandied about like we're advertising in it.....the scaffold is there and the culture has been developed (Participant B)

Participant C commented that it was particularly important that graduates had been taught research methodologies in a 'formal way':

I think you need to kind of formalise it as well because, action research can become very anecdotal. "Oh, I had this grade at the end and this is what I did." But in order to give that a certain quality or weight, you need to formalise it in terms of describing their actions, recognising the actions.....situating it in existing theory and practice. And that's where the literature review comes in. That's where the methodology comes in. All that will ever do is just increase the critical faculty of whoever is engaged in the research.

Both school-based participants elaborated further with anecdotal stories of graduates who had worked in their schools. They discussed the benefits they had brought to the school community and commented on the reflective nature of their practice.

However Participant C expressed the view that the graduates themselves don't often mention their thesis at interview and rarely have opportunities to share their research.

And I mean, a lot of students don't even include what their thesis was about. And I think it still remains that they want to push their kind of pedagogical skills to the forefront as well. And generally speaking, that's the primary interest for principals..... I mean, I'd love to ask them about their research sometimes at interviews because, again, you're giving them the opportunity to think, what will work for them? What would improve their practice? And it's great if you can take that from somebody to think, "Well, they've actually really considered this because naturally, it's going to make them a better teacher because they've taken something and said, "How can I make it better?" Which ultimately is the aim, I would say, generally speaking, of all research, how can we improve upon it?

Consistent with these findings, recent studies indicate many teachers, and particularly beginning teachers, do not feel that they can confidently engage in debates on issues within the classrooms (Kincheloe, 1991; Keyes, 1999). Findings of these studies highlight teachers' reluctance to admit to having done any research, maintaining that it wasn't real research, just observation or keeping journals. Teachers' reluctance to acknowledge classroom inquiry as 'research' may well stem from notions of research gained in their degree programmes. Keyes(1999) suggests that teachers would not easily develop a practical notion of classroom or school based research if contexts and examples offered in preservice training are limited to a formal style of research.

5.9.3 The Induction Process

One interesting theme that emerged from the interviews was the perceived lack of support for newly graduating teachers as they transition to their early years of teaching. Both Participant B and C expressed the view that PMEP graduates would require particular and focussed supports if they were to continue to develop their research capacity. Both alluded to changes that would be required in the 'induction phase' for newly qualified graduates. A new model of school-based induction and probation, Droichead (meaning bridge in Irish), was introduced by the Teaching

Council in September 2013. Participants felt that there was a missed opportunity within the Droichead process that could be further developed. Participant B commented:

They had put so much emphasis on this new process in terms of Droichead laying foundations, integrated induction framework, lots of classroom observation, lots of support. But then there seemed to be a total gap between what they are expecting of newly graduated teachers in terms of demonstrating knowledge that was premised on research, on their own research, that that doesn't carry through even the first year of teaching

This was further supported by Participant C who commented:

So just my own observation, I suppose, is that while they expect a lot from graduates, then it comes to a screeching halt through the induction process nearly straight away that there isn't one aspect other than attending one professional learning event and one cluster meeting that would encourage teachers to continue engaging in kind of reflective research.

Both participants further stated that until this issue was addressed through the Droichead process, graduates would not be incentivised to continue as reflective practitioners. Participant C commented:

Sure, I mean, you could go to a conference and drink coffee all day, and then one cluster meeting, or, like one cluster meeting per term. There's no incentive to engage in kind of critical reflection, or research as soon as you have it. And until they change that, it's always going to be, "Oh, I'll just do my thesis. And I have to get it done to make sure I graduate." There has to be some change if they are serious about teachers becoming kind of reflective practitioners.

Both felt strongly that this process would need to change in order to ensure that graduates were supported in this area. This was discussed with Participant A who considered that this may be something that could be considered in respect of the Droichead programme.

We've been very careful only to prescribe what is absolutely necessary, but it might be a bit... But at that same time that great flexibility, can be also its greatest weakness sometimes. It's like, you need a bit of shape sometimes. It might be a refinement on the other side of the policy... It could be quite easily done, policywise, certainly, and I can see the kind of practical relevance. 'Cause it would support that transition.....

Teacher professional learning is central to improving the quality of instruction and learning and to bringing knowledge innovations to fruition in classrooms and schools. Instead of the traditional knowledge dissemination through one-off workshops, seminars or discussions, knowledge mediation and knowledge application should be in line with the new accounts of professional learning mobilisation. Such learning is grounded in participants' questions, inquiry and experimentation as well as research on effective practice, and is focused on very specific and contextualised aspects of instruction. It should be iterative and extended over time, supported by follow-up activities, properly structured and overseen by expert teachers, and embedded in schools functioning as collections of communities of learning and inquiry. It should also be focused systematically on instructional innovation and cultural change at the school level to address the implicit (often uncontested) conceptions of, or beliefs about, teaching, learning, knowledge, assessment and epistemic authority that teachers hold (Teh et al. 2013).

5.9.4 Culture of Research in Irish Primary Schools

Interviewees were asked if they felt that more experienced teachers viewed themselves as researchers. Firstly, all of the interviewees agreed that teachers did not have a strong conception of teaching as a research profession. Participant B stated that he didn't feel that teacher as researcher was part of 'teacher's DNA'. Participant C stated that in thinking of teaching as a profession, it was better regarded for its altruism and autonomy but that the knowledge base that teachers required was not yet considered as 'intellectually based'. In speaking about the teacher as researcher identity, interviewees expressed a strong belief that many teachers lack confidence and self-esteem.

Participant C commented:

There is a recognised knowledge base the way there would be an accountancy that you need a certain proficiency, but it's not yet considered, I don't think, kind of intellectually-base

They both expressed the view that further strengthening enabling factors would potentially aid and enhance participation and engagement in research, for example, additional financial support would allow teachers to work on their research during paid daytime hour. Furthermore, professional credit for teachers and recognition of the value of teacher research projects in whole school, evaluation reports was highlighted. Participant A spoke about the need to develop a 'research-infused profession will be where it's actually a real part of their practice without necessarily being always explicitly recognised as such'.

The complexity of the school and classroom environment was also identified as a barrier to opportunities for teachers to play the double role of teacher and researcher. Within their daily workplace, teachers are faced with challenges concerned with time constraints, relationships within school communities, accountability, system pressure, as well as lack of confidence and experience in the area of research This is resonates with findings from Potter(2001), who identified the daily challenges teachers face.

Participant A commented on the challenge facing the education community in realising a research culture:

The full realisation of a research-informed teaching profession is probably one of the most significant strategic challenges faced in the profession of education more broadly this century. Because I see it as... I think the council would probably see it as well, as being pretty vital to breaking the cycle of... The constant vicious cycle that you have of, where is the concern in terms of the practice, the system, that it's very often not in that... For instance, in the practice of the teacher, one sits behind the other.

Each of the participants spoke about the crucial importance of resourcing for research. This includes the resourcing of support structures, including protected time for in-

school groups to meet and also the expense of researching. Time is the most expensive commodity and therefore the most difficult to provide.

Johnson (2003) for example emphasises the importance for senior management of protecting teachers' time from other school and external demands. Equally important, he suggests, is taking the lead in showing how the time and energies devoted to research fits within a coherent and realistic overall school plan for reform, and reframing talk about work intensification to emphasise teachers' capacity to make realistic changes in arrangements in the interests of students.

5.10 Summary and Discussion of Findings of Interviews with Stakeholders

In this section, the stakeholder interviewees have contributed a rich and varied range of perceptions on research and teachers as researchers. The findings from the analyses indicate that school based stakeholders in this study appear to perceive recent changes to ITE programmes as mainly positive. They welcomed the changes to programmes of ITE and the development of a culture of research amongst graduates. They were particularly positive regarding the research skills that graduates acquired. Nevertheless, tensions are also evident within the broader context of teacher research. It would appear from the discussion that although ITE has been reconceptualised and has undergone major change at both programme and policy level, the changes in how many teachers view teacher research are very much unchanged. The school-based participants noted that the absence of formalised and clearly defined support structures for schools is hindering the development of a culture research amongst all teachers. For newly qualified teachers, they noted weaknesses in the Assisting teachers navigate their careers is a collective responsibility (Caspersen and Raaen, 2014).

At the core of the notion of the researching school is the idea of schools systematically encouraging and supporting teacher engagement in research. It would seem important to create quality induction and early professional development schemes to provide structured opportunities for continued learning to enhance their professional skills, knowledge and commitment among early career teachers (see Day, Elliot, and Kington 2005, 575; Choi and Tang 2009, 768). In this way, a supportive culture can be

developed to give new entrants the best chance of success as classroom teachers (Bubb and Early 2006).

5.11 Overall Summary of Findings

Understanding how pre-service and early career teachers shape and can be helped to shape their professional identities is an important consideration to all who work with them, not least because of the interplay between teacher identity and teacher resilience, teacher well-being and teacher effectiveness (Day et al. 2007; Pearce and Morrison 2011; Bullough 2012).

- Findings from the study reveal that a large percentage of graduates surveyed experienced a disconnect between the study of research on the PMEP and its perceived usefulness for teaching. Instead, the findings indicate that they preferred the extended practice and pedagogy related studies. This finding resonates with other studies which suggest that many teachers consider the work of practice as their core business, and consider the research work as something that unnecessarily steals time from teaching (Cochran-Smith and Donnell, 2006. Kozina, 2013, Elkund 2014). Greenwood and Abbot (2001, p. 282) report that “complaints from teachers about the lack of relevance of educational research to instruction are legendary”. Many teachers perceive research as far removed from the classroom (Tseng 2017), presenting often contradictory findings (Fleming 1988) and language that is inaccessible (Viadero 1994).
- There was overwhelming evidence from the research data, both from the questionnaire and from the focus group interviews, that the majority of graduates engage in regular systematic reflection on their practice. The findings from this study suggest that graduates viewed reflective practice in a very positive light and indicated that it was something that should be included in all future PMEP programmes. The findings from this study also suggest that graduates of the programme value the research skills and knowledge they have gained from their study at master’s level. The findings also suggest that graduates engage in a range of professional development activities to

improve practice and value highly informal conversations with colleagues to improve practice.

- The act of belonging to a teacher community is argued to play a foundational role in the process of constructing professional identity. Research suggests that beginning teachers learn and develop within a variety of communities and contexts throughout their careers, highlighting the importance of the school context on the formation of identity (Wenger 1998, 2000). Lemke (2008) emphasises the situated nature of identity and argues that identity is constructed by interaction and is shaped by the cross section of self and others. It was clear from the interviews with stakeholders that they welcomed the recent developments at ITE and the development of a research informed profession. Interviewees welcomed the development of research skills and the nature of reflective practice that is now key components of ITE programmes. They commented on the rich set of skills which graduates of the PMEP to the school community which will ultimately help improve learning outcomes for all students.
- However the findings from this study suggest that the relation between research based activities carried out in teacher education programmes and the teaching profession seem to be quite weak. There appears to be little interest in the knowledge developed through the dissertation in the broader teaching community. Brennan (2019) suggest that it is in the process of translating research into an accessible format, highlighting the significance of findings for an audience and exposing research to critique, feedback and dialogue, that student teachers see the value of research-based practice. Research is about “informing discussions and decisions regarding what constitutes good practice in education and to do that it must be a public enterprise from start to finish...it must be shared, discussed, argued, refined and reexamined” (Sears 2010, p. 250). Without an audience for their research, students are far less likely to consider the significance of their findings for others; the accessibility of their language; their long-term research goals; and the wider context in which their research can contribute (Brennan, 2019).

- A concerning finding of the study that emerged was the view expressed by graduates that the study of research had not motivated them to continue researching. While the inquiry-oriented approaches to teaching during their programmes had grounded their research skills clearly more needs to be done to develop a positive disposition towards thoughtful and critical research practices in order to provide a firm foundation for career-long professional learning. Establishing an openness to and capacity for research-informed pedagogical practice early in ITE has the potential to benefit graduates' professional practice (Sahlberg and Hyland 2019).

The present chapter presented the findings and discussion obtained from the mixed methodological research design. The data collection involved gathering, both quantitative information (questionnaire) as well as qualitative information (focus groups and semi-structured interviews), so that the final database represents both. Findings and discussion pertaining to each individual method were provided providing comparisons with the relevant literature. The following chapter draws together the findings and provides a conclusion to the thesis.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

For several decades now, there has been increasing interest in teachers' research practices (Barkhuizen, 2009; Borg, 2007, 2009; Brown and Flood, 2018; Hemsley-Brown and Sharp, 2003; Wentworth et al., 2017). It is recognised that teachers who engage with and in research create stronger links between theory and practice in their teaching profession, resulting in better pedagogical decisions and learning outcomes for students (Walker, 2017). Furthermore, it is considered that when teachers engage with and in research, they think critically and reflectively about classroom issues (Allwright and Hanks, 2009), discover new and relevant knowledge for themselves (Cain, 2015; Smith, 2014) and develop greater confidence in their own professional practice (Cabaroglu, 2014; Henson, 2001).

As part of the political drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning, education policy-makers across the globe have sought to stimulate more evidence-informed approaches to teacher education policy and practice. Since 2000, ITE programme reforms have been implemented in several countries (Eurydice, 2013), resulting in the reconceptualisation of programmes with a particular focus on teaching as a research informed profession. Against this background of diverging policy and provision for teacher education, recent changes to initial teacher education policies in Ireland have included the reconceptualisation of both concurrent and consecutive programme with the latter becoming the Professional Master of Education (PME). Central guidelines for initial teacher education programmes now require the development of student-teachers' knowledge and skills in educational research, their understanding of research methodologies and research/enquiry-based learning (Teaching Council, 2011). It was against this background that this study explored the following primary research question:

How has the study of a Research Module, as a component of the Professional Master of Education in Primary Education (PMEP) programme, shaped the development of teacher identities as teacher researchers amongst beginning primary school teachers in an Irish school context?

This chapter draws together the research findings in light of key themes identified in the analysis and discussion of findings in Chapter 5. The study's limitations are also contemplated in Section 6. 3. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and practice relating to teacher education policy and programme design.

6.2 Synopsis of Research Findings

The following set of guiding questions of the research were developed in order to address the main research question. They are as follows:

1. What are graduates' perceptions, attitudes and experiences of the Research Module completed as part of the PMEP programme?
2. What research practices have graduates adopted to date in their own teaching careers?
3. Has completing a research dissertation at master's level changed their perceptions of themselves as teacher researchers?
4. How are these graduates viewed by the wider education community?

The results of this research are presented according to these guiding research questions;

What are graduates perceptions, attitudes and experiences of the Research Module completed as part of the PMEP programme?

Initial findings from the study reveal that a large percentage of graduates surveyed experienced a disconnect between the study of research on the PMEP and its perceived 'usefulness' for teaching. As Everton et al (2000) conclude, teachers value research when it is closely related to classroom activities. This result is also supported by subsequent Finnish studies, where student teachers find a weak relation between the master's thesis and the teaching profession (Eklund, 2018; Niemi, 2011).

However, further examination of the data both from the questionnaire and focus group interviews conducted with graduates of the programme, suggest that graduates were positive regarding the research skills and knowledge they had acquired as a result of their studies. Many studies suggest that gaining research expertise gives graduates confidence and develops high-level skills, such as data analysis, writing, collaboration and critical thinking (Healey and Jenkins, 2009; Hunter, Laursen, and Seymour, 2007).

In turn this contributes to the analysis of their own development and learning processes (Medwell and Wray, 2014) and plays a significant role in their personal development, professional competence and research competence (Aspfors and Elund, 2017). Knowing about research allows teachers to solve problems in a more systemic way. Darling-Hammond and Snyder, (2000) suggest that is reasonable to assume the successful transferral of these skills into the professional life of teachers in their early careers.

It must be noted however that a majority of graduates expressed the view that the study of research had not motivated them to continue researching and many indicated that they were not currently conducting research in their classrooms. This is concerning for those designing teacher education programmes and has implications for the future design of the PMEP programme at Hibernia College. One possible reason for this lack of transfer to practice may be that the benefits of research were not significantly articulated throughout the programme and as such a greater focus is required to articulate the personalised values of research more effectively. Zeichner and Conklin (2005) emphasise that teacher education programmes should be explicit about their visions and aims. A further reason for this lack of motivation may centre on the difficulties teachers often experience when they first enter the profession. Entering teaching can be a stimulating but also challenging transition. Becoming familiar with organisational routines and new colleagues, while putting theoretical knowledge into practice has been depicted as a 'reality shock' (Veenman 1984), a 'sink or swim experience' and a 'survival phase' in beginning teachers' careers (Huberman, Gronauer, and Marti, 1993). These findings resonate with the views of the focus group participants who were in their first year of teaching. These participants articulated the challenges facing them in becoming familiar with school and classroom practices and routines. In contrast those who were slightly more experienced pointed to the structural constraints of teaching contexts which make it difficult for beginning teachers to research such as lack of permanency, lack of time and lack of funding to conduct further research.

What research practices have the graduates adopted to date in their own teaching careers?

Many studies have concluded that the effects of teacher education programmes on the actual practices of teachers are in fact generally meagre (Brouwer and Korthagen, 2005). Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) argue that educational ideas developed during initial teacher education are 'washed out' during practice placement. Similar indications of a lack of transfer, from initial teacher education to practice have emerged in studies conducted by Feiman-Nemser (1990) and Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998). However, the findings of this study suggest that graduates had adopted a wide range of research practices and had integrated them in their daily teaching lives. The following emerged as particularly noteworthy;

(i) Research and Reflective Practice

There was overwhelming evidence from the research data, both in the questionnaire and the focus group interviews, that the majority of graduates engage in regular systematic reflection on their practice. Reflection happens in the classroom as part of the teaching process where teachers observe and think about students' engagement with the learning process which they have designed. Reflection is a crucial cognitive practice in the research field (Dahlberg, Drew, and Nystroöm, 2002; Steier, 1995). According to Schön (1983, 1987) teachers develop professional knowledge through a process of defining and solving problems. Goodson (1997) views that the best way of improving the practice of teachers is researching and reflecting upon their own practice. He suggests that what, great teachers have in common is that they constantly reflect upon and refine their practice, try new things, work at what is not working well and think through the problems that face them. The findings from this study suggest that graduates viewed reflective practice in a very positive light, they felt it was something that should be included in all future PMEP programmes and they considered it a crucial aspect of effective teaching. Hertz (1997) notes that the reflective researcher does not merely report the findings of the research but questions and explains how those findings are constructed. Reflective practice is an essential practice in research, it aims at raising a 'thoughtful eye on oneself, which allows the subject to gain self-awareness' (Dahlberg et al., 2002, p. 139).

(ii) Research and Professional Conversations

Another finding from the data indicates that graduates engage regularly with colleagues in informal conversation to improve practice. Shulman (2004) suggests that teacher learning becomes more active through experimentation and inquiry, as well as through dialogue, and questioning. In simple terms, a professional conversation about practice involves a teacher laying out their reasoning and encouraging others to question and challenge it. What distinguishes a professional conversation from a 'chat' is a shared commitment to revealing and unravelling the reasons behind teachers' practice (Schulman, 2004). The impact of such conversations on identity formation cannot be under estimated. A dialogue framed by a theory of action is considered highly productive. The private reasoning made transparent, deepens the thinking and elevates the conversation professionally.

(iii) Research and Professional Development

An important factor in the formation of a teacher identity is the development of professional competences (Borg, 2010). A teacher requires relevant knowledge and skills with respect to subject matter and curriculum (content knowledge), the students they teach (knowledge of learners) as well as the general rules and principles of learning and teaching (pedagogical knowledge). Day and Sachs (2004), refer to the notion of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to describe all the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career designed to enhance their work. Guskey (2000, p. 16) defines professional development as 'those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students'. The findings from this study indicate that a large number of graduates engage in a myriad of CPD activities to improve their practice. In line with other studies many of the graduates reported reading academic articles to acquire new teaching methods (Campbell et al., 2004) and deepen specific topics (Aspfors and Elund, 2017) to strengthen their teaching practice. Others reported attending workshops or completing summer courses as a means of acquiring more knowledge. Other reported regular engagement with research articles to acquire new knowledge. It is important to consider that engagement in and with educational research can provide a model for professional change and learning (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002; Timperley and Parr, 2007). In such cases learning is seen as active (Stephenson and Ennion, 2012). Teachers

decide the focus of their learning, move beyond the role of classroom 'technician' (Carr, 1995) and become 'facilitators' of their own learning and that of others (Day, 1999). For those who commit to research engagement there is evidence of the benefits which accrue (Kershner et al, 2013). Findings from the study suggest that participants in this study recognise the benefits of such practices.

Has completing a research dissertation at master's level changed their perceptions of themselves as teacher researchers?

The literature on identity discussed in Chapter 3 reveals that teachers' identity is manifested in how teachers see themselves as teachers, how they think others see them as teachers and in how they experience their teaching at a personal, professional and social level (Sachs, 2005). Identity in this case is not a fixed state but rather a process that evolves and changes as teachers gain experience, consolidate professional knowledge and adopt plans of personal and professional development (Tsui, 2003). It is widely acknowledged that student teachers enter teacher education programmes with personal beliefs about teaching, experiences with teachers, images of self as a teacher and memories of themselves as pupils (Kagan, 1992). A fundamental principle in teacher education programmes is the facilitation of shifts in thinking about teaching (Korthagen, Loughran, and Russell, 2006). Many of the participants in this study noted feeling anxious and nervous at the prospect of completing a research dissertation. However, by the end of their programme of study, these feelings had dissipated and many expressed the view that they had enjoyed or benefitted from completing the research. The findings of the study suggest that identities can be shifted and reformed through teacher preparation, and point to the positive impact a programme of study can have on identity formation.

Although many teachers regard the world of research as removed from their practice and difficult to apply to their everyday experiences (Godhard, 1998; Gore and Gitlin, 2004), the findings from this study indicate that graduates involvement and exposure to research has helped inform and shape their professional development and identity. For these graduates, being involved in the study of research provided an avenue to actively and critically engage with new and different ways of thinking and gave them the confidence to try new approaches. These experiences also enabled them to recognise connections between theory and practice which, in turn, challenge and

extend their established understandings and actions and help them become more reflective and agentic practitioners. Rather than being dismissive of educational research, or positioning research in opposition to practice, as described by Gore and Gitlin (2004), findings from the study suggest that these graduates have gained a deeper theoretical understanding of their research and practice which has helped broaden their perspectives.

Furthermore it is argued in this study that graduate teachers have taken on a new identity as part of the process of learning to teach (Britzman, 2003). The perception of belonging to a new generation of professionals was common in the data findings amongst those in the focus group interviews. Participants in the focus group were keen to adopt the identity of teacher researcher. The graduates showed a clear ability to see themselves as distinct professionals with a lot of personal and professional potential. Zembylas (2003, p. 107) argues that 'the teacher is an autonomous individual, constantly moving between the need to connect with other colleagues and the need to maintain a sense of individuality'. This emerging self is a fundamental part of the nature of becoming a teacher.

How are these graduates viewed by the wider education community?

The literature discussed in Chapter 3 considered how teachers shape their professional identities by participating in and interacting with other members of a teacher community (Wenger, 1998). How they are viewed within that community is an important aspect of identity formation. The findings from this study reveal that the school based principals regard highly the skills of graduates of the PMEP. They view the graduates as reflective professionals and both articulated a positive impression of the skills they bring to the profession. However, they noted that the process of participation in a teacher community is not always a smooth process for PMEP graduates. The school environment can be difficult to negotiate and the transition can be problematic.

While there was relative agreement on the importance of research for teachers, tensions between research policies and teachers' professional practice emerged. The findings suggest that the relation between research based activities carried out in teacher education programmes and the teaching profession seem to be quite weak.

There appears to be little interest in the knowledge developed by student teachers by the broader teaching community. Only a small number of participants indicated that they had shared their dissertation results with colleagues or had received interest in it. This resonates with other findings (Jakhelln, Bjørndal, and Stølen, 2016), who note that student teachers received hardly any interest from the school community in their master's dissertation.

This finding raises serious implications for graduates of the PMEP programme who are trying to negotiate an identity, when there is little or no perceived research culture in schools. Wenger (1998) argues that individuals develop an identity as they become a valid member of a community of practice where learning happens in collaboration with others and through activities situated in that learning community. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002, p. 7) define communities of practice as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis”. However as findings suggest the prevalence of a culture of research in schools is weak, and graduates can find themselves teachers isolated in their practice as researchers.

In identifying and acknowledging this difficulty, the stakeholders in this study suggest that the Droichead Induction Process a process designed to support NQT's should be better used to ensure continued support for newly qualified teachers as they transition to their early careers. Induction programmes are highly valued and well received by beginning teachers (Draper, O'Brien, and Christie, 2004; Hodkinson, 2006) and have shown to be beneficial for the improvement of beginning teachers' teaching quality and commitment, and significantly improve teachers' retention rates and student achievement (Helms-Lorenz, van de Grift, and Maulana, 2016; Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004). The stakeholders agree that this process can support the many valuable skills acquired by the graduates as a result of their teacher education programme.

This resonates with findings by Cowan (2002) which suggest that when teachers begin their career with research awareness and related skills, and are working in a collaborative teaching environment with more experienced, like minded colleagues,

they are better positioned to integrate research into their practice. The school context is a critical factor in the on-going development of a school based community of inquiry. There is a need to provide teachers with a collaborative framework for anchoring research within their classroom and professional practice. Perhaps there is a need also to consider and develop research-engaged schools which, are seen as sites for research design, methodology and application and in which intervention projects tackling practical problems and joint research programmes between schools and universities are developed (Dimmock 2016). The findings of this study highlight the need for schools to be supported to embed integrated professional cultures, to facilitate professional conversations about teaching and learning, co-inquiry, shared reflective practice and collaborative learning opportunities. How best to strengthen connections between theory and practice and develop teachers as researchers is an important consideration for policy makers.

The aim of this study was to collect a rich, multifaceted and representative data set encompassing as wide a variety of accounts as possible. To answer the research question:

How has the study of a Research Module, as a component of the Professional Master of Education in Primary Education (PMEP) programme, shaped the development of teacher identities as teacher researchers amongst beginning primary school teachers in an Irish school context?

This study has shown that the construction of a teacher researcher identity is a challenging task. In summary these findings point to the ways in which the study of a Research Module, as a component of the (PMEP) programme, have shaped the development of teacher identities as teacher researchers amongst beginning primary school teachers in an Irish school context. The demand for active research as an integrated part of every teacher's work has been challenging, and will no doubt continue to be so. If the requirement is to be fulfilled, it will require consideration of the widest possible range of aspects of the social context and of individuals' agency in professional identity negotiations. Bound up with this, there is a clear need to support teacher researcher-identity construction, with enhanced possibilities for the renegotiation of their professional identities, from teachers to researchers.

Consequently, it is important that research should be made attractive to individual teachers.

6.3 Limitations of the Research

In considering the findings of the current research, it is also important to discuss its limitations. Firstly, the limitations of this research are clearly defined in the research sample and size of the case under study. In this study, the data was gathered from one group of beginning teachers from one HEI. Small-scale studies raise the question of the extent to which the findings and conclusions can be transferred to other settings. It is widely agreed that the transferability of findings to other contexts depends upon the similarity between the contexts (Patton 2002). However, notwithstanding the limitation highlighted here, it is hoped that the findings of this study may be transferable to other teacher educators involved with initial teacher education programmes at master's level.

In addition to the issue raised above, purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study. This is recognised as a sampling method for use when the research is not seeking to produce results that are representative of the whole population. It could be argued that the focus group participants were self-selected and may have been both favourably predisposed towards the study of research. This raises the possibility that they were motivated by a desire to express views, which may not be typical of the views held by their peers.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that interpretations of the data could potentially be influenced by my own professional experience. It was important to guard against any bias which might arise through my own preconceived ideas and passion, or the perhaps the desire to show the PMEP programme in a positive way. In an effort to establish trustworthiness in the research design, I acknowledged my 'insider' position from the outset and tried to minimise any preconceptions through continuous reflection throughout the study period.

6.4 Implications of the Study

Implications for Hibernia College

The ability to construct a teacher identity based on one's experiences and beliefs about teaching, has been found to be critical to establishing a strong sense of self-efficacy among teachers (Settlage, Southerland, Smith, and Ceglie, 2009). Paying

attention to identity has been stressed as a crucial element in teacher education (Bullough, 1997; Bullough and Gitlin, 2001). The findings from the study have implications for practice amongst teacher educators within Hibernia College. The establishment of an identity requires providing student teachers not only with the necessary skills and knowledge but positively encouraging and nurturing dispositions. Fostering student teachers research disposition and researcher stance is more likely to link research to practice and extend reflection into more systematic inquiries of practice (D'Ambrosio 1998; Loughran 2004; Bailey and Van Harken 2014). The findings of this study suggest that more work needs to be done to ensure graduates of the PMEP leave their programme with a greater disposition and motivation to carry out future research in their classrooms.

The findings from the study also suggest that it is important for ITE programmes to adequately prepare student teachers to deal with the realities of school culture, so that the early years of teaching can be turned into a positive experience where teachers are enabled to grow and develop their skills (Gratch, 2001; Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002) As Bezzina (2006, p. 2) describes it, the 'transition shock' caused by the teachers' realisation about the discrepancy of the real world of teaching and the feeling of lack of preparation for many of the demands that teaching brings can lead to a state of paralysis that renders teachers unable to transfer to the classroom the skills they learned during teacher education. The PMEP programme can provide opportunities to interrogate and broaden the possibilities continuing to research even when the culture of the school may be different.

Implications for Policy and Practice

International trends in evidence-based practice have emphasised the importance of teachers' engagement in and with research (Guuske et al 2009; Marjolein et al 2012). This has been supported nationally by Teaching Council policy on professional development (2019) and teacher education (2017). The findings from this study suggest that there is a need to address the issue of research informed practice from the perspective of the continuum of teacher education. Systematic and collaborative inquiry into teaching practices and learning in schools is dependent on the support of school leaders and practicing teachers. A research-based approach to teacher education throughout the continuum requires close collaboration of all involved. This

research raises questions regarding the benefits and necessity of establishing collaborative approaches or communities of practice to support beginning teachers' research practices and to sustain teachers' lifelong commitment to research. It is critical to provide teachers with ongoing and meaningful opportunities for professional development and foster their research expertise in the early stages of their career. As student teachers transition to teaching roles they reconstruct new identities within their new workplace activities. As Wenger argues, there is a 'profound connection between identity and practice (1998, p. 149). Wenger considers the identity models provided by a community as 'paradigmatic trajectories'. The more experienced members of the teaching community provide models that set out the possibilities that teachers might move towards in terms of developing their own identity. Wenger argues that, 'exposure to this field of paradigmatic trajectories is likely to be the most influential factor shaping the learning of newcomers (1998, p. 156).

The findings presented in this study point to the high regard graduates of the PMEP place on conversation of professional learning with colleagues to improve practice. Feldman (1999, p. 137) conceives of "serious conversations" as dialogic and dialectic processes whereby participants bring forward, share, and seek new knowledge that can lead to new understandings. There has been a growing interest in gathering data on how teacher conversations support and stimulate development of higher order reasoning and increase knowledge-building in the profession (Clark, 2001; Lieberman Miller, 2001). While policy in Ireland provides space for professional conversations during the Droichead Induction phase, identifying further ways to sustain these professional conversations throughout teacher's careers would be valuable. Establishing a collaborative inquiry culture in schools is crucial to embedding a culture of research. Professional learning communities enable the sustained relationships and time needed to build authentic professional learning and have "the potential to make effective and substantial teacher professional learning achievable" (Bowe et al., 2010, p. 9).

6.5 Implications for Further Research

This study makes a contribution to our understanding of how an ITE programme can impact the formation of beginning teachers' identity as teacher researchers. While we know from Hattie (2009), that teachers make a difference to student achievement,

there is however very little systematic evidence of how teacher learning during ITE translates into or impacts classroom practices. As Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) point out in their review of teacher education research in the US, research on initial teacher education needs to be strengthened through closer connections between student teachers' conceptions and beliefs and their teaching practice. They argue that:

These studies pay little attention to how teachers' knowledge and practices are influenced by what they experience in teacher education programmes and even less attention to how teachers are affected over time by their preparation. There is a clear need to look more at how teachers' knowledge and practices are shaped by their preparation including after they have completed their programmes. (Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005 p. 742)

Despite the limitations already described, this study points to important areas for potential research into the formation of teacher's research identity. A longitudinal study which might capture student teachers' beliefs, perceptions and experiences from the beginning of their teacher education programmes to their completion may add to the research on identity formation. Additionally research might follow participants from the current study further into their future teaching career. This would provide an opportunity to observe how research identity develops over time as participants move into more permanent established practices.

Furthermore as participation and interaction in a teacher community is vital to identity formation, data from different sources might be gathered in order to gain more insights into this process of identity formation. The next phase of this research might capture the views of teacher educators' towards the research-based approach as well as its connections to and implications for teachers' everyday work. This wider scope of study could contribute to consolidating a broader perspective and understanding the role of a teacher community in forming a research identity.

6.6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the identity formation amongst teachers following the completion of a master's programme of study. Minimal research in Ireland has explored teacher researcher identities and this study has extended and provided new knowledge to the area. The current thesis has contributed a number of important

implications for both policy and practice. The quality of learning for students in our schools will depend to no small extent on the quality of learning and opportunities for the development and growth that we provide for our teachers. While it is appropriate and necessary at times for policy-makers to set directions for reforms and to provide teachers with the skills and content that they need to carry them out, there must also be a place in teachers' lives for the fostering and nurturing of research practices that have been discussed in this study. Creating and sustaining the conditions that enable teachers' to engage in the systematic, intentional inquiry about their own school and classroom work is a challenge for us all.

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Appendices

Research Survey

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for accepting the invitation to engage in this research project.

This questionnaire seeks to ask for your preferences and opinions on your Professional Masters of Education (PME) programme with particular focus on the Research component of the programme.

I intend to represent your personal (anonymised) voice throughout the research. To enable me to do this effectively, please take the time to address the questions set out in the questionnaire as they apply to you in your particular circumstance.

In completing this questionnaire you are indicating that you are consenting to participate in this research project and that you have read and understood the description of the project.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

1. Are you female or male?

Female

Male

I choose not to identify

2. What year did you complete the Professional Master of Education (PME) programme?

Select year

3. How long have you been teaching since graduating from the PME programme?

Years

Months

4. What is your current employment status?

Full-time

Part-time

Fixed-term contract

Not employed

Other (please specify)

5. In what capacity are you employed?

Class teacher

Principal teacher

Deputy Principal teacher

Special Education teacher

Other (please specify)

6. Have you taught outside of Ireland since completing the PME programme?

Yes

No

If yes, which country?

7. Which modules of the PME programme do you think most prepared you for teaching?

[Rank in order of importance, with 1 as most useful and 10 as least useful.]

Foundations of Education: History, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy

Pedagogy 1: Physical, Arts and Inclusive Education

Pedagogy 2: Language, Literacy, Numeracy and ICT

Pedagogy 3: Ethical, Social, Personal and Early Childhood Education

Pedagogy 4: Social, Scientific and Development Education

Nua-Ghaeilge 1

Nua-Ghaeilge 2

School Placement: Research and Evidence-Based Practice

Advanced School Experience

Research

8. Please elaborate on why you found No. 1 most useful?

9. Please elaborate on why you found No. 10 least useful?

10. Was there another module you think should have been included as part of the PME programme? If yes, please elaborate.

11. How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree Strongly	Agree
The Research module taught me the skills to reflect critically on my own practice in the classroom				
The Research module taught me about qualitative, quantitative and mixed research methods that would be useful in future research				
The Research Module has increased my motivation to carry out future research				
The Research Module helped Develop my written communication				
The Research module helped develop my critical thinking skills				

12. Did the Research module help you to develop your own philosophical stance on teaching and education?

Yes

No

Please elaborate.

13. Since you graduated from the PME programme, have you participated in any of the following kinds of formal activities?

Never Once Once per year 3-4 times per year Monthly Weekly

**Attendance at
education
course/workshop**

**Attendance at
education
conference or
seminar**

**Completion of
face-to-face or
online Summer
CPD course**

**Participation in
an educational
online webinar
(e.g. hosted by
the Teaching
Council)**

**Carried out
research in your
own classroom**

**Carried out
research with
other colleagues
in your own
school**

14. Since you graduated from the PME programme, have you participated in any of the following kinds of activities?

Never Once Once per year 3-4 times per year Monthly Weekly

**Continued
reading
professional
literature in
education**

**Engaging in
reflective
practice on
your own
teaching**

**Informal
conversation
with colleagues
to improve your
own teaching**

15. Have you ever attended FÉILTE, the Teaching Council's annual Festival of Education in Learning and Teaching Excellence?

Yes

No

16. Have you considered presenting your findings at:

At a national level (e.g. conference, seminar, FÉILTE)

To colleagues on the staff

17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

**All student
teachers
should learn
about
educational
research
methodologies
as part of their
PME course**

**All student
teachers
should have
to complete
a small scale
research
dissertation
as part of their
PME course**

**All student
teachers
should be
taught about
reflective
practice as
part of their
PME course**

18. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

In my opinion,
the most effective
teachers are those
who reflect
on their
practice
through
research

In my opinion,
the most effective
teachers attend
research
conferences
to inform
their practice

19. Which theme broadly describes your research area?

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

ICT

Psychological and Sociological

Inclusion and Differentiation

20. Was the research area chosen influenced by your practice as a student-teacher?

Yes

No

21. Was the research area chosen influenced by your previous undergraduate studies?

Yes

No

22. Are you still actively researching in this area?

Yes

No

If yes, please elaborate.

23. Have you completed any further work on your research dissertation following graduation?

Yes

No

24. Have you published any part of your research dissertation?

Yes

No

25. If yes, where?

26. Would you consider publishing your dissertation with one or more of the following?

An academic journal

A book chapter (contribution to an edited book)

Within the print / ePrint media (e.g. Education Matters, Education Magazine InTouch)

Other media correspondence (e.g. newspaper journal, media blog)

Presentation at an appropriate national and/or international conference (e.g. ESAI, BJES, IJS)

27. Has your experience as a student teacher researcher helped you develop your own research voice in:

Classroom

Staff room

With parents

28. Are you currently or have you progressed onto a further programme of study since graduating from the PME programme?

Yes

No

29. If yes, please tick one or more:

Postgraduate certificate

Postgraduate diploma

Master's degree

PhD

Other